

Maine DOE English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Pre-K Service Provision Guidelines

Teachers and caregivers can use a wide variety of instructional strategies, throughout the pre-K day, to promote English language development for young multilingual learners, even when they are not familiar with the child's primary/home language. Multilingual children, commonly referred to as dual language learners or DLLs, are exposed to multiple languages in their homes, communities, and/or early care and education settings, and they develop and use language in dynamic ways.

Best practices in instructional planning for pre-Kindergarten include differentiating and personalizing lessons, activities, home assignments, centers, materials, and read-alouds. Culturally and linguistically diverse learners also need differentiation based on their primary/home languages, pre-K screening results, family interviews, child interviews, and observations. These various sources support teachers in their planning by providing: 1) rich information about the child's language development; 2) guidelines to interpret baseline data from screenings; and 3) opportunities for partnering with their families to support learning at home.

The Maine Department of Education recommends the [WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development](#) as the foundation of pre-K ESOL programming.

WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development

1. Multilingual children are learning more than one language at the same time and adjust the use of their languages to different sociocultural contexts.
2. Multilingual children learn language and culture through their experiences at home, in the community, and in early care and education.
3. The languages and language varieties used by multilingual children and their families are valuable resources to be considered and incorporated into early care and education and into everyday routines and activities.
4. Multilingual children benefit from continuous home language development at all levels of English language development.
5. Multilingual children follow different paths for language development than monolingual children.
6. Multilingual children follow unique paths of language development according to their exposure to and opportunities for using their multiple languages.
7. Multilingual children approach learning language in different ways, with each child bringing a unique set of attitudes, habits, and preferences for language use.
8. Multilingual children, like other children, develop language through play-based activities that invite rich language interaction.
9. Multilingual children are developing language and literacy at the same time that they are also developing physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally.
10. Multilingual children's development of social and developmentally appropriate academic language is a complex and long-term process.

Source, including research citations: <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Guiding-Principles-of-Early-ELD.pdf>

Pre-K teachers should strive to integrate children's primary/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 primary/home language for learning and promotes a positive perspective towards multilingualism and multiculturalism. This begins with communicating to children and their families that their primary/home languages are welcome at school. There are many ways to integrate primary/home languages into lessons and activities. Once teachers begin to integrate them, the children themselves may suggest ideas. See [this resource](#) from the US Department of Health and Human Services for strategies to support a Planned Language Approach.

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

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. Consider implementing the following strategies to support DLLs.

Strategies for Working with Dual Language Learners

Cultural Considerations

- Be aware of diverse non-verbal social cues, which differ from culture to culture.
- 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
- Coordinate with families to have them read translations of familiar classroom books at home.
- Encourage family members to conduct at-home assignments in the 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 home languages.
- Play songs and narrations in the home languages.
- Label objects in the classroom in both English and the home languages. Learn the translation of these objects from families or from translation software.
- 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 language learners.

Linguistic Considerations

- Respect the idea that when children are acquiring a new 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 native 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.

- 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 language learners with native English speakers. Many times children can understand each other before they are understood by adults.

Oral Language Development

- Take advantage of cognate words in English and other languages.
- Offer pictures from books to retell,
- 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.
- 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.
- Sing in multiple languages.

Written Language Development

- 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.
- When possible, teaching staff may learn the specific sounds in English that do not occur in a child’s native language (e.g., the differences in pronunciation of *b* and *v* in spoken language).

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. The Kindergarten teacher will benefit from having this information before meeting the student and their family. Student information would include:

- a language profile
- a social history
- results from screenings
- notes from interviews
- any anecdotal records a teacher considers important should be maintained in the student record that accompanies the child to Kindergarten.

An achievement gap between English learners and their English-speaking peers has been an on-going concern. Differences in foundational language and literacy skills have created a disadvantage in reaching achievement parity by the time young learners are entering Kindergarten (Miller & Garcia, 2008).

Recent research has shown that high-quality early childhood education programs, implemented by highly qualified and trained staff, can have a significant impact on children's later academic achievement (Barnett, 2008). Early childhood programs that provide research-based, age-appropriate instruction in early language and literacy skills can ensure that English language learners enter school equipped with the tools they need to be successful learners in kindergarten and beyond (Ballantyne et al., 2008).

If you would like support in implementing high-quality pre-K programs for DLLs, please contact April Perkins at april.perkins@maine.gov.

Resources and References

[Colorín Colorado: 8 Strategies Preschool ELLs Language and Literacy Development](#)

[National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs: Dual Language Learners in the Early Years: Getting Ready to Succeed in School](#)

[National Institute for Early Education Research: Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications](#)

[US Department of Health and Human Services: Specific Strategies to Support Dual Language Learners when Adults do not Speak their Language](#)

[WIDA Early Years](#)

Ballantyne, K. G., Sanderman, A. R., & McLaughlin, N. (2008). Dual language learners in the early years: Getting ready to succeed in school. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition.

Barnett, W. S. (2008). Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications. Retrieved 6/3/2009, from <http://nieer.org/resources/research/PreschoolLastingEffects.pdf>

Miller, L. S., & Garcia, E. E. (2008). A reading-focused early childhood education research and strategy development agenda for African Americans and Hispanics at all social class levels who are English speakers or English language learners. Phoenix: Arizona State University, Office of the Vice President for Education Partnerships.