

ACTION 1.5

Ensure that social-emotional health and educational assessment tools can work for and be understood by many cultures and by people who speak different languages—are culturally and linguistically relevant. This helps to ensure accurate mental health diagnoses and educational supports and services.

ENSURE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS are CULTURALLY and LINGUISTICALLY RELEVANT

North Carolina's population includes a rich tapestry of different cultures and languages. When culturally and linguistically relevant screening tools and assessments are used with young children and families in educational and mental health settings, they are more likely to be assessed correctly, receive the services they need, and feel positive about their experiences.

It is a myth to believe that most assessments are culturally neutral. This is because most assessments used in the U.S. were developed by people with a White middle- or upper-class background and used their cultural history and knowledge in determining the content of assessments. As Molly Faulkner-Bond, a Senior Research Associate with WestEd notes, "the tests that people often think of as 'neutral' are actually reflecting a single racial perspective: the White perspective." Therefore, making assessments culturally and linguistically relevant is about ensuring that they are inclusive of the full diversity of the American population.

WHAT WE KNOW

Assessment practices and instruments that reflect students' diverse experiences, interests, and values enable young children to be assessed more accurately and holistically. Allowing students to bring their home cultural practices into the educational setting and ensuring that assessments credit rather than penalize students' cultural knowledge creates a more equitable learning environment as all students are given the opportunity to draw on their specific social and cultural literacies.

Culturally and linguistically relevant assessments afford students the space to draw connections between their learning and their direct, daily experiences with the world, and to see those experiences as an asset in and beyond the classroom.

OVER 30% OF CHILDREN enrolled in North Carolina's state Prekindergarten programs **ARE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS.**

Dive Into the Data

Though North Carolina doesn't collect data on the percent of students who have access to educational programs in their first language, there is data on the percentage of children across the state who identify as dual language learners. Duplin County has the greatest percentage of **dual language learners**, with 16% according to data collected in 2015. This compares to a **national percentage** of 11% from 2019.

WHAT WE NEED

Assessment instruments that reflect childrens' diverse life experiences and backgrounds are needed to reflect the way learning is embedded in broader social contexts and to illustrate how the larger communities that students exist within matter to their learning.

Culturally and linguistically relevant assessments enable students to draw connections between their learning and their daily experiences, and equip them to value those experiences as an asset in the classroom.

HOW TO SUPPORT

As part of the Every Student Succeeds Act, several states have incorporated language supporting culturally responsive curriculum and assessments into their state plans. In North Carolina's legislation, the text is as follows: "Steps taken at the local level to ensure equitable access may include, but are not limited to:...promoting responsiveness to cultural differences." Embedding this language into law is an important step, however more support for educators with implementation is needed to guide action.

It is important to couple culturally and linguistically relevant assessment and diagnosis with referring children in minority and immigrant families to interventions and treatments that are known to work for people from different cultures.

In order to best serve them, children across North Carolina need assessment instruments that reflect their diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

INITIATIVES WORKING IN THIS AREA



ISLA PADRES Research: Early Childhood is a community based participatory research initiative that

is designed to train parents of the Latinx community to create an information/advocacy program on Early Childhood (children ages 0-5) for the Latino community. By providing recommendations to ensure accountability for culturally and linguistically equitable practices, they are empowering the community, providing clear and useful information, and improving services.



The **Family Stakeholders Advisory Council (FSAC)** based out of Rockingham County Partnership for

Children was designed to elevate and amplify family voices within our agency and community as a whole. It focuses on increasing the resiliency of all community members, with specific initiatives targeting parents and caregivers of young children, early childhood professionals and communities at the intersection of race and poverty by ensuring that these individuals have a seat at the table.



Advancing Latinx Mental Health Access (ALMA)'s aim is to provide focused support to programs and

agencies who wish to increase access to culturally responsive mental health support for Latinx people. Trainings and coaching sessions are offered to programs, along with policy review and feedback sessions to identify and address topics such as social drivers of health, community engagement or adherence to best practices around cultural and linguistic accessibility.

Visit the Pathways Action Map to learn more about these and other initiatives leading efforts in this area.