



Change Agent

Heartwired Stories

Teach Plus California

Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Network Cohort 5



The California Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Network (EBCAN) is a statewide Teach Plus California program that equips educators to lead school-level changes supporting implementation of the California English Learner Roadmap. Selected teacher leaders receive specialized coaching, leadership training, and grant funding to implement data-driven, equity-focused action plans for English learner students in their classrooms, on their campuses, and throughout their communities.

In 2025–26, EBCAN's fifth cohort expanded this work by using the Heartwired storytelling approach. Teacher leaders learned to draw upon personal experiences and craft narratives grounded in truth and humility to shift attitudes, inspire action, and advance lasting change for English learners. The stories that follow are theirs.

Our use of the Heartwired approach was informed by our participation in a narrative change community of practice led by Wonder for Good.

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Rebecca Bakshi O'Leary

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Morgan Hill, California

Imagine a classroom where your newcomers are actively engaged in Socratic Seminars and collaborating with their groups—not just receiving help but contributing to the work, providing feedback, and supporting others. Imagine not feeling overwhelmed by 36 individuals demanding help at once, but instead rotating between nine collaborative teams.

This is possible. This is my 9th grade English class.

This is the power of clear structures, intentionally taught roles, and student agency. Instead of 36 voices calling my name, I often have one or two groups checking in to share ideas, ask thoughtful questions, or propose innovations that better support engagement and learning than what I originally planned.

Teaching 36 unique students is hard. It's exhausting. It's often unsustainable. Students come to us with vastly different strengths, needs, experiences, and levels of confidence—especially in the post COVID world. There is never enough time—in a period, day, week, year—to meet every need perfectly. But we *can* create classrooms where students learn how to support themselves and each other.

Our newcomers and long-term English learners (LTELs) have complex needs and deserve intentional support. When they sit isolated or in groups that don't know how to include them, they lose opportunities to process, practice, and belong. Students come to life when classrooms are built for participation, not compliance.

For many LTELs, conversation is a strength. Talking with peers helps them process ideas, make meaning from texts, and build confidence in their thinking. For our newcomers, interaction is essential for language development and understanding what is happening around them. As humans, we learn through interaction, storytelling, collaboration, and practice. Language develops through meaningful use,

through trial and error, and through spaces where mistakes are treated as part of learning rather than something to fear. We do not learn by ourselves in silence.

When students set goals, monitor their own progress, and take on purposeful team roles—something shifts. We spend less energy convincing students the work matters and more time celebrating the growth they can see in themselves. The more we empower them to carry, the more space teachers have to coach, observe, encourage, and breathe.

And students rise to the challenge.

Teach kids to reflect on their growth, how to support one another, and contribute meaningfully to a team. Build structures that allow them to lead alongside you. Enjoy teaching again. Then step back and watch what becomes possible—for them and for us as educators. Students thrive and exceed not just your expectations but your wildest dreams.

When we teach students to carry the learning together, everyone breathes easier.



Juliano Calvo

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Glendale, California

Dear colleagues,

I am writing this as a fellow teacher who is still learning, still questioning, and still trying to make sense of what our students need from us right now.

There was a moment not long ago, sometime between the bell ringing and the quiet hum of students settling into their seats, when I realized something had shifted.

A student stared at his screen, assignment open, cursor blinking. He was not confused about the concept. In discussions, he often showed sharp instincts and practical understanding. Growing up helping with his family business had given him a natural grasp of entrepreneurship, customer relations, and problem solving. In my business classes, he was one of the strongest thinkers in the room, especially when participation did not depend on reading or writing.

But that strength seemed to fade the moment reading and writing became the gateway to participation.

When the task required extended writing or academic language, his confidence quietly disappeared. The ideas were there. The experience was there. The intelligence was there. What stood in the way was not his content knowledge. It was the language needed to access and express it.

I carried that moment with me long after the class ended. I kept thinking about him, and then about every other student in the room. How many were holding ideas that never surfaced because language stood in the way? How many were navigating content in a language they were still learning, being evaluated for fluency rather than understanding? How many were doing double the cognitive work just to reach the starting line?

As teachers, we notice these things. We adjust. We scaffold. We encourage. We do what we can with the time and tools we have. But that day, the question stayed with me in a deeper way: what if access to language did not determine who could show their thinking?

So when conversations about AI enter our classrooms, it makes sense that we pause. We worry about plagiarism. We worry about students bypassing thinking. We worry about protecting the integrity of learning and the professionalism of our work. These concerns come from a place of responsibility.

I felt those same hesitations.

But I also noticed something: our students were already using tools to make sense of academic language—not looking for shortcuts, but trying to participate. That is when I began to see AI as a bridge between thinking and expression, between language development and content mastery

Used responsibly, these tools do not replace teaching. They do not replace relationships. They do not replace the craft of what we do every day. Instead, they can support the invisible work our multilingual students are already doing as they process, translate, revise, and build confidence while learning a new language.

I think about our newcomers who have crossed borders and still show up ready to learn. I think about long term English learners who hesitate to speak because they fear being wrong. They are not lacking intelligence. They are navigating complexity.

And we, as educators, have always stepped *into* complexity.

When I began using language support tools intentionally, with transparency and clear boundaries, I saw something shift. Students participated more. Writing became less about fear and more about expression. Conversations deepened. Thinking surfaced more clearly. Not because the work was easier, but because the barrier to entry was lower.

This is not about technology. It is about access.

It is about ensuring language supports—rather than limits—a student’s expression, and that our assessments capture growth rather than just fluency. It is about ensuring rigor means opportunity, not gatekeeping

Our students are already living in a world shaped by AI. The question is not whether it will exist in their learning. The question is whether they will navigate it alone, or with educators who help them use it responsibly and with purpose.

I do not have all the answers. I am still learning. But I believe that when we approach this work with humility and care, we create classrooms where language is no longer the first barrier students must overcome before showing what they know.

And when that barrier begins to lift, something beautiful happens. Students speak. Students write. Students take risks. Students begin to see themselves not as learners trying to catch up, but as thinkers who belong.

Maybe this work isn't about adopting something new, but returning to our guiding values: equity, dignity, and the belief that every student deserves to reach their full potential. If AI can help us move closer to that vision—giving multilingual learners the tools to express the brilliance they already possess—then perhaps this is not a disruption, but an opportunity.

With respect and hope,

Juliano



Dr. Olivia Chavez Hart

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
San Bernardino, California

Imagine a 4-year-old starting their first day of kindergarten. Their grown-ups have had many conversations about school; what it is, why they attend, and most importantly, that they will make lots of friends. The child feels excited and nervous, holding their backpack just a little tighter as they walk toward the classroom door. For most children, the first day of kindergarten is a major milestone in growing up. For me, it was the moment the world I knew at home suddenly came into focus against the world outside.

My first day of kindergarten was when I realized not all Moms are Deaf.

As I watched my classmates talk with their parents, I realized that the way my family communicated was different. I began to understand that the language that shaped my earliest memories, the language I used to tell stories, ask questions, and learn about the world, was not the language used in my classroom.

Like many bilingual CODAs, hearing children of Deaf adults, American Sign Language (ASL) is our first language, and spoken language is our second. Yet, when CODAs enter the K-12 public school system, we are not provided language support or services to help us develop English, even though English is the language used for instruction in our classrooms. In classrooms across the country, CODAs still are not considered multilingual learners.

According to the California Department of Education, multilingual learners are identified when a language other than English is used in their home. District assessments then determine whether a student qualifies for specialized programs or language services designed to help them succeed in school.

While protections for multilingual learners have evolved from the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act to Title III of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act, a critical gap remains. Despite the clear intent of these laws to support students who use a non-English language at home, a 2011 federal guidance explicitly classified ASL as “English-only.” This single definition effectively bars ASL-first students from the very language services designed to ensure their academic success.

I share this not as criticism but as an invitation to understand a complexity that many have rarely pondered.

CODAs bring incredible strengths into the classroom. We grow up navigating two languages and two cultures. We often develop strong visual communication skills, empathy, adaptability, and responsibility at a young age. Many of us serve as a bridge between the Deaf and hearing realms.

However, being a bridge also means carrying invisible weight.

A CODA like me may arrive at school already translating conversations, navigating cultural differences, and managing responsibilities beyond their years. At the same time, we are learning to read, write, and think in a language that may not be our first. I think about all the CODAs who came before me and those who arrive after me. My first day of kindergarten was over 30 years ago, yet many CODAs today are still having a first day that looks remarkably similar.

Awareness creates possibility, but it also reveals responsibility. Understanding the experiences of CODAs requires us to look beyond individual classrooms and consider how perspectives among educators, administrators, and policymakers shape what is recognized and what is overlooked in our education system. My project centers on those perspectives to better understand the level of awareness needed to move from isolated understanding to collective action. When awareness expands across systems, it has the power to influence not only classroom practices but also the policies that define who is seen, supported, and included.

Every time we expand our understanding of language, culture, and identity in our schools, we create more space for students to be seen. We create opportunities for educators to support students in ways that reflect the full reality of their lives.

So I invite you to continue this work by helping raise awareness about CODAs.

The next time you find yourself in a conversation about multilingual learners, I encourage you to ask one simple question, “What about those communicating in ASL?” By posing it, we ensure that the next child holding their backpack just a little tighter isn't just discovering how they are different; they are discovering that their school is ready to meet them. Recognition has the power to ensure that a CODA's first day of kindergarten is defined not by what they lack, but by the strength of the bridge they've already built.



Jason Charles

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Temecula, California

This year I joined a panel of other teachers and presented ELD strategies at Wonder-Con. I shared how I've been slowly but intentionally annotating the comic Usagi Yojimbo with sentence frames and close reading questions. The intentional choice of visual medium, close level of support, fluency practice, and opportunity to work together engages and empowers my students. It also ensures we are hitting listening, speaking, reading, and writing standards every day. This lovingly prepared educational recipe was a huge hit and I've been invited to repeat the session at Comic-Con this summer.

I want to start by naming something I know many of us feel: I'm so thankful for the opportunity to "cook" in a career that connects me to excellent, compassionate people who:

- advocate for students, especially the marginalized
- seek out opportunities to uplift colleagues
- celebrate improvement, even if it takes time; we know it's worth it

But this is where things get complicated. It can be tempting to rush growth, especially when we have a new English Language Development team and new Educational Assistants who are eager to fill the buckets of others, even at the cost of emptying our own. We all have great intentions, but in practice, it often feels like the system asks us to act like first responders rather than educators. We bounce from one code-yellow priority to another, instead of laying a foundation of long-term progress, and that state of anxiety isn't sustainable. If you don't want to take it

from me, ask our beloved Lenny Dykes, former ELD coordinator and heart-attack survivor. He was the first to tell me to pace myself. And I listened.

I've heard it said that many educational trends can feel like a "flavor of the month," and we're right to be skeptical of pendulums of practice that swing into and out of favor for a season. But ELD isn't that. What if we treated our designated ELD program like a slow-cooked meal instead of a flash-in-the-pan experience? I had to sit with my own resistance here: the fear that slowing down meant falling behind. But with intentional long-term planning, we can cook up educational experiences that become beloved family recipes.

In keeping with larger California demographics, Temecula's ELD student enrollment has been gradually increasing year by year. Our focus on them should be increasing, too. When I think about who this affects most, I think about the quiet cost of our current pace. In the classroom, these students often use blending in as a survival strategy, just like you and I would if we were to suddenly find ourselves living in Vietnam, Guatemala, or the Philippines. These learners are often reluctant to advocate for themselves, which invites us to take the initiative of refining our best-practices, work that benefits ALL students.

The California Dashboard is one measure of progress, and last year our new team moved the Reclassification dial from very low to highest possible in *only* one year. Our principal said to me, "I didn't know that was possible... that kind of growth usually takes three to five years." What gives me hope is that this growth wasn't an accident. It was the result of moving away from flash-frying our lessons. Now let's use the time we've earned to improve gradual, long-term, practice that will move other dials like students scores on the state level English language arts exam.

In our first English Learner Advisory Committee meeting of 2025, one of the feedback points from students was a simple but profound request: "We want more agency in selecting the topics we research and present." I need to remind myself that I don't teach curriculum, I teach kids. I don't have the perfect recipe figured out yet, but I know it involves a shift in our shared mindset. I'm not sure what the exact solution is yet, but I know it has to do with implementing effective systems that protect our prep work, prevent code-yellow priorities, and ensure our classroom instruction is not just a standard to be met, but a meal that is relevant, engaging, and EMPOWERING.



Maria Guillen

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Sacramento, California

From the beginning, language has shaped who I am as an educator.

Growing up in Los Angeles in the early 1980s as the child of an immigrant family, my educational experience was deeply influenced by language. I was fortunate to attend school at a time when my peers and I first built strong literacy skills in Spanish before transitioning into English instruction. Because of that foundation, the shift into English felt natural. By third grade, I had been reclassified, and for years I moved through school without thinking of myself as an English Learner.

It was not until much later, once I had already entered the profession, that I fully understood how much that part of my identity mattered.

My turning point came when I began working as an Academic Intervention Specialist supporting bilingual students and their families. For the first time, I was seeing classrooms through a different lens. The experiences of the students I served looked very different from my own. I quickly realized how fortunate I had been to receive strong support in my early schooling and how many students were navigating systems that did not yet fully see or support their strengths.

That realization stayed with me when I became a mathematics teacher.

Math had always been the place where I felt most confident as a student. In language-heavy subjects, I often struggled to express my thinking in the ways teachers expected. I still remember papers marked with red pen, moments that left me questioning whether my ideas were truly being understood. But math was different. In mathematics, I could communicate through numbers, diagrams, patterns, and

equations. Mistakes became visible steps in my reasoning, not evidence that I lacked ability. Math gave me a voice.

As a teacher, I began to notice this same pattern in my multilingual learners.

Again and again, I saw students with strong mathematical reasoning and deep problem-solving skills hesitate to participate, not because they lacked understanding, but because they were still developing the language to express it in English. Too often, the gap between what students know and how easily they can communicate that knowledge becomes mistaken for a gap in ability.

This is where the stakes become deeply personal.

I think about the student who solves a complex problem but keeps their hand down because they are unsure how to explain their reasoning aloud. I think about the student capable of advanced mathematical thinking who is placed into lower-level courses because language development is misread as limited academic potential. The cost of that misunderstanding is not only academic; it shapes how students see themselves.

What gives me hope is that this challenge is not beyond our reach.

I do not believe educators lack care or commitment. Teachers are working under enormous pressures, pacing guides, accountability measures, time constraints, and increasingly diverse classrooms. The challenge is often that systems have not consistently equipped educators with the tools, strategies, and collaboration needed to support multilingual learners well.

I understand why conversations about language development can sometimes feel like “one more thing I have to do.” I felt that way myself at first. But over time, I came to understand that supporting academic language in mathematics is not an extra task; it is simply part of effective teaching.

When students are invited to explain their reasoning, engage in mathematical discourse, and use visuals and multiple representations, all students benefit. More importantly, multilingual learners begin to see themselves as mathematicians.

Throughout my career, from earning my master’s degree in curriculum and instruction to leading professional learning communities, participating in district mathematics professional development, and serving on our curriculum adoption pilot committee, one belief has only grown stronger: meaningful change happens when educators learn from one another.

I do not believe there is one perfect solution. But I do believe we must keep asking better questions: How do we ensure mathematical brilliance is not hidden behind language barriers? How do we create classrooms where students’ voices, identities, and ideas are honored?

When language development and mathematical thinking grow side by side, students learn more than math.

They learn that they belong.



Areeje Hamza

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Castroville, California

I love watching you teach—seeing your students as they think, collaborate, and figure out answers together. However, I do not love testing them, especially when the assessment tool is not derived from the formative and even summative tools you use to inform your instruction, yet testing the same child two or three years in a row, I see the growth you don't always get to witness. I experience the habits you've helped them form every day: speaking in full sentences, maintaining eye contact, supporting their answers with evidence, adding details to their stories, organizing their thoughts, and so much more.

These habits are not just learning objectives or success criteria—they are ways of thinking. I know this firsthand because I still have my notebooks from my first year in college when I was a new immigrant studying English as a second language; those journals helped me learn to think, even if they are barely comprehensible to me now. Back then, I didn't know what a graphic organizer was or how to use it. Today, they guide my thinking even when they're not available on paper as they inform my cognitive processes. Back then, I didn't know what morphemes were, and I wouldn't be able to tell you a list of five affixes. Today, I know their types, teach vocabulary by breaking down word structures, and guess meaning based on roots and other affixes. Teaching changes the way we think and perceive our own thinking; I know because, as an adult learner, I am always conscious of my own language-acquisition process.

I also know that the work is never-ending, and so are the challenges. There are moments when I cannot gain a student's trust, build a productive relationship with a colleague, or even get the supplies I ordered in time. There are moments where you have to prioritize classroom

management over completing your lessons. The struggles are real, but so is the learning, the hope, and the resilience.

You know many of your colleagues and the invisible work they contribute. You know Mr. Gonzalez, who puts in extra hours prepping ELPAC support lessons and works with students twice a week to help them do well on their tests. You know Mr. Noria, Mr. Mattimoe, and Mr. Warren, who plan lessons together and create materials for students, which take countless hours of their own time. You know the heroes in this room and the superpowers they bring.

You also know that when one of us is facing a challenge, we don't carry it alone- we solve it together as a team. We come together regularly to reflect on what is working, revisit standards, look closely at data, and refine our practice. That collaborative cycle is what strengthens us.

I hope our focused work around selected ELD standards becomes a strong foundation for the powerful learning ahead. My goal is to provide practical support that helps you plan lessons with intention, design meaningful language objectives, integrate necessary scaffolds for multilingual learners, and bring that work to life in your classrooms every day.

Our collective understanding of the EL Roadmap, ELD Standards, and rigorous yet purposeful instruction and modifications is a great starting point. I look forward to building upon this foundation and altering our response as we reflect on the evolving needs of our learners; I hope to continue to support your classroom effort by focusing on specific language objectives that address the needs of our students as shown in our site data.

Remember, *you* are the architect of your classrooms; the level you teach to is the level students will strive to achieve, so believe in those young minds and their great capabilities. Please know that your work matters deeply. It is seen. It is valued. It is appreciated.

You know the choices you make every day will impact over a hundred human beings for years to come. For many of our students, education represents opportunity and upward mobility. We are not just teaching content; we are expanding pathways, strengthening confidence, and building hope. And we do that best, together.



Elizabeth Maciel

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Corona, California

In an uncertain world where many of us feel overwhelmed, stressed, unheard, overworked, and burdened by ever-increasing expectations, I often find myself deeply concerned about the experiences of my students. I feel the weight of this work in my own mind and body. Every day, I wonder: How are my students feeling? Why are they disengaged? Why do some seem sad or hopeless? What are they carrying in their minds and hearts? How does my attitude affect them? How do my words shape their day?

At the same time, our days are filled with to-do lists, objectives, emails, trainings, meetings, and constant demands. It is understandable that we may not always have the emotional capacity to fully focus on what our students are experiencing. Sometimes we avoid getting too involved because we are already stretched thin, and the complexity of our students' lives can feel overwhelming and beyond our control. Yet we must remember our calling: to teach, to serve, and to make a difference in the lives of children.

Our students shape our communities and our future. We hold the power to influence lives in meaningful ways, for better or worse. A simple word of encouragement or an "I see you" when someone feels invisible can make a lasting difference.

Lisette, one of many students traveling alone and living with extended family, taught me the reality many students face. She came to the United States with the dream of learning English and eventually helping reunite her family after her parents were deported when she was a baby. At sixteen years old, she believed she could pave the way for her parents and younger siblings to one day return to California legally. But when she arrived, the reality was far different from what she had imagined.

Many of our students and families navigate environments where they feel targeted or misunderstood simply for who they are. Some experience hostility, racism, and exclusion in their communities. Most of my students came to this country because a choice was made for them—often for safety, stability, or survival. If they had the freedom to choose, many would remain in the places where they are surrounded by family, language, culture, and belonging.

For immigrant students learning a new language, the work is far more than academic. For many, school is the one place where they do not have to work physically, where they receive a meal, and where they can invest in their education with hope for a better future. By empowering students as leaders and ensuring they feel connected from the first day they step onto campus, we inspire them to dream beyond their current circumstances. When we instill belief in them and encourage them to reach their full potential, they begin to bloom academically and personally.

When I witnessed students becoming disconnected and showing their anger and frustration by failing classes, dropping out, returning to their countries, or joining the wrong crowd, I realized it was time to take action. I started a club for newcomer students to connect, build relationships, and feel a sense of belonging. Through the Multicultural Club, students became involved in school activities, served their community, and discovered the possibilities of creating a better future. The club gave them a space where their voices, stories, and ideas mattered.

When I was challenged to develop a project for EBCAN, I immediately saw the opportunity to expand this work beyond newcomers to also support Long-Term English Learners. Students with incredible potential but often shattered dreams, shaped by systems that should instead ensure equity and opportunity. I wanted to reach students who lacked motivation, students born and raised in our communities who nevertheless felt invisible, unheard, and hopeless. I chose to embrace their differences and encourage them to recognize their strengths and assets.

I understood that changing the mindset of an entire organization would be a tremendous challenge, but I believed I could begin by helping students change the way they see themselves. I wanted them to erase the limiting stories they had heard about themselves over and over again. I wanted to challenge the deficit mindset that had been placed upon them and help transform it into an asset-based mentality.

Through this project, I sought to create leaders, thinkers, and achievers. In our meetings and events, students explored the possibilities available to those who believe in themselves, work toward their dreams, and develop leadership skills.

Together, we worked to transform a “pobrecito” mentality into a “sí se puede” mindset.

As educators, we know when students feel safe in certain environments. Even small moments of recognition, compassion, and affirmation can become steady sources of light for students carrying burdens we may never fully see.

We may not be able to change every hardship our students face outside of school, but within our classrooms we still hold power. We shape environments, relationships, and memories that students carry long after they leave our care. My project is rooted in the belief that students learn best when they feel emotionally safe, respected, and connected. I want to help create learning spaces where compassion is not secondary to achievement, but essential to it.

In a world that often asks students to prove their worth, educators can become the people who remind them they already have it. My project aims to empower students, develop them as leaders, and encourage them to succeed academically while recognizing their own value. When students believe in their worth, they become inspired to break barriers, pursue their dreams, and create meaningful change.



Erica Maldonado Higle

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Turlock, California

I want to start by naming something many of us feel.

Teaching right now is heavy. Our days are full, and our students' needs are real. It can feel like we're being asked to do more with the same—or even less—time. Many of you are already doing so much to support your students, including your English learners.

In the English Language Development (ELD) room, we serve about 60 students daily with the support of two paraprofessionals. We work with newcomers, at-risk, and long-term English learners. Our students bring Farsi, Arabic, Spanish, Assyrian, and other languages into the room every day.

I also want to acknowledge something important: our school district multilingual students showed growth on the State Assessments Dashboard last year. That growth reflects care and strong instruction already happening in your classrooms.

This work is complex. Most of us were not deeply trained in Integrated or Designated ELD. Many of us work within schedules and routines that do not always allow time for intentional language development.

It's understandable to think: If students are making progress, maybe what we're doing is good enough. That belief makes sense when time is tight and expectations are high. We are balancing instructional minutes, testing demands, varied English learner profiles, pacing guides, and the tension between flexibility and fidelity. Trying something new can feel vulnerable—especially if it might be judged.

Let me say this clearly: this is not about adding one more thing.

Integrated and Designated ELD are not extras. They strengthen what you already do well. This work does not have to be perfect. We are learning together.

I carry this work personally.

I didn't speak English when I started kindergarten. With the support of incredible teachers, by fourth grade I was in Gifted and Talented Education, and by middle school I was in advanced English classes. Academically, I thrived.

At home, my parents nurtured our language and culture. Spanish was never something in which I felt ashamed. But at school, I was never encouraged to read or speak Spanish. I didn't know Spanish books existed until college.

I share this not to criticize my teachers—they changed my life. But I now see how schools can support academic success while missing opportunities to affirm students' full linguistic identities. That realization shapes how I show up now—not with all the answers, but as a partner in learning.

When I think about our English learners, I see incredible potential.

Some students are brand new to English. Others have been learning for years and still hesitate to speak. Many understand far more than they can express. When students don't feel safe using all their language resources, they may participate less, take fewer risks, or wait years for full access to grade-level learning.

Integrated and Designated ELD are not just about test scores. They are about belonging, dignity, and ensuring students are fully seen, heard, and able to participate.

Strong ELD: Has clear language objectives, provides purposeful structured opportunities for student talk, sentence frames and academic vocabulary, strategic use of primary language as a tool for meaning making, and a shared belief that multilingualism is an asset.

When students clarify ideas with a peer, negotiate meaning, or connect new English to what they already know, they are not avoiding English—they are building toward it. This strengthens strong teaching.

What gives me hope is that this is doable.

Small, daily ELD routines can shift student confidence and engagement. We've already seen growth. With more intentional Integrated and Designated ELD, we can accelerate that growth and close opportunity gaps—without burning ourselves out.

One question I hope we keep asking is:

What do our English learners already understand—even if they can't say it yet—and how can we give them the language to show that understanding?

For too long, schools have limited students' access to language—by waiting for correctness, restricting talk, or discouraging home language use. What our students need are daily opportunities to talk, practice, and make meaning in safe, structured ways.

When we intentionally support language development, we are not adding something extra.

We are opening doors—
To participation,
To confidence,
And to deeper learning.



Megan Masters

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Hanford, California

In my first two years of teaching designated English Language Development to newcomers, I went home and cried every night. I felt imposter syndrome and a deep sense of inadequacy. How was I—a monolingual speaker—supposed to connect with and teach students I couldn’t fully understand?

My two years of high school Spanish did little to prepare me to communicate with my students who spoke multiple languages fluently. My secondary English credential trained me to teach poetry, Shakespeare, and novels—not language acquisition. I was handed *Read 180* and told to make it work. Nothing in the program’s rigid, standardized approach truly met the needs of my learners. I knew I was doing them a disservice, yet I lacked the professional agency to adapt it to their reality. .

Have you ever had this experience? Have you felt like you wanted to help and not known where to start?

Many of us had a single college course about how to support multilingual students, maybe called English as a Second Language (ESL). We are constantly told that preparation was embedded in the programs that led to our credentials. But often, there is no meaningful support behind those words. The messaging becomes: *You were taught this. Now go do it.* .

But theory and reality are two very different things.

In theory, you translate the document and the student is able to read it. In theory, you assign a buddy to help.

In reality, the student may not be fully literate in their home language. In reality, their buddy might not understand the content either. In reality there isn't enough funding for additional bilingual aides. And suddenly, theories have collided with reality—hard.

So there you are. A room full of students with varying needs. Just you, the curriculum, and the clock.

I understand that feeling. I sat in that overwhelm and thought about walking away from the madness.

That's why this isn't about adding to your plate or blaming teachers. It's about all of us coming together. It's about building common strategies and shared language. It's about being able to ask, "What have you tried with Daniel?" or "What's working in your class? It's about knowing we are not alone in the work.

There is no magic formula for teaching multilingual learners. If there were, we would have applied the knowledge already. Our students don't need perfect teachers. They need teachers who are willing to try, to adjust, and to refuse to give up on them.

So maybe we start small.

- What is one thing I can do today to increase access?
- What is one small adjustment that could help a multilingual learner participate?
- Who can I collaborate with this week?
- What strategy have I seen work somewhere else that I could try?

This work becomes lighter when it becomes collective.

Imagine what this could look like for our students if they experienced consistent language supports across classrooms. Our students would feel a better sense of community if we all worked together. *You belong here, and we will help you find your voice.*

And imagine what it would feel like for educators. Teachers wouldn't feel like they are alone and isolated. Instead, we would also feel that community and sense of shared responsibility.

Common strategies create continuity. Continuity builds confidence. Confidence unlocks participation.

We may not have all the answers. But together, we have experience, creativity, and commitment. Together, we can make small, intentional shifts that change the trajectory for our multilingual learners.



Sara Perez

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Santa Clara, California

I want to be vulnerable and share that I show up for my students the way I do because I still carry the weight of feeling unseen during my own time in school.

I did not participate in class and often appeared disengaged, not because I wasn't thinking, but because I wasn't sure I was saying things "correctly." I was scared of kids in the class or even my teacher thinking I didn't speak "right". I felt unseen. I felt unsafe to make a mistake. I attended an English-only school where there was a clear divide. Those who lived up the hill in the two-story houses behind the school, and those of us who lived at the bottom in apartments by the park. I didn't have a teacher that reflected my identity until secondary school, and it was hard to connect with teachers I felt didn't understand my experience.

My mom did everything she could. As a single parent, she worked, learned English, and earned her high school diploma while raising us. She showed me the value of education. But even with her example, school often felt like a place where I had to figure things out on my own. I didn't feel a connection between my home life and my school life.

What changed for me was one teacher who had all four of us siblings over the years. She took the time to get to know me. My story. My life. She called on me and supported me in answering. Because of that, something shifted, I felt less "othered." I felt like I belonged. In her class, I felt seen.

That experience shaped the educator I am today, and how I show up for multilingual learners.

In our classrooms, we see students every day who want to succeed but cannot fully participate yet. Like I once did, they are thinking and processing, but without intentional, safe opportunities to use academic language, they remain quiet. Over time, quiet can be misinterpreted as disengagement.

As educators, we are already doing so much, analyzing data, implementing curriculum, and adjusting instruction. Yet, it can feel discouraging when we don't see the growth we expect for our multilingual learners. There is a real tension: deep care and commitment alongside limited time and outcomes that don't always reflect our effort.

This can feel like one more thing. But it's not about adding more, it's about being more intentional with what we already do.

Our multilingual learners are not "other" students. Many have grown up in our communities. When access is not intentional, they become quiet participants. This is not because they lack ability, but because they lack structured opportunities to show what they know.

The challenge is not effort. It is structure.

When we make small shifts, like planning structured talk, intentionally partnering students, and providing language prompts, we create space for students to practice, take risks, and be heard. These are not add-ons, rather they are intentional moves within our existing lessons.

This is the heart of the work I lead. Supporting teachers to create structured opportunities for multilingual learners to engage, use language, and be seen.

And I've seen what happens when we do this.

I think about a student who rarely spoke at the beginning of the year. He avoided eye contact and often passed when called on. But when his teacher implemented structured partner talk, sentence frames, and clear roles, something shifted. He began rehearsing with a partner, then sharing short responses. Over time, he spoke in full sentences using academic language with confidence.

He didn't become a different student.

He finally had the structure to show who he already was.

And when I think about that student, I think about myself.

I wasn't disengaged. I wasn't incapable. I needed a connection. I just needed someone to create the conditions for me to be seen.

One teacher did that for me. She created a space where I felt safe and gave me ways to participate. Because of her, I experienced what it meant to belong.

Our students are waiting for that same opportunity.

They do not need lowered expectations.

They need intentional access.

And when we make those shifts, together, we move from students being silent to students being seen, heard, and fully part of the learning community.



Dr. Azar Robles

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
San Diego, California

Samantha is the student who stays with me from my first year at Knox Middle School, a time when I arrived in California confident in my ability to serve immigrant communities only to be met with a level of complexity I never anticipated.

Each day Samantha entered quietly, opened her computer, and retreated to playing video games. When we worked on paper, she sketched instead of writing. She wasn't disruptive—she was distant. We were told she spoke French. I tried Google Translate. I attempted broken French. Nothing worked.

This was during the fragile return from the pandemic. Students carried grief and instability back into classrooms, and we were expected to address trauma while still meeting academic benchmarks. At the same time, our school was implementing new evaluation standards and additional responsibilities. The load was immense.

When a colleague suggested beginning the special education process, it seemed responsible. But something felt incomplete. I wondered if we were reacting to symptoms without understanding the cause.

Later, I discovered Samantha spoke Haitian Creole, not French. Critically, lacked literacy in her first language, as Creole has only been standardized recently and access to education was historically reserved for the elite. What looked like disengagement was actually inaccessibility.

When I transitioned into teaching English Language Development (ELD), the pattern became clearer as our objectives are to improve reading, writing, speaking, and listening—but for some students, language instruction alone is not enough because they lack literacy.

Peterson, another student, made that unmistakably clear. In my classroom, he was outgoing and articulate, fluent in Haitian Creole and Spanish. He participated confidently in discussions. Nothing about him suggested academic struggle. While preparing him for a presentation, I asked him to read a classmate's name.

He couldn't.

The issue wasn't intelligence or effort. It was foundational literacy. His ability to speak English had masked gaps in print literacy.

That moment changed my practice. I began teaching phonics alongside ELD. Not all multilingual learners need this. Many arrive literate in their first language and can transfer those skills to English; they primarily need vocabulary and academic language development. But others need access to the code itself.

One day, I asked a recently arrived Haitian student with limited print literacy, Djelensky, to read a short list of words containing digraphs. He hesitated, then began decoding. When he finished, his eyes filled with tears.

"Mrs. Robles," he said, jumping out of his seat, "I can read. I love English."

Moments like that feel powerful—and fragile.

As we learn to better support multilingual students, we also navigate political pressures, accountability systems focused on test scores, and expectations to accelerate learning while addressing mental health and unfinished instruction.

I also understand the weight my colleagues carry—the planning, meetings, evaluations, and emotional labor. Everyone is stretched thin.

I know asking anyone to take on "one more thing" can feel impossible.

But I believe there is a way to make the work lighter, not heavier.

What if we created a consistent process to gather meaningful literacy histories when students enroll—information about prior schooling and literacy in the home language? If we understood those factors earlier, we could make more accurate placement decisions, reduce unnecessary referrals, and ensure students receive the right support from the start.

I know this: we need systems that help us understand where our students come from before deciding what they need.

Understanding our students more fully—and collaborating intentionally as colleagues—is one of the most realistic and powerful ways we can create meaningful change.



Liz Rondero

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Azusa, California

I want to start by sharing an email from a former student. It was an unexpected surprise—one that reminded me of my *why*, a reminder I deeply needed as I near the home stretch of my career.

I taught Emmy in kindergarten and again in third grade in my English/Spanish dual language classroom . She shared that as she navigated higher education she was reflecting on her early schooling, specifically in a narrative she wrote for her English class about being first-generation American and struggling with reading.

She ended her essay with these words:

“The last day of school was an emotional day... Mrs. Rondero had been my teacher twice. She got to know me, and I appreciated her empathy and kindness. Who knew one elementary school teacher would have such an impact on my life?”

I sat with that email for a long time, not because it praised me, but because it reminded me of something that’s easy to forget in the rush of teaching. When English learners feel seen linguistically, culturally, and emotionally, it shapes how they see themselves as learners long after they leave our classrooms.

I’m sharing this because I know how complex our work is. Elementary classrooms are demanding. Serving the needs of English learners can feel like just one more thing added to already overfilled plates. Planning is especially challenging when students come with different language levels, home experiences, and relationships to school. Many of us weren’t deeply trained in language development, and the system

doesn't always give us the time or tools to truly understand who our English learner students are beyond a label or proficiency score.

If you've ever thought, I'm not sure what to do with all this language data, or how do I make ELD culturally relevant when I'm just trying to survive the day you are not alone. Those concerns are real and valid. I don't believe they come from lack of care ; they come from wanting to do right by our students.

What I've learned through teaching in bilingual classrooms, and through stories like Emmy's, is that knowing our English Learners matters more than having perfect lessons. When we take time to understand students' language profiles, how they use language at home, how they express understanding orally, and the cultural strengths they bring, we design language acquisition differently. It stops being about compliance and starts becoming intentional preparation for success across the school day. We give our English learners the language "nuggets" they need to participate, collaborate, and feel confident alongside their peers.

Emmy was quiet in class. It would have been easy to assume she lacked confidence or language. In reality, she was thinking deeply, navigating two languages, and carrying experiences that didn't always show up on assessments. What stayed with her wasn't a specific strategy- rather, it was the feeling that her teacher truly saw her.

You don't need to speak your students' home languages to do this work well. You don't need to overhaul your curriculum. Sometimes this work looks like choosing language objectives that reflect how students already communicate. Sometimes it means designing ELD lessons that intentionally bridge home language practices to academic English. And sometimes it's simply pausing to ask: Who is this child and how can my instruction honor that?

Language development is most powerful when it's grounded in knowing our students, not just teaching standards.

This is not work meant to be done alone. When teachers collaborate by sharing insights about students' language strengths, aligning expectations, and learning from one another, we reduce the gaps students feel as they move between classrooms and grade levels. We create coherence. We create safety. We create opportunity.

Emmy didn't remember worksheets or pacing guides. She remembered empathy, continuity, and being understood.

That's the hope I want to leave you with: when we commit to truly knowing our English Learners—their language profiles, their cultures, and their stories—we don't just prepare better lessons. We prepare students to see themselves as capable, valued, and worthy of voice.

And sometimes, years later, they write to remind us that it mattered.



Leanne Samek

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
San Diego, California

Jesus immigrated to the United States from the Philippines three years ago. As an eighth grader, he carries many labels: immigrant, newcomer, Multilingual Learner. But the labels he values most are Filipino and a basketball athlete—words that reflect pride, identity, and resilience.

In my classroom, however, Jesus appeared discouraged and confused. He wanted to succeed but could not fully participate in the learning. Without consistent opportunities to build language through meaningful, engaging instruction, he began to withdraw—and sometimes act out. His story is not unusual. Many of our English learners experience this same frustration.

I have taught in this district for 18 years across grade levels, schools, and roles. Like my colleagues, I have worked hard to implement the class materials provided and support students as best I can. Our district has invested in English Language Development standards and programs designed to prepare students for proficiency assessments so they succeed in school and beyond. None of us entered this profession to limit students. We want them to thrive.

At the same time, we must acknowledge a hard truth: compliance with grade-specific expectations does not always translate into meaningful access. Our middle school did not offer a dedicated English development class. Sixth period was labeled “study skills,” and students who had not yet passed the English proficiency exam were expected to prepare largely through a computer-based program.

While that program offers benefits, language development is not simply a technical skill practiced in isolation. It requires interaction, affirmation, and purpose. Students like Jesus were being asked to pass a test without a learning environment that honored the language assets they already possessed.

The challenge was not effort. It was structure.

I remember a colleague saying, “He just doesn’t have the language skills to pass this class.” I understood the frustration behind the statement. Teachers are under pressure and accountable for academic results. Meeting the needs of students developing English while teaching grade-appropriate content can feel overwhelming.

But this is not about blame—it is about support. The issue is not student ability or teacher commitment. The issue is whether our systems leverage student strengths or focus primarily on perceived deficits. Shifting to an asset-based approach does not lower expectations. It raises opportunity.

With support from district leadership and our superintendent, we piloted something new: a translator pathway beginning in middle school. For the first time, bilingualism was positioned as a professional strength. This pathway allows students to graduate with a translator certificate and earn income directly after high school.

Four middle school teachers implemented the first district-developed unit. When it ended, we continued building additional lessons because our students deserved continuity and depth.

In this class, students began to see themselves differently. They explored the brain-boosting and professional advantages of bilingualism. They practiced academic language in English and their home languages. They understood they were not placed there because they were behind, but because they were developing a powerful skill set.

Jesus responded immediately. He participated more. He took risks with language. He showed pride in translating for peers and adults. What once looked like disengagement revealed itself as untapped potential.

After four months, the results are clear. Students are producing language more confidently. They engage in discussions, transfer skills to other classes, and advocate for themselves.

Jesus now carries new labels: scholar and translator.

Through teacher leadership and district partnership, we made a strategic shift. We created a space where bilingualism is cultivated, not corrected.

Principal One of the California English Learner Roadmap calls for an asset-oriented approach that responds to students’ strengths and needs. When we design systems that truly reflect who our learners are, students move from surviving school to shaping their futures.

Students like Jesus do not need lowered expectations.

They need aligned opportunity.

And when we provide it, transformation follows.



Jewel Sanchez

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
San Leandro, California

During the third week of school, I noticed Cristian, a 10th grader in my class, still hadn't started an assignment. I went over to ask them to put their phone away, and a moment later, I realized I had misread what I was seeing. They weren't off task—they had taken a picture of the worksheet and uploaded it into Google Translate, trying to follow the lesson line by line. What I had mistaken for distraction was actually a student trying to survive instruction in a language that was not yet theirs.

I know three weeks is far too long for a student to sit in my classroom without me recognizing they are navigating school at an emerging level of English. All the scaffolds in the world mean little if I don't first recognize when a student is struggling with language access.

What felt painfully familiar was that Cristian hadn't been introduced to me with any context. They weren't framed as an English learner or a newcomer; they were simply the 35th name on a chaotic beginning-of-the-year roster—when we are learning names, launching curriculum, juggling schedules, and doing our best to build relationships quickly. There is nothing inherently wrong with not knowing everything about our students right away. But I keep asking myself: why didn't the system help me know what I needed to know sooner? Why was access left to chance rather than designed from day one?

When you look closely at how much English is required to navigate high school from reading a schedule to understanding signage to ordering lunch—you begin to see how quickly a student can be excluded before instruction even begins. Our systems, policies, and pacing unintentionally send the message that English dominance is the expectation, not one way of being. And that message lands hardest on our newcomer and multilingual students.

Our students' languages, and experiences are not obstacles to overcome; they are assets that must be honored. When advisory or newcomer programs become places students land instead of intentionally bridging transition we are unintentionally reinforcing separation.

The immediate concern can feel like this is just one more thing we have on our plates. I feel that too. The fatigue of rewriting lessons, finding the most appropriate scaffolds, or adjusting instruction in classrooms of 35-plus students is real.

However, I believe we should focus on intentional shifts, checking in with newcomer teachers early in the year to identify gaps and strengths, as well as getting to know each of them and identifying how we can best support their needs.

What gives me hope is seeing teachers embed advisory practices directly into their content classes to create spaces for success. When we prioritize goal-setting, reflection, and the explicit teaching of how to navigate school systems, we see students' success that reflects our true intentions as teachers. By collaborating across disciplines and sharing scaffolds, we follow students, instead of isolating them. If we expect our students to collaborate, we must expect the same of ourselves.

I would like us to imagine a system where newcomer students are known early, where their languages are affirmed, where advisory line practices help them transition into the campus community with confidence.

My invitation: Join me in this crucial work.



Alison Shewmaker

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Poway, California

I know the weight you carry. You are balancing pacing guides, standards, and state assessments while managing a classroom full of students whose needs stretch across a wide spectrum—and somewhere in that room sits a multilingual learner who is quiet, hesitant, or appears unsure. You may have wondered whether they are engaged, whether they understand, whether they are trying. I want you to know—they are. You are working hard, often beyond capacity, because you care deeply about getting it right. So do they.

I have learned as a Multilingual Educator that the student you see and the student I see are the same person; they are simply navigating the classroom with different tools.

The story of a multilingual learner can be complex. In many classrooms, they appear quiet, hesitant, or unsure. Yet in English Language Development (ELD) and AVID Excel, those same students shine. The transformation I witness is not about content knowledge, and it is not about effort. The student's silence in content area classes isn't passive, it is protective.

In ELD and AVID Excel, students know the rules of engagement. They've practiced with sentence stems. They know I'll wait seven seconds for their response. They understand that approximations are celebrated, that errors are teachable moments not failures. The learning is manageable because the language support is visible and consistent.

In content classes, those rules change every period. While processing mitochondria or the quadratic formula, learners simultaneously translate, formulate responses in English, monitor grammar, calculate social risk, and decode unspoken classroom norms. Underneath it all, I know, runs their quiet fear: "If I speak with an accent, will they think I don't belong?"

The silence isn't about not knowing—it's about not knowing if it's safe to show what they know

When content teachers see a silent student, the narrative can become: “They can’t do it.” I understand where that narrative comes from. You are managing 150 students, pacing guides, state tests, and a wide range of readiness levels. When a student is silent day after day, it is human to conclude they are not ready.

But I have seen these same students do remarkable things when there is consistency, structure, and an asset-based environment. The difference is not ability. It is access.

The ask is not to abandon your content, slow your pacing, or be certified as an English as a Second Language specialist. The ask is to make visible what's invisible—to use the strategies that already exist in our ELD and AVID Excel programs, the ones our multilinguals already know, so they can transfer them into your classroom.

This is not about adding more to your plate. It is about alignment.

When we echo the language supports students' experience in ELD- clear objectives, structured talk routines, sentence frames, wait time, strategic use of primary language- we lower the affective filter and raise participation. We send a powerful message: ***Your voice belongs here.***

It's about consistency and access so multilingual learners not only strengthen their English ability, they also demonstrate the academic thinking we know they already possess. These learners don't just acquire language—they reclaim their voice.

A multilingual learner is not two different students depending on the classroom they enter. They are one student navigating two different systems. And we have the power to align those worlds so they thrive in every classroom, every period, every day.

This is more than an instructional shift. It is a collective commitment. So here is my call to us as educators:

- Let's refuse to interpret silence as inability.
- Let's design classrooms where risk-taking feels safe.
- Let's build predictable language routines that travel with students from room to room.
- Let's partner across departments so that learning frameworks are not isolated to ELD, but embedded everywhere.

When our students reclaim their voice, they participate more fully. They access rigorous content. They see themselves as capable scholars. We are working together. We are partners in learners' language development. We are architects of access. And we are activators of hope.

I Can...

Be invisible

Take risks with my voice

I am learning.

Swallow my questions

Ask questions that move us forward

I am curious.

Disappear

Light up the room with "HOLA!"

I am here.

Erase my accent

Bridge my two worlds

I am a Multilingual Learner.



Erin Webster

Teach Plus Emergent Bilingual Change Agent Fellow
Fresno, California

Every educator knows that moment at lunch, the brief pause when the bell is quiet, the campus hums, and learning shows up in an unexpected place. For us, it happened on an ordinary day outside our classrooms. Across the corridor, a group of migrant education students sat on a concrete planter near the Migrant Education Program office. They were playing instruments, singing, and laughing alongside their coordinator, who encouraged them to keep going.

We stopped what we were doing and just listened. The music carried down the hallway, cutting through the usual lunchtime noise. It was simple, spontaneous, and deeply human. We looked at each other and said what teachers so often say in these moments: *This matters*.

Just days earlier, we had attended Art Hop, a monthly citywide pop-up where galleries and museums open their doors to the public for free. Standing there at lunch, watching students create and connect through music, we felt those two experiences click together. Why couldn't our campus have something like this? Why couldn't our students have a space where their creativity was not only allowed but celebrated?

As art teachers, we've seen again and again how the creative process fosters voice and expression, especially when words are limited. We understand its power to build belonging, invite participation, and honor identity. Arts on the Plaza grew from that shared understanding and that shared moment: a desire to create a safe, joyful, inclusive space where students could be seen, heard, and valued through their creative expression.

Of course, moments like this also surface real challenges. As educators, our time and energy are already stretched thin. Lunch is often the only moment in the day to breathe, catch up, or support students in other ways—so asking colleagues to give up that time to support visual and performing arts, and a new initiative, is not a small ask. The hesitation isn't about a lack of care; it's about capacity. When there isn't

a history of showcasing the visual or performing arts, it becomes harder for art students to feel equally valued, even when educators deeply support them in the classroom.

These structures don't come from a lack of belief in the arts; they come from habits, policies, and roles that prioritize what is most familiar and easiest to organize. And yet, not every student is an athlete. Our art students, including newcomers and multilingual learners, want what all students want: to be seen, supported, and affirmed.

When a newcomer student lights up after performing for an audience, or when art students glow with pride as teachers and peers stop to engage with their work, the impact becomes undeniable. Those moments reveal both the challenge and the opportunity. The issue isn't whether students care; it's whether our systems consistently make space for them to be visible. For many students—especially our emergent bilinguals—art isn't an "extra;" it is their primary language. I know this personally. As a painfully shy child, art was how I spoke before I had the confidence to use my voice. When we don't provide a stage for this expression, the loss isn't always loud; it's seen in the quiet hesitation of a student who shines in class but disappears in public.

What's at stake at Arts on the Plaza is more than just exposure; it's dignity, belonging, and the validation that their voices matter exactly as they are. By simply showing up to the plaza, you offer a powerful reminder that they belong here, even when their words are still forming.

This small shift, from viewing arts events as optional extras to seeing them as extensions of our commitment to equity, belonging, and student voice, aligns with who educators already strive to be. When we show up together, even briefly, we model curiosity, affirmation, and care. Arts on the Plaza becomes not just an event but a shared practice, one that reminds students and ourselves that meaningful change often begins with collective attention.

When we step into the plaza, bring a class by, or pause to listen, we send a powerful message to our students: **your voice matters**. By shifting our mindset—viewing these moments not as "extra" but as essential extensions of our classrooms—we bridge the gap between curriculum and community. In these shared spaces, we find the connection and equity we've always strived for. Together, we don't just observe art; we affirm the very purpose of our profession and remind our students that they truly belong.