



COLORADO
Department of Education

MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS WITH EDUCATIONAL DISABILITIES WEBINAR SERIES

*Voices from the Intersection of Language, Literacy,
Culture, & Opportunity*

SAVE THE DATE

The Offices of Special Education and Elementary Literacy and School Readiness proudly invite you to join the **2025-26 Webinar Series: Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities**. This engaging series brings together a star-studded lineup of national and Colorado-based researchers and practitioners who are leading the field with practical, student-centered approaches.

Participants will gain fresh insights into this often-overlooked intersectional population, explore evidence-based literacy strategies to strengthen instruction, and consider thoughtful adjustments to referral, evaluation, and programming decision-making.

For each webinar, attendees will receive 1 hour of Special Education recertification credit, which satisfies part of the new renewal requirements under Colorado HB 21-1104. Space is limited, so reserve your spot today!

This series is for Special Education teams, including ELD Teachers, Literacy Specialists, Directors, and Coordinators in Special Education and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education.



JOIN US ON THESE DATES FROM 8:30 AM TO 9:30 AM!

August 21, 2025
September 4, 2025
September 25, 2025
October 22, 2025
October 30, 2025
November 20, 2025
December 11, 2025
February 19, 2026
March 5, 2026

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER OR
SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW!**



MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS WITH EDUCATIONAL DISABILITIES WEBINAR SERIES

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SPEAKERS + SESSIONS

This webinar series is FREE to attend!
Please register in advance by [clicking here.](#)



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DR. CLAUDIA RINALDI

August 21, 2025 8:30 am to 9:30 am

“Ensuring Access, Building Ownership: Supporting Multilingual Students with Diverse Needs in MTSS”



Join us to explore how schools can ensure access and foster student ownership for Multilingual Learners within an MTSS framework. This webinar will share strategies to identify and support diverse needs while building inclusive, culturally responsive systems.

About the Speaker: Claudia Rinaldi, Ph.D., is a Professor of Education and Dean of Curricular Integration at Lasell University. A nationally recognized scholar and educator, her research focuses on implementing the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in urban schools, particularly for English learners, as well as advancing teacher preparation in bilingual special education and strengthening diversity in the teacher workforce.

Dr. Rinaldi is the author of *Practical Ways to Engage All Struggling Readers* and has published widely in peer-reviewed journals. She directs Lasell's graduate certificate program in Teaching Bilingual Students with Disabilities and leads Pathways to Teacher Diversity, a college mentoring initiative aimed at increasing representation in the education field.

Her leadership extends beyond the university through service on the board of the Council for Exceptional Children, advisory roles with the National Center for Learning Disabilities and Understood.org, and technical review contributions to the National Center for Intensive Interventions. Dr. Rinaldi also served as a thought leader on the needs of English learners with disabilities for the National Center for Systemic Improvement and a presenter for the MA webinar on Raising the Bar for Dyslexia Screener for English Learners for the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education among many others.

A passionate advocate for equity in education, Dr. Rinaldi believes in preparing teacher leaders who champion the success of all students—regardless of language, culture, disability, or socioeconomic status—both in the U.S. and globally.

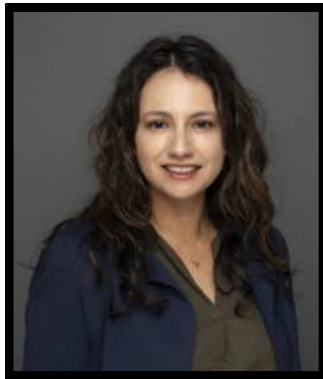
[Link to Dr. Rinaldi's webpage via Lasell University](#)



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DR. JEANNETTE MANCILLA-MARTINEZ

September 4, 2025 8:30 am to 9:30 am

“The Representation of Multilingual Learners with Specific Learning Disabilities in Special Education: Examining Patterns and Exploring Possibilities”

English remains the predominant language of instruction for most U.S. students, including for the large and growing population of Multilingual Learners (MLs). However, MLs come from homes in which a language(s) other than only English is used.

This population of learners is designated by schools as coming from a non-English language background, independent of their academic English language proficiency. A subset of MLs—referred to as English learners [(MLs) in Colorado]—are formally identified as being in the process of acquiring academic English language proficiency.

Given that reading is language-based, MLs in general and ELs in particular have been reported to be over- and under-represented in special education, particularly in the high-incidence category of specific learning disabilities (SLD). I discuss the representation of students with SLD by language status, attending to the importance and implications of assessment considerations for evaluating and supporting language and reading achievement and development among multilingual learners.

About the Speaker: Jeannette Mancilla-Martinez is an Associate Professor in the Special Education Department, as well as Associate Dean of Graduate Education for Peabody College. She holds an M.Ed. and Ed.D. in language and literacy from Harvard University, as well as a B.A. in liberal studies from Mount Saint Mary's College. Jeannette's program of research is focused on advancing students' language and reading comprehension outcomes. The studies she is engaged in build on her earlier research in reading development and focus on the central role of supporting students' language comprehension to mitigate later reading comprehension difficulties. Jeannette was appointed to the National Assessment of Education Progress Standing Committee on Reading in 2017 and serves on the Early Literacy Advisory Council for the Tennessee Department of Education.

The LLD research group is a team of educational researchers and practitioners dedicated to understanding and supporting elementary school students' language and literacy development. We collaborate with experts through research-practitioner partnerships with local schools, community-based language development programs, and state-level partnerships with the Tennessee Educational Research Alliance. Our work aims to inform research, practice, and policy efforts to help students become independent, successful learners.

[Link to Dr. Mancilla-Martinez's webpage via Vanderbilt University](#)



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DR. AMY FERRELL

September 25, 2025 8:30 am to 9:30 am

“Cultural Intersectionality and Literacy”

This webinar will focus on evidence-based practices that honor the cultural nature of learning for students with learning disabilities. We will explore how culture acts as the vehicle for learning and how to capitalize on the strengths of students with dyslexia and other language-based specific learning disabilities. Attendees will learn about strategies for designing literacy instruction that leverages students' cultural practices.

About the Speaker: Dr. Amy Ferrell began working with people with disabilities as a care provider in 1999. She was a special educator for six years before entering academia, and she now teaches and studies literacy, language, and community in special education. Her scholarship situates disability research in social, cultural, historical, racial, linguistic, and political contexts. She explores critical literacy approaches in special education, as well as collaborative and communal models of learning.

[Link to Dr. Ferrell's webpage via University of Colorado Denver](#)



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DR. BRYN HARRIS

October 22, 2025 8:30 am to 9:30 am

***“Building from Asset-Based Frameworks to Affirming
Systems of Support”***



In recent years, educators and school professionals have increasingly recognized the importance of asset-based frameworks in highlighting the strengths of multilingual learners and their families. This webinar will offer practical guidance on transitioning from conceptual understanding to actionable strategies that foster affirming, inclusive environments for children with disabilities. Affirming schools not only validate the lived experiences of these children, but also embrace their linguistic and cultural assets. Participants will explore approaches for cultivating truly affirming school climates that are welcoming, inclusive, and aligned with best practices for supporting multilingual learners with disabilities.

About the Speaker: Bryn Harris, PhD, is a Professor in the School Psychology doctoral program in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. She has a secondary appointment in the Department of Pediatrics (Developmental Pediatrics) at the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus. Her primary research interests include the psychological assessment of bilingual learners, culturally and linguistically responsive assessment of autism spectrum disorder, health disparities among children with autism spectrum disorder, and improving mental health access and opportunity within traditionally underserved populations. Dr. Harris is the director and founder of the bilingual school psychology program at the University of Colorado Denver. She is also a bilingual (Spanish) licensed psychologist and nationally certified school psychologist. Dr. Harris practices as a bilingual school psychologist part-time in Denver Public Schools. She also provides coaching to districts across the state pertaining to issues of disparities and advancing inclusive school mental health practices for the Colorado Department of Education.

[Link to Dr. Harris' webpage via University of Colorado Denver](#)



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DR. SARA KANGAS

October 30, 2025 8:30 am to 9:30 am

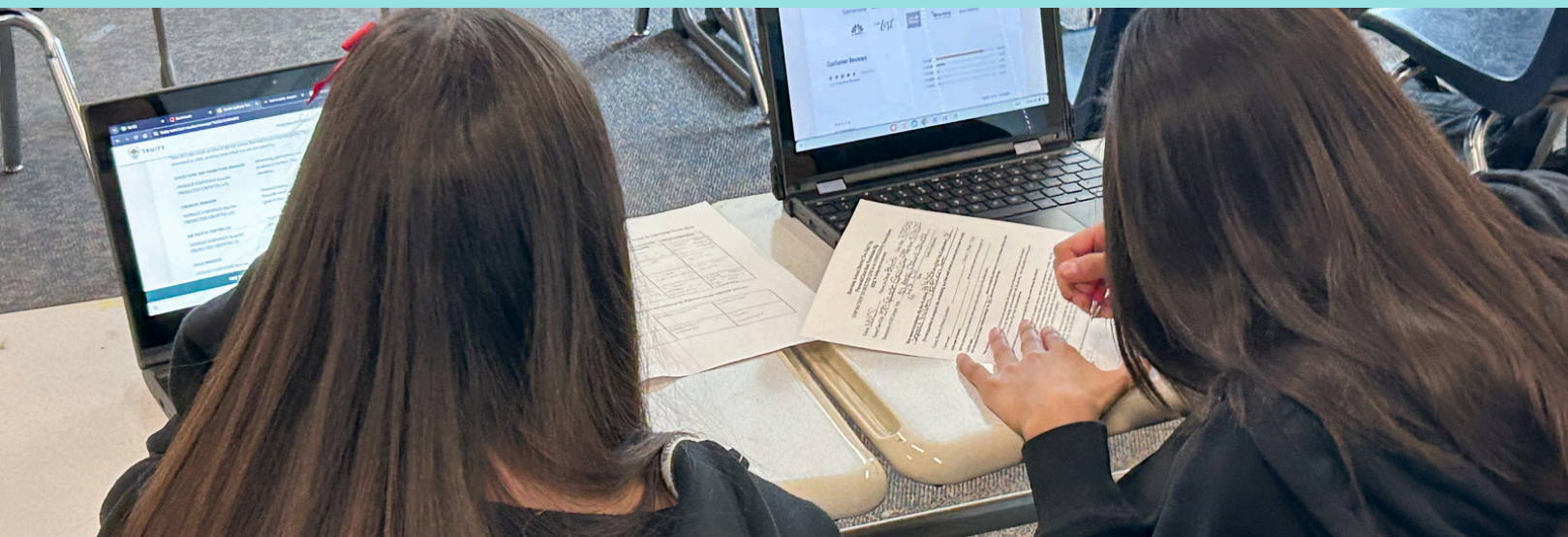
*“Sound Data Interpretation and Decision-Making for
Multilingual Learners with Disabilities”*



Data at the intersection of multilingualism and disability are complicated, at best and inclusive, at worst. For this reason, making decisions for Multilingual Learners (MLs) with disabilities based on evidence is more complex than just looking at data. In response to these challenges, this webinar offers a framework for educators to utilize to interpret and use data soundly—meaning, logically and validly—during high-stakes decisions for MLs with disabilities.

About the Speaker: Sara E.N. Kangas, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the College of Education at Lehigh University. Her research explores the everyday beliefs, conditions, and policies in K–12 education that shape the learning opportunities of multilingual learners (MLs) with disabilities. For her work in this intersection, she has received the James E. Alatis Prize from the TIRF Foundation and the Wilga Rivers Award from the American Association for Applied Linguistics. Kangas’ research has been funded by the Spencer Foundation and has been published in scholarly venues such as *American Educational Research Journal*, *Educational Researcher*, *The Journal of Special Education*, and *TESOL Quarterly*, among other journals.

[Link to Dr. Kangas’ webpage via Lehigh University](#)



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DR. LINDSAY ROMANO

November 20, 2025 8:30 am to 9:30 am

“Exploring Strategies for Successful Postsecondary Transition for Multilingual Learners with Disabilities”



Transition goal setting and planning are legally mandated supports in high school for students receiving special education services. For Multilingual Learners (MLs) with disabilities, these supports often fail to integrate students' language and learner identities. In this webinar, we will explore various barriers and facilitators to postsecondary transition for MLs with disabilities. We will explore practical strategies for implementing transition supports that build from multilingual students' strengths and that encourage self-determination as they plan for the future.

About the Speaker: Lindsay Romano is an Assistant Professor in Bilingual Special Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her research examines how systemic oppressions, such as racism, ableism, and linguicism, impact the educational trajectories and postsecondary outcomes of secondary students experiencing multiple marginalizations. She is particularly interested in how teachers play a role in perpetuating/disrupting inequities in their instruction and how critical and contemplative pedagogies may be used as tools for social justice in the classroom.



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DR. HOLLY PORTER

December 11, 2025 8:30 am to 9:30 am

“Designing Inclusive Programming: Co-Teaching and Supports for Multilingual Learners with Disabilities”

This webinar will explore how to ensure Multilingual Learners with disabilities have full access to both special education services and English language development supports. Participants will examine key programming considerations and learn essential components of effective co-teaching, including joint planning, shared instruction, and collaborative assessment. Practical strategies will be provided to support inclusive, integrated service delivery that meets the needs of dually identified students.

About the Speaker: Dr. Holly Porter is an educational expert in the areas of multilingual learners and students with disabilities. She has more than 29 years of specialized experience in the field of education and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish: Bilingual/Bicultural Elementary Education, a Master of Arts degree in Special Education: Moderate Needs with an endorsement in Deaf Education, an Educational Specialist degree in educational leadership, and a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership, all from the University of Northern Colorado.

Dr. Porter has served in several Colorado school districts as well as at the Colorado Department of Education. She has been an adjunct professor for Regis University, University of Colorado, University of Northern Colorado, and Adams State University. Dr. Porter recently received recognition as the Language Culture and Equity Director of the Year for the State of Colorado, and received the Colorado Association of School Executive’s Distinguished Service Award.

[Link to webpage](#)



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DRA. TANIA HOGAN

DRA. DEENA GUMINA

February 19, 2026 8:30 am to 9:30 am

“Translanguaging as a Tool for Equity: Supporting Dually Identified Learners”



Translanguaging is introduced as a pedagogical approach to more equitably serve dually identified students. Participants will explore how to meaningfully incorporate students' home languages into IEP-aligned instruction, challenge monolingual norms, and foster inclusive, asset-based learning environments. Classroom-based examples in reading, writing and oral language instruction will illustrate how translanguaging bridges language development and disability support in meaningful, practical ways.

About Dra. Hogan: Dra. Tania Hogan is the Executive Director of The BUENO Center for Multicultural Education in the School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. She leads with a justice-centered approach that recognizes bilingualism not just as an academic strength, but as a source of identity, resilience, and cultural wealth. A former multilingual learner from Acapulco, Mexico, Dra. Hogan advances bilingual education as a transformative force that centers and celebrates the brilliance of Latine, immigrant, and multilingual learners.

[Link to Dra. Hogan's webpage via University of Colorado Boulder](#)

About Dra. Gumina: Dr. Deena Gumina is an Assistant Teaching Professor in Equity, Bilingualism, and Biliteracy in the School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder and a former bilingual elementary school teacher. She teaches courses on language acquisition, family engagement and methods for teaching multilingual learners. Dr. Gumina's research and teaching interests include bilingual education, teacher education and advocacy, and educational policy.

[Link to Dra. Gumina's webpage via University of Colorado Boulder](#)



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DR. ALISON BOARDMAN

March 5, 2026 8:30 am to 9:30 am

“From Evidence to Action: Creating Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining IEPs”

Participants will review key elements for collecting a comprehensive body of evidence to support multilingual learners in the IEP process. For students who qualify for special education, we'll explore how to use the body of evidence to design individualized supports and accommodations that reflect students' unique needs. This session will also provide practical strategies for attending to students' intersectional identities within the IEP document - ensuring the plan is meaningful for families, educators and service providers.

About the Speaker: Dr. Alison Gould Boardman is an Associate Professor in Equity, Bilingualism, & Biliteracy in the School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder and a former special education teacher. She teaches courses on disability and culturally and linguistically sustaining assessment practices. Her current research explores project-based learning with students with disabilities and student-led collaboration in inclusive classrooms.

[Link to Dr. Boardman's webpage via University of Colorado Boulder](#)



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