

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

ExceleRate® Illinois Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice

Why should I go for the Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice?

With the growing diversity among the youngest learners in the state of Illinois, working towards the Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice will allow you to:

- Deepen the staff's expertise by broadening their knowledge of tools, strategies and resources for supporting young dual language learners and their families.
- Demonstrate that your site has implemented high quality practices for all the diverse learners in your program.
- Develop a professional community of practice that will continue into the future.

Why should I utilize the supports to go for this Award?

Participation in the LCExcel Project will provide your site access to online modules that will include articles, resource materials, videos, presentations, interactive activities, and exemplars for your portfolios, as well as feedback from coaches, site visits tailored to fit your needs and collaboration with other practitioners.

Participating in the LCExcel Project can help your site to organize and prepare your application for the Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice.

Does each room at a site have to have a fully qualified bilingual teacher in order to apply for the Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice?

Each Preschool For All site that has 20 or more children who speak the same home language must have a certified Early Childhood teacher with a bilingual endorsement, in order to serve the eligible children. When a site does not have the appropriate staff, a written plan that addresses the methods for meeting the needs of the children must be developed. In addition, the plan must outline how the site will be compliant by 2016.

For other preschool sites where the majority of children speak a single language other than English at home, at least one member of every teaching team that is serving eligible children must be proficient in the home language and at least one must have English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual training.

A site that is compliant with the criteria listed above is eligible for the Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice.

Are sites that have multilingual populations eligible to apply for the Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice?

Sites that serve children and families who speak a variety of different home languages and varieties of English are encouraged to apply for this Award of Excellence. During the process of self study, sites will be able to enrich their efforts to include the culture and home languages of all the children whether bilingual/bicultural staff are available or not in the classroom. These multilingual sites will also have the opportunity to examine the use of ESL strategies by all direct service providers who do not share the home language of the children.

Can my site have access to LC Excel support even if we are out of the geographic area for the grant?

While the geographic scope of this two-year grant is limited to sites in Lake, DuPage, Winnebago, Cook (excluding Chicago), Kane, McHenry, Kendall and Will counties, many of the online supports and materials will be made available to programs outside of these regions.

Does every classroom at the site have to have dual language learners (DLLs)?

No. There are a variety of reasons why all classrooms may not have DLLs. Some sites may cluster children in a few rooms with Bilingual/ESL certified staff or may not have sufficient numbers to enroll DLLs in every room. Still other sites may have culturally diverse children who do not speak a second language. In any case, each classroom in a site that applies will need to address the 13 standards required by this Award of Excellence.

Can sites that do not have dual language learners (DLLs) apply?

Yes. Linguistic and cultural diversity can be interpreted broadly to include many groups of children and their families, especially if your program does not have dual language learners (DLLs). DLLs are one group of children that can be considered linguistically and culturally diverse. Children who speak varieties of English can also be considered linguistically and culturally diverse.

Can sites with some self-contained special education classrooms and sites with only self-contained special education classrooms apply?

Yes. Sites that serve young, exceptional learners must also create linguistically and culturally appropriate learning environments, assessment and instructional practices for their diverse learners and families.

All programs that serve exceptional children must seek to make their assessment procedures more linguistically and culturally responsive so that they do not over or under identify young DLLs as having disabilities whether in self contained or inclusive settings.

Who are linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families?

Linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families can be characterized by both their diversity and their homogeneity. The majority of young children who are exposed to two languages in the US are exposed to Spanish but 93 additional languages are being used in the US according to the 2000 census data. Language characteristics within this group can vary widely. Some children live in households where the home language or dialect is spoken exclusively while others use two languages or dialects from birth; others may learn 3 languages simultaneously. Additional characteristics that differentiate individuals and their families include immigrant circumstances, extended family cohesion, community characteristics, geographic provenance, economic challenges, levels of educational achievement, cultural history, and identity. For this Award of Excellence, a broad definition is used to identify linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families.

How long will it take me to apply for this award using supports?

It is anticipated that a typical program will take approximately one year to complete the process with supports. Timeframes may vary based on individual site characteristics.

What kind of resources can the supports offer?

A private online space will be provided for each site that will include an area that your staff can use to conduct a self assessment, develop your practices, ask questions, receive specific feedback, and document your practices for your portfolio. In addition, each site will have a coach assigned that will provide both online and on-site assistance that is tailored to your individual needs. There will also be a site specifically for LCExcel cohort awardees to share their ideas and resources and ask each other questions.

Where are supports located geographically?

While Gold Circle of Quality programs all across Illinois are eligible to apply for the Award of Excellence, sites in Kane, Lake, DuPage, Kendall, McHenry, Cook (excluding Chicago), Will and Winnebago counties are eligible to apply for the full supports through LCExcel. Once accepted into a cohort, sites will access the majority of the supports in an online format. With a private login, programs can access LCExcel online modules, resources, and supports in a self-paced manner. Sites outside of the Project LCExcel service area will also have access to the online module materials, and should visit LCExcel.com to get started.

What is the time commitment to enroll in supports?

While each site will vary, it is anticipated that a team will meet at least monthly to assess current practices, review modules, implement practices, and document practices. In addition, team members will participate in online discussion groups, communicate with coaches, host two coaching site visits, and respond to ongoing feedback of their Project LCExcel portfolio.