



OUR VOICES

The annual newsletter of WABE – Celebrating multilingual learners, educators, and communities across Washington state.

A Full House in Yakima

Educators, administrators, and advocates from across Washington gathered in Yakima April 23–25 for the 2026 WABE Annual Conference, themed **Multilingual Communities of Voice, Power, and Purpose**. The energy in the room matched the theme – hallway conversations between sessions ran as long as the sessions themselves, and the WABE booth stayed busy from badge pick-up to closing session.



*A full room for the 2026 Annual Conference – Multilingual Communities of Voice, Power, and Purpose.
Dr. Ann Ishimaru delivering her keynote on Friday.*

From Dr. Ann Ishimaru and Dr. Maria Lucero's pre-conference workshop on designing everyday practices with multilingual families, to Dr. Adeyemi Stemberge's sessions on culturally responsive instruction, to Valentina Gonzalez's strategies for building language across every content area, attendees left with practical tools and renewed purpose. Thank you to every presenter, volunteer, and district partner who made the conference possible.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS**Valentina Gonzalez**

“When we unite with families in purpose, we don’t just support a student – we build a community of voice, power, and purpose that carries them for years.”



Valentina Gonzelez during her Saturday keynote

In her Saturday keynote, “Uniting with Families of MLs in Purpose,” Valentina Gonzalez called on educators to treat families as co-educators, not just recipients of information, honoring the cultural knowledge and strengths they bring rather than treating language as a barrier to work around. Her message landed squarely on the conference theme and gave attendees a clear takeaway: build family partnership into the design of instruction, not as an add-on to it.

IN THE FIELD • YAKIMA SCHOOL DISTRICT**Learning Walks: Seeing the Work in Action**

Alongside the conference, OSPI coordinated a Dual Language School Visit with Yakima School District on April 23, giving educators the chance to step inside real classrooms and see dual language instruction in practice. Interest was so strong the visit reached full capacity ahead of the conference.

Participants observed dual language classrooms in action: biliteracy instruction, translanguaging, and family engagement practices, then debriefed with the host team about what makes Yakima’s program work. Our thanks to Yakima School District, and to the staff and students who welcomed us so warmly.



Dual Language Site Visit at Yakima School District

COMING UP • WENATCHEE, WA

Fall Institute: Save the Date, October 16–17

Mark your calendars – WABE heads to the Wenatchee Convention Center this fall for two days of hands-on learning, with the Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel right across the street. Two-day registration is \$325 and single-day is \$225 through September 30.

Featured Speaker. Cristina Sanchez-Lopez, a bilingual educator of 30 years and co-president of Paridad Education Consulting, leads Friday's general session and a two-hour workshop on building culturally and linguistically inclusive learning environments for multilingual learners with and without disabilities.

Saturday Panel. Cristina Sanchez-Lopez joins Dr. Cassie Martin, OSPI's Executive Director of Special Education, and Dr. Kristin Percy Calaff for a panel discussion – a direct extension of the whole-child conversation from this year's conference.

COMING UP • SEATTLE, WA

Winter Institute: Bringing Students and Families into the Room

Save the date for January 29–30, 2027, when WABE returns to the DoubleTree Suites Seattle Airport, Southcenter for the Winter Institute.

We're looking ahead to something new: bringing multilingual students and their families into the Winter Institute itself, not just into our conversations about them. Picture a student panel sharing what it's like to

grow up bilingual, a family showcase of dual language classroom projects, and a welcome session where families sit alongside educators as partners in the work.

Why It Matters. Every session at WABE is ultimately about students and families. Giving them the mic turns “family engagement” from a session topic into something WABE members experience firsthand. Details on nominating students for the keynote panel are coming soon.

We can’t wait to see multilingual communities interwoven with purpose take the stage in Seattle. Watch wabewa.org and our social media page [@wabewa](https://twitter.com/wabewa) for more details.

COMING UP • BELLEVUE, WA

Annual Conference: April 29–May 1, 2027



*Dr. Carol Salva, Lead Educational Consultant,
Seidlitz Education*

WABE’s 2027 Annual Conference heads to the Hyatt Regency Bellevue, with keynote speaker Dr. Carol Salva.

Dr. Carol Salva is Lead Educational Consultant at Seidlitz Education, specializing in supporting SLIFE and multilingual learners. She is co-author of *Boosting Achievement and DIY PD: A Guide to Self-Directed Learning for Educators of Multilingual Learners*.

WIDA UPDATES

What's New – and how to grow every language domain

Big changes took effect this year. WIDA dropped “for ELLs” from the assessment name – it is now simply WIDA ACCESS (and WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten). The Kindergarten assessment was fully redesigned, while grades 1–12 were revised behind the scenes to align with the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, so the test-taking experience stayed the same.

2025–26 is a New Baseline. Because of the revisions, this year's scale scores are a fresh starting point and can't be compared to prior years. Use them to set new growth baselines.

Standard Setting Resets Cut Scores (July 2026). WIDA holds a national standard-setting event July 27–31, 2026 to set new proficiency cut scores. New resources follow in 2027 – read this year's levels with that transition in mind.

Also new: the WIDA Language Charts connect the Proficiency Level Descriptors directly to instruction, and a revised WIDA Screener arrives in 2028. Confirm Washington's testing window and the new annual test-administrator training requirement in the WIDA Secure Portal and on OSPI's Multilingual Education page.

The Four Language Domains

The WIDA framework organizes language across four domains, grouped by how students use it. Growth in all four moves a learner toward full proficiency – here's a refresher and a scaffold for each.

INTERPRETIVE · RECEIVING MEANING	EXPRESSIVE · PRODUCING MEANING
Listening Making meaning from spoken language. Scaffold with visuals, sentence frames, wait time, and repeated read-alouds. Reading Making meaning from written text. Scaffold with pre-taught vocabulary, native-language texts, and graphic organizers.	Speaking Communicating orally. Scaffold with structured talk, partner protocols, oral rehearsal, and low-stakes practice. Writing Communicating in writing. Scaffold with models, word banks, sentence and paragraph frames, and revision cycles.

Highlight the domain your data points to Pull each learner's four ACCESS domain scores and look for the gap. A student may score high in Listening and Speaking but need targeted support in Writing. Naming the specific domain, rather than a single overall level, makes instruction sharper and progress easier to see.
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PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

AI in the Multilingual Classroom

Artificial intelligence is showing up fast in schools. Used thoughtfully, it can lighten teacher workload and open doors for multilingual learners, but it works best as a support, never a substitute for skilled, culturally responsive teaching. Understanding AI literacy includes learning how AI has evolved, how its tools are built, and how human and regional biases can shape their outputs. Our use of AI should remain grounded in human relationships and trust.

- Where AI Helps.** Drafting leveled texts, generating sentence frames, producing home-language family communication, and giving students low-stakes speaking and writing practice.
- Use It With Care.** Watch for translation errors and cultural bias, protect student data and privacy, keep a human reviewing output, and make sure access is equitable across schools.

SERVING THE WHOLE CHILD

When a Student Qualifies for Both

Students who qualify for both special education and multilingual services are too often served by two systems that don't talk to each other. Serving the whole child means neither identity gets lost – language development and disability supports are planned together, not traded off.

Language Need vs. Disability. Distinguish a developing second language from a disability so students are neither over- nor under-identified. Use language-appropriate evaluation and interpreters.

One Coordinated Team. Bring ML and special education staff to the same table so the IEP reflects language goals, and multilingual supports continue alongside services.

Families at the Center

Meetings, documents, and decisions should be accessible in the family's home language. Multilingual families are full partners in both the multilingual and special education process, not just recipients of a translated form.

ADVANCING YOUR TEACHING

Grow Your Credentials in Multilingual Education

Washington districts need more educators trained to serve multilingual learners and there are well-worn, often funded, pathways to get there. A few options worth sharing with staff.

Add an ELL or Bilingual Endorsement. Certified teachers can add a PK–12 English Language Learner (ELL) or Bilingual Education (BE) endorsement. The BE route also requires ACTFL language-proficiency ratings. Offered at WWU's Woodring College, UW, and other WA programs.

UW MEd for Practicing Educators. The Project TELL Equity Grant covers up to \$9,000 toward ELL Endorsement courses, and tuition-exempt teachers can have four more courses covered toward the 36-credit MEd – together, more than half the program cost. Autumn 2026 applications are open through Wednesday, September 9 at grad.uw.edu/admissions/apply-now (select Education – Tacoma, MEd – General for Practicing Educators). Questions: Academic Advisor Payton Modie, pmodie@uw.edu, 253-692-5698.

INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

Learning that Crosses Borders

Global connections turn a partner language into something students can use in the real world and give educators new perspective to bring home.

Sister Schools & Global Projects. Consider student exchanges, virtual collaborations, and joint project-based learning with partner schools abroad build language, culture, and friendship.

Study Abroad & Immersion. Summer immersion, heritage-language trips, and travel programs deepen the partner language and open doors.



Student and family opportunities at
Salamanca University, Spain
Hanyang University, Korea

Contact Cecilia Tamayo at
TamayCP@puyallupsd.org for more information



STUDENT VOICES

In Their Own Words

The reason for all of it. Give students space to share what being multilingual means to them – a newcomer's first year, a dual language student's pride, a graduate looking ahead.

"Mi experiencia en el distrito...es muy positivo...Cuando entre al Ballou, fue una experiencia nueva para mi porque es una nueva escuela en una nueva pais pero afortunadamente creo que pude manejarlo y ahora me siento muy confiada en esta escuela. "



Osman, Subhan, and Nehan: Students from the Puyallup School District

Celebrate the Seal of Biliteracy

Consider recognizing this year's Washington State Seal of Biliteracy – a meaningful way to honor students' bilingualism as an asset and inspire younger learners.

LOOKING AHEAD

Funding & policy to watch

Where things stand for multilingual education across Washington – the funding landscape coming out of the 2025–27 biennium, and what to watch in the 2026 session.

STATE · BUDGET	K–12 protected through a tight biennium Lawmakers closed a roughly \$16 billion shortfall with a ~\$77 billion, 2025–27 operating budget that made about \$3.1 billion in cuts. K–12 was largely shielded, including a major special education investment, but many programs held at maintenance level, so watch your allocations closely.
STATE · TBIP	Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program TBIP remains the core state funding for multilingual learners (RCW 28A.180), serving roughly 160,000 students statewide through per-pupil allocations for current and recently exited MLs.
STATE · DUAL LANGUAGE	Statewide expansion continues

	OSPI's updated Washington State Dual Language Program Guide (August 2025) supports districts building toward the state's goal of dual language access statewide by 2040, with planning and development grants continuing to roll out.
FEDERAL • TITLE III	Title III & federal uncertainty Title III continues to supplement services for multilingual and immigrant/newcomer students, but districts should plan for possible shifts in federal education funding.
AHEAD • 2026	A supplemental session — add your voice 2026 is a short, supplemental-budget session, with OSPI finalizing policy priorities in the fall. Watch for mid-biennium adjustments to education funding and English learner supports.

JOIN • RENEW • ADVOCATE

Be Part of the Work



The mission of WABE is to advocate for multilingual education and asset-based mindsets, practices, and educational systems that support the success of all students.

Thank you for everything you do! WABE is stronger with every member. Renew your membership, bring a colleague, and help us keep multilingual education thriving in Washington.

Save the Date: 2027 Annual Conference, April 29–May 1, Hyatt Regency Bellevue

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