

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
RURAL ENDORSEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Preparing Idaho Teachers to Work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: Research Brief

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About Education Northwest

Education Northwest is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping all children and youth reach their full potential. We partner with public, private, and community-based organizations to address educational inequities and improve student success. While most of our work centers on the Pacific Northwest, our evaluations, technical assistance, and research studies have national impact and provide timely and actionable results.

The Rural Endorsement and Development Opportunities (REDO) project is offered through Boise State University's Department of Literacy, Language & Culture. It was partially funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition through its National Professional Development grant program for the period September 2016 through August 2022. This research brief summarizes the evaluation which was conducted by Education Northwest. [Read the full evaluation report.](#)

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Introduction

English learner students, like other culturally and linguistically diverse students, bring strengths, assets, and diversity to Idaho’s classrooms and communities. These students learn grade-level content—such as language arts, math, science, and social studies—while developing English language proficiency at the same time. Doing [“double the work”](#) is not easy, and these students need teacher support. Despite the many English learner students in Idaho, teachers don’t always have the skills they need to support them.

In response, Professor Claudia Peralta and Dr. Diane Boothe at Boise State University created the **Rural Endorsement and Development Opportunities (REDO) Project**, partially funded through an Office of English Language Acquisition National Professional Development grant from the U.S. Department of Education. REDO’s online courses let teachers earn an English as a new language or bilingual teaching endorsement, preparing them to integrate culturally and linguistically responsive practices into their instruction and use evidence-based strategies for teaching English learner students. This will increase the pool of highly qualified, culturally responsive teachers in Idaho, and improve English learners’ reading and writing achievement and family engagement.

Education Northwest partnered with Boise State University to understand how teachers’ perceptions of their preparation to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students change after completing REDO and to evaluate the impact of teacher participation in REDO on students’ academic achievement. Our findings are summarized in this brief. For more details, data, and explanations of methods, please [read the full report](#).

How we evaluated REDO

To evaluate the REDO program, we focused on two questions:

1. How do program participants perceive their **preparation to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students** and related classroom practices after participating in REDO?
2. How does teacher participation in REDO impact **English learner students’ English language proficiency and English language arts achievement (ELA)**?

To answer the first question, we surveyed teachers who participated in REDO before and after the program about their **knowledge, confidence, instruction, and assessment** practices focused on culturally and linguistically diverse students. Then we compared the results. We also analyzed **state test data** from the Idaho State Department of Education to see whether having a teacher who participated in REDO boosts students’ scores.

REDO's Impact on Teachers

Who were the teachers?

BSU initially partnered with four Idaho school districts—Melba, Blaine, Nampa, and Kuna. As REDO grew, more participants came from 20 other Idaho school districts. Overall, 133 in-service teachers in five cohorts completed REDO coursework, with 90 earning their English as a new language endorsement and 17 earning their bilingual endorsement in Idaho. Among participants, 75 percent identified as white and 16 percent as Latino.

Overall teacher impact

Education Northwest's evaluation found that REDO was effective in preparing teachers to serve English learner students and their families.

- REDO participants reported **increases in their knowledge, confidence, and use of 49 of 50 instructional practices and competencies** focused on English learners
- Nearly all participants (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that **REDO was effective in preparing participants to serve English learners**
- Nearly all participants (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that **REDO increased participant knowledge and skills related to parent, family, and community engagement**

WHO WORKED ON PROJECT REDO?

At Boise State University Professor Claudia Peralta, Ph.D., served as the Principal Investigator. Diane Boothe, D.P.A, was the Project Coordinator. Tabitha Gonzales-Ramos, M.Ed., facilitated the English as a New Language and Bilingual Professional Learning Communities. Elizabeth Meador, Ph.D., and Margaret Mulhern, Ph.D., were professors, and Maria Sudduth, M.Ed., served as a consultant from the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education.

Evaluators from Education Northwest included Jason Greenberg Motamedi, Ph.D., Becca Merrill, Ph.D., Mary Martinez-Wenzl, Ph.D., Diana Serrano, Ph.D., and Ozen Guven, Ph.D.

We also looked for differences between rural and non-rural teachers. A total of 81 of the 130 participating teachers (62 percent) taught in rural schools. We found that **rural teachers felt less knowledgeable in five instructional practices and competencies compared to their non-rural peers**. We can't say for sure why this is, but we do know that rural teachers face different challenges compared to teachers in cities and suburbs, due rural schools' smaller size and distance from teacher preparation programs.

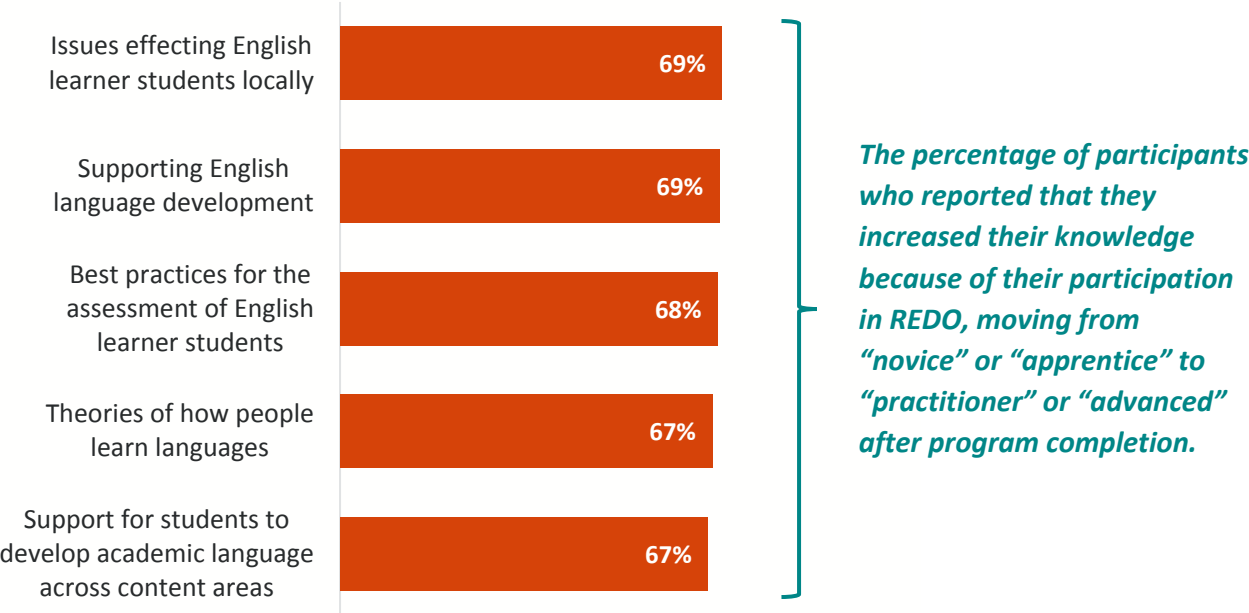
Changes in Knowledge

I have changed immensely in my academic knowledge since completing the English as a new language program. I have been exposed to so many new ideas and have been given a solid foundation when it comes to teaching, connecting to, and assessing emergent bilingual students. This program has been a gift for me both personally and career-wise.

– Cohort 2 REDO participant

To understand changes in knowledge, we asked participants to rate themselves on a four-point rubric (novice, apprentice, practitioner, advanced) and examined changes in the percentage of participants who rated themselves as either practitioner or expert from when they began REDO to when they finished it. **REDO participants reported increases in all areas knowledge of practices and competencies related to English learner students.** The largest areas of growth included understanding the issues impacting students locally, as well as practices to support English language development and assessment practices (figure 1).

Figure 1. REDO participants’ self-reported increases in knowledge



Source: Education Northwest analysis of REDO survey data. See the [full report](#) for complete data and outcomes.

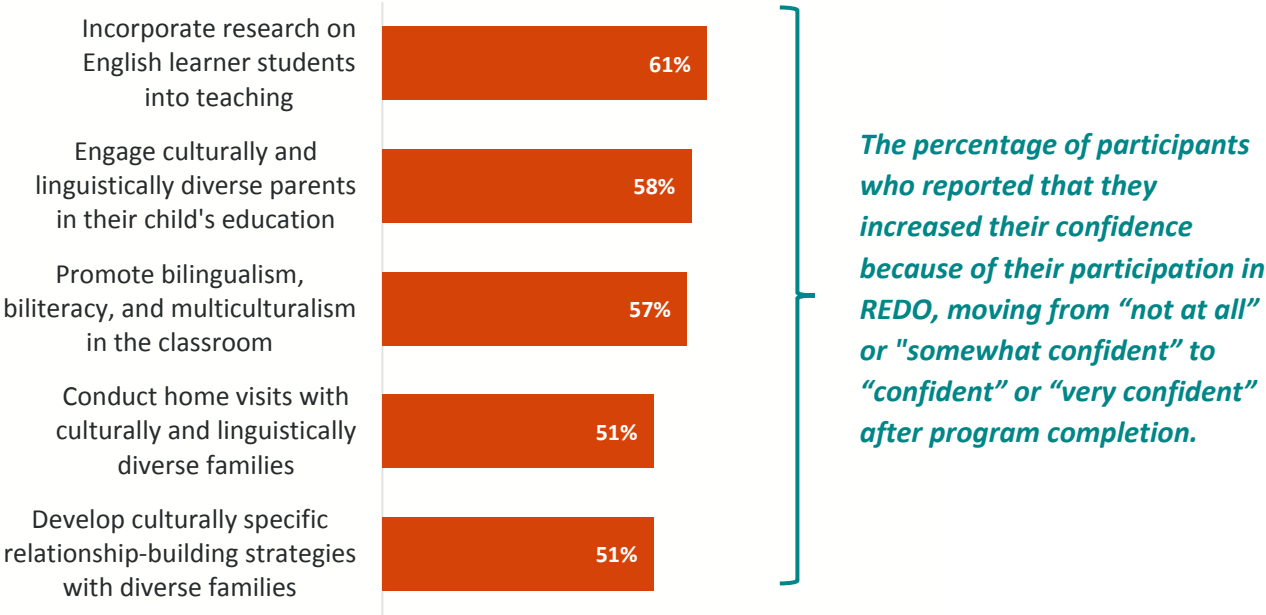
Changes in Confidence

My role has evolved to one of social/cultural/linguistic advocate for my students. I better understand the legal and political issues that impact the educational context of many culturally and linguistically diverse students and am able to advocate more effectively for these students and their families.

– Cohort 1 REDO participant

REDO participants also reported **large increases in their confidence as teachers and advocates of culturally and linguistically diverse students**. They felt more confident (meaning they rated themselves “confident” or “very confident” in the survey) in using research and engaging parents in their child’s education, promoting bilingualism, biliteracy, and multiculturalism. After completing REDO, all participants agreed that they were effective educators of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and many agreed that they were also effective advocates for them. The largest increases in confidence were in areas such as incorporating research into teaching and engaging culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

Figure 2. REDO participants’ self-reported increases in confidence



Source: Education Northwest analysis of REDO survey data. See the [full report](#) for complete data and outcomes.

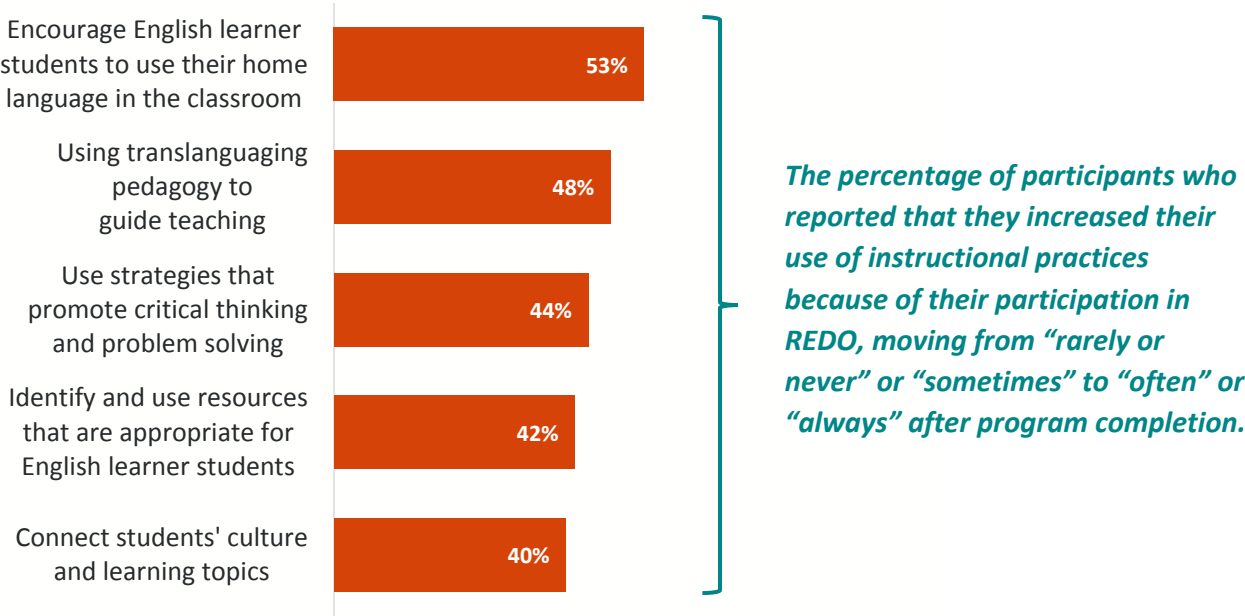
Changes in Instruction

I have grown in my ability to have diverse instructional strategies and provide differentiated instruction. I have a more expanded viewpoint when it comes to English learners, and am a more effective educator.

– Cohort 5 REDO participant

REDO participants reported moderate increases in how frequently they used research-based instructional practices to support English learner students. They said they increased their use of all the instructional practices covered in the program. The largest increases included encouraging students to use their home language in school and using strategies to support higher-order thinking.

Figure 3. REDO participants' self-reported increases in their use of research-based instructional practices



Source: Education Northwest analysis of REDO survey data. See the [full report](#) for complete data and outcomes.

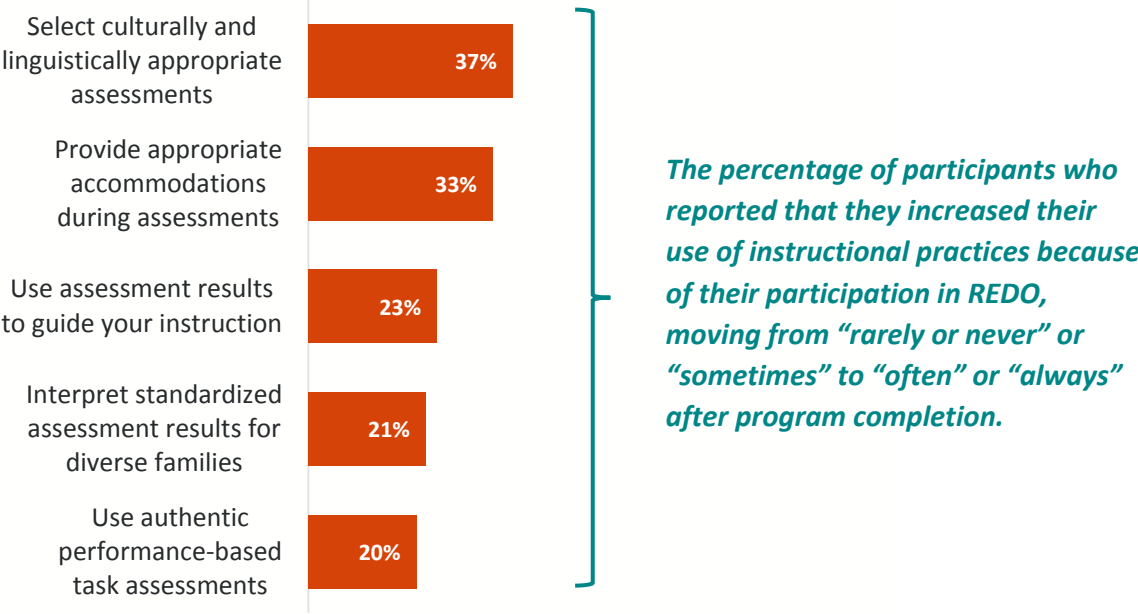
Changes in Assessment

Prior to REDO, I knew that there was more I could be doing for my emergent bilingual students, but I did not know how. The program taught me how to support my students before, during, and after instruction. How to get to know my students and their families, incorporate language/content best practices in the classroom, and how to assess my students.

– Cohort 4 REDO participant post-program survey response

REDO participants reported **small increases in their use of assessment practices** to support English learner students. These include increases in the percentage who “often” or “always” selected culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments, provided appropriate accommodations, used assessment data to guide instruction, interpreted results to families, and used performance-based task assessments.

Figure 4. REDO participants’ self-reported increases in their use of assessment practices for English learner students



Source: Education Northwest analysis of REDO survey data. See the [full report](#) for complete data and outcomes.

REDO's Impact on Students

In addition to using surveys to evaluate REDO's impact on teachers' knowledge, confidence, and practices, we also looked at the program's impact on students' English language proficiency and achievement in English language arts.

Challenges and limitations

In general, it can be challenging to evaluate the impact of teacher professional development programs. Teachers who choose to participate are likely different from their peers, making it difficult to distinguish whether changes in outcomes result from a program like REDO or another factor. For example, teachers may be especially invested because they have many English learner students in their classrooms, or may be motivated because they are former English learners themselves and feel passionate about supporting these students.

To determine whether participation in REDO had an impact on student outcomes and to meet the Department of Education's rigorous [What Works Clearinghouse standards](#) for research, we used statistical methods to find a comparison group of teachers and students who were very similar to REDO teachers and students but did not participate in the program. We identified a group of comparison teachers in REDO school districts who appeared likely to enroll in REDO and then selected a subset of their students who were statistically indistinguishable from REDO students.

In addition, there were challenges in measuring REDO's student impact because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Idaho districts were not required to administer state assessments 2019-20 and 2020-21 because of the pandemic. As a result, we only have reliable assessment data for 2018-19—the first year of post-REDO teaching for cohort 1 participants.

Promising impact on English language arts

The data we do have for 2018-19 shows that teachers' participation in **REDO had promising impact on English learner students' English language arts assessment outcomes, raising scores by 6 percentile points**. This is equivalent to moving from the 50th to the 56th percentile. However, while promising, this result is only marginally statistically significant. Because of this limitation, we encourage caution in considering these results. We are confident that REDO students outperformed their peers on the English language arts assessment. However, because of the small numbers of students, we cannot be confident that this positive outcome was related to participation in REDO.

Sustaining the Impact

After completing REDO, participants reported **positive changes in their use of and confidence in 49 of 50 practices and competencies** focused on culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Participants reported the largest changes in their knowledge and confidence as effective teachers and advocates for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Will REDO participants sustain these changes long-term? It's hard to say. However, we do know that three years later, **cohort 1 and 2 participants are sustaining many REDO instructional practices.**

Fewer participants used the practices as often or felt the same confidence as they did upon program completion. However, participants report that they continue to feel knowledgeable and confident in more than half of the practices or competencies they learned in REDO, suggesting that teachers are indeed continuing to use them.

These findings suggest that **REDO has met its goals** to increase the pool of highly qualified, culturally responsive teachers in Idaho and increase their use and knowledge of evidence-based practices to improve culturally and linguistically diverse students' academic progress, and engagement with parents, families, and communities.