



Texas' Forthcoming Bilingual Special Education Certificate Should Require Specific Skills for Teachers of Dually-identified Students

IDRA Testimony for the proposed Bilingual Special Education Educator Standards, submitted by Lizdelia Piñón, Ed.D., to the Texas State Board for Educator Certification February 10, 2023

My name is Dra. Lizdelia Piñón, and I am an education associate at IDRA. IDRA is an independent, non-partisan, education non-profit, committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

I am a former emergent bilingual student, a former public school bilingual and ESL teacher with over 20 years' experience teaching emergent bilingual students in dual language and ESL programs and have trained teachers across the United States on bilingual education and ESL practices.

I have co-taught courses to student teachers at TCU in the College of Education in TESOL and have also given professional induction training for ESL and special education student teachers.

But honestly my greatest job has been being a mother to four amazing and exceptional children Gabriel, Santiago, Felicita, and Frida who all currently attend Crowley ISD, Texas public schools. Felicita, Frida, and Santiago my triplet fourth grade children whom are dually identified as emergent bilingual students and also differently abled are all representatives of the tens of thousands of Texas students who sit at the intersection of learning English in school and a developmental or learning disability that this new bilingual special education certificate will directly impact and make a difference for. They and all the little boys and girls just like them, are my reason to have served on the Bilingual Special Education Educator Standards Advisory Committee. Please believe me when I share that this intersection between being multilingual and being differently abled is my heart work. I am here as a scholar and a parent.

I was humbled and honored to have been appointed to be part of the Bilingual Special Education Educator Standards Advisory Committee this past summer. As a committee, we met multiple times with TEA and collaborated in the development of the initial domains and then on each and every standard under each. We met in various modes such as in whole group, in smaller groups, we diligently drafted each and every standard, we cross checked each other's work, we worked independently and had many conversations and discussions in regard to the specific and unique intersection between the bilingual education certificate and the special education certificate and the educator that we hope would emerge from this work.

We know these drafted bilingual special education domains and standards encompass the type of educator that is needed for this bilingual special education certificate.

This bilingual special education educator needs to have skills and an in depth understanding of the integrated bilingual and special education pedagogies needed for this population of students.

- They will need to be able to effectively integrate both areas for students, school personnel, and families; recognizes the wide variety of individual student characteristics that influence school success and can lead the school community in implementing appropriate instructional and behavioral methodologies as well as assisting them in identifying areas of bias.
- They will need to know evidence based practices in both content areas.
- They must be able to understand student's backgrounds and characteristics as assets to leverage rather than challenges to overcome and can effectively communicate this knowledge and belief with all stakeholders, including families. Texas being multilingual is an asset not a deficit.
- They will need to ensure that informed, collaborative decisions are made throughout the process pre-referral, identification, and placement processes, and then be able to support stakeholders in understanding and being able to create appropriate, ongoing evaluation opportunities based on each student's linguistic and disability related characteristics.

And lastly but to me the most important piece to me as a scholar and a mother is that this bilingual special education educator will need to be an advocate that knows best practices and can give targeted training related to each special population to highlight the needs of dually identified students and build capacity in the school community. They need to be advocates for our often forgotten multilingual and differently abled students like Felicita, Frida and Santiago.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact me at lizdelia.pinon@idra.org.

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by leading policy analyses and advocacy; dynamic teacher training and principal coaching; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; and innovative student, family and community engagement.