



ESOL Service Provision Guidelines for Dual Language Learners in Pre-K

Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are young children who are in the process of learning two languages. While still developing their primary language, they are simultaneously acquiring an additional language. DLLs in pre-Kindergarten programs thrive when educators have high expectations for their achievement, leverage their linguistic and cultural assets, and support them with high-quality, individualized learning opportunities. Being bilingual or multilingual is a cognitive benefit to be celebrated. Research overwhelmingly shows that speaking more than one language is not only associated with increased ability to concentrate, solve problems, and focus, bilingual children outperform monolingual children in measures of literacy and math.

Source: <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/ece-priorities/dual-language-learners/>

It is important to conduct screening and evaluations in both English and the primary/home language with the use of an interpreter to better determine the child's developmental abilities. Be aware of different written language systems (e.g. Arabic).

Best practices in instructional planning for DLLs in pre-Kindergarten include differentiating and personalizing lessons, activities, home assignments, centers, materials, and read-alouds, and developing gross and fine motor skills. Emergent culturally and linguistically diverse learners also need differentiation based on their primary/home languages. Pre-K screenings, family interviews, child interviews and observations support teachers in their planning by providing: 1) rich information about the child's language development; 2) guidelines to interpret baseline data from screenings; 3) a plan for partnering with their families to support learning at home.

Ten Research-Based Guiding Principles Serving the Needs of DLLs*

1. The education of English learners is enhanced when preschool programs and families form meaningful partnerships.
2. Children benefit when their teachers understand cultural differences in language use and incorporate them into the daily routine.
3. Successful practices promote shared experiences in which language is used as a meaningful tool to communicate interests, ideas, and emotions.
4. Language development and learning are promoted when preschool teachers and children creatively and interactively use language.
5. Experimenting with the use, form, purpose, and intent of the first and second languages leads to growth in acquiring the second language.
6. Continued use and development of the child's primary/home language will benefit the child as he or she acquires English.
7. Code switching is a normal part of language development for many bilingual children.

8. Coordination and collaboration among families, teachers, and specialists become crucial in supporting the language and literacy development of children with disabilities and other special needs.
9. Engaging in multiple literacy practices, such as reading books, singing songs, and reciting poetry, is part of the daily life of many families.
10. Offering a variety of opportunities for children to explore written materials and their meanings as well as the sounds of spoken language through rhyme and alliteration builds the language and literacy skills of preschool English learners.

*Adapted from *Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning* [California Department of Education, Resource Guide](#)

Pre-K teachers should strive to integrate children's home languages strategically to support comprehension, engagement, scaffolding, practice, assessment, and extending. From the physical environment to the daily schedule, the teacher models the usefulness of the home language for learning and promotes a positive perspective of multilingualism and multiculturalism. It begins with understanding that the development of the primary/home language supports progress in the acquisition of English and communicating to children and their families that their primary/home languages and cultural perspectives are welcome at school. Cultural norms of school and the roles of families and teachers may be different. Reciprocal intercultural communication supports the partnership between schools and families in the education of the child.

Children who are just starting to learn the English language, or children with limited vocabularies, need many opportunities to use language in conversation, look at illustrations and written language in books, and listen to others speak and read aloud. Listening to books with pictures and print read aloud on CDs or tapes may enhance children's understanding and learning, particularly if discussion with peers or an adult is included. The speaking and listening abilities of these children in particular should be closely observed and assessed on an ongoing basis during classroom activities. The "Classroom Practices and Strategies" listed for children with disabilities are also relevant for DLLs, and a non-exhaustive list of suggestions for teaching English learners is below.

- Read aloud and add books to the class library in languages represented in the classroom as well as bilingual books for children who are English learners.
- Be aware of diverse non-verbal social cues, which differ from culture to culture.
- Team teach with a parent/guardian or staff member who speak a child's/children's primary/home language.
- Use staff, parents and/or older children as interpreters.
- Take advantage of cognate words in English and other languages.
- Assist children in composing messages.
- Offer pictures from books to retell, and then help children with dictation.

- Have the child choose a picture from the story, then assist him/her to write a few words to retell the event in the picture.
- Increase background knowledge of subject by adding books and pictures of the subject.
- Use words in children’s primary/home language if necessary.
- Organize relevant field trips to strengthen understanding of a topic.
- Offer pictures of a topic or experiences to help children recall an event.
- Respect the idea that when children are learning English as a second language, they may need to remain silent as they gradually learn about the sounds and conventions of spoken English.
- When possible, teaching staff may learn the specific sounds in English that do not occur in a child’s primary/home language (e.g., the differences in pronunciation of *b* and *v* in spoken English and Spanish). Once children learn sound-symbol relations, they may practice identifying words, decoding simple texts, and writing in English.
- Provide opportunities (and support) for children to talk with one another – informal conversations can be a form of peer tutoring and have been shown to be a motivator for young children learning a second language.
- Build recognition of word families (e.g., *-at* words such as *bat, mat, rat*). Use a limited set of letters to build as many familiar words as possible so children gain fluency quickly and learn about written letters and how they relate to sound patterns.
- Build recognition of high-frequency words whenever possible (e.g., *the, of, are, you*) through listening, reading, and writing. A “word wall” that associates words with meaningful objects and actions may be helpful. This kind of resource can be constructed over time by writing new words on paper and alphabetizing them on a bulletin board.
- Build syntactic and semantic awareness. Young children’s attempts to understand any language result in incorrect grammar at first in the attempt to create order and generalize rules (e.g., “I *rided* to the store”). Adults can model proper usage and syntax, and ask children whether words make sense in a sentence rather than just pointing out and correcting errors.
- Pair English learners with native English speakers. Many times children can understand each other before they are understood by adults.
- Pair a child with a peer speaking the same language.
- Use a recording, video or a person who speaks the child’s language to introduce a rhyme, song or poem with a beat to help children respond to rhythm and/or rhymes. *Note that some languages do not include rhyme.
- Define/reinforce and emphasize words and events in stories and illustrations from informational books.

There are many ways to integrate primary/home languages into the English language classroom. Once teachers begin to integrate the primary/home language in their lessons and activities, the children themselves may suggest ideas. Include these strategies to support a [Planned Language Approach](#):

- Coordinate with families to have them read translations of familiar classroom books at home.

- Encourage family members to conduct at-home assignments in the primary/home language.
- Invite community members to read books in multiple languages.
- Introduce translations of target vocabulary, teaching the English word alongside the word in the primary/home languages.
- Play songs and narrations in the primary/home languages.
- Label objects in the classroom in both English and the primary/home languages. Learn the translation of these objects from families or from translation software.
- Sing in multiple languages.
- Incorporate in the classroom familiar objects (i.e. instruments, household items, clothing, toys, etc.) from children's countries and cultures and encourage children to name and use them.
- Encourage counting in multiple languages.
- Learn and use key phrases in the primary/home languages of the children.
- Encourage children to speak to classmates who share their language.
- Develop a thorough selection of visual aids labeled in multiple languages.
- Use audio and video resources in multiple languages.
- Create a multilingual library.
- Invite community members to transcribe children's narrations on their drawings.
- Record children telling stories in their primary/home language and ask them to translate their stories into English.
- Display children's work in multiple languages.

As teachers check for understanding or assess learning, it may be necessary to partner with staff, community members, or parent volunteers fluent in the children's primary/home languages. This sets a good example of how early childhood professionals value multilingualism -- parents or guardians work together to use diverse language resources on behalf of the children.

Transition to Kindergarten

Designing a thoughtful transition from pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten is a vital aspect of early childhood education, predicated on good communication between the early childhood setting and the elementary school. The pre-Kindergarten teacher and staff will have a wealth of knowledge about a child's progress, in the primary/home language as well as English, to share with a future Kindergarten teacher. Student information including a language profile, social history, results from screenings, notes from interviews, and any anecdotal records a teacher considers important should be maintained in the student records that accompany the child to Kindergarten. Engaging families is also essential to ensuring an effective transition for the child and teacher, as their participation in their child's education is one of the greatest factors in their child's success.

Resources:

WIDA Early Years

<https://wida.wisc.edu/memberships/early-years>

NAEYC Dual Language Learners

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/dual-language-learners>

Young Dual Language Learners with Disabilities

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dll/#content>

Opportunities and Policies for Young Dual Language Learners

<https://nieer.org/policy-issue/opportunities-policies-for-young-dual-language-learners>

Office of Head Start Dual Language Learners Toolkit

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/dual-language-learners-toolkit>

¡Colorín Colorado! A bilingual site for educators and families of English language learners

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/home-language-english-language-learners-most-valuable-resource>