ECE Dual Language Learner Essential Competencies for Working with Dual Language Learners

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August 2019

The California Department of Education and First 5 California in their publication entitled *California Early Childhood Educator Competencies* (2018) has clearly articulated a set of ECE Competencies in 12 Areas that address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that early childhood educators are expected to have. One of the Competency Areas is Dual Language Development. This Competency Area identifies and defines four Performance Areas that comprise the knowledge and skills necessary to support the optimal development of dual language learners (DLLs): 1) Dual language program models and strategies; 2) Development of the home language and of English; 3) Observation and assessment of young dual language learners, and 4) Relationships with families of dual language learners. As a starting point for this DLL analysis, we recognize and affirm the comprehensive content represented in the ECE Competencies and do not intend to duplicate or replace them. This analysis is intended to highlight additional essential areas and topics discussed in related documents that will require focused attention in order to meet the needs of California's DLLs.

The reviewed documents include:

> *(1) Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning (2nd Ed.)*
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> *(2) California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 1*
> *(3) California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1*
> *(4) California Preschool Program Guidelines*

In addition, we reviewed the Faculty Initiative Project Instructional Guides relevant to content knowledge and pedagogical practice for DLLs. These DLL-specific ECE teacher competencies will be cross-walked with the Curriculum Alignment Project's Student Learning

Outcomes to assist ECE faculty with the integration of this content within their existing coursework.

What follows is a discussion of additional topics and added specificity to current ECE competencies that are necessary for the effective teaching of preschool DLLs. They are organized within the four performance areas identified by the existing early educator competencies for DLLs. These resources include both CDE publications and other salient information. The additional ECE competencies have been identified through an analysis of the documents listed above and linked to current research findings on effective practices with DLLs. These competencies are bulleted following a discussion of the current relevant research accompanying each Performance Area. The Curriculum Alignment Project's Student Learning Outcomes for their designated coursework will be indexed with this material. Finally, an example of an activity that can be used by faculty to teach the competencies in each Performance Area is provided in Appendix B.

Educator dispositions that positively contribute to the development of Dual Language Learners

Before proceeding to a discussion of the Early Childhood Educator Competencies that are essential to effective pedagogy for Dual Language Learners, there are some key dispositional factors that undergird appropriate instruction.

a) Possess a strengths-based perspective toward DLLs

The goal of the early educator is to promote every child's optimal learning and development (NAEYC, 2019). Given the increasing diversity of the child population, there is an increasing focus on identifying the talents and capabilities of peoples from different cultures who speak different languages. Increasingly, the field is recognizing that child development is a cultural process (Rogoff, Audun, & Callahan, 2018) and has shifted away from viewing differences as deficits but rather as characteristics that merit accommodation and where difference can be a beneficial asset. For example, there is strong evidence that early balanced bilingualism is associated with greater neural density in the prefrontal cortex area of the brain which gives young bilinguals cognitive advantages in executive function skills (Bialystok, 2017). Early educators who believe all children can learn regardless of their background

characteristics, and that the ability to speak more than one language during the early childhood years is a strength that will yield life-long benefits possess an essential dispositional quality to effective teaching and the development of warm and accepting relationships with DLLs.

b) Maintain an openness to DLLs' culture and an understanding of the contexts in which they live

Children's development not only takes place in their familial homes but also is influenced by the broader community context in which they live. Educators working across cultures may find that parents have different priorities for their children's behavior than do educators such as stressing interdependence over early independence in young children (Bornstein, 2012). Differences in goals underlying caregiving practices may become a source of confusion for families and children (Shrivers, Sanders, & Westbrook, 2011). One of the best ways to prevent potential cultural misunderstandings is by initiating and maintaining a dialogue with parents and other family members. It is through dialogue with families about their childrearing beliefs, practices and expectations that educators will be able to integrate culturally responsive practices into their own programmatic goals and objectives (Orosco, & O'Connor, 2014). In order to understand any particular child or family, it is important not to make any assumptions about their specific values and customs, but to actively engage with families to learn about their unique strengths and background and to discover the local community habits and resources.

c) Consistently self-monitor and reflect on how personal beliefs and values interact

Self-reflection is a key to the improvement of pedagogical practice. Self-reflection is a cyclical process in which the educator observes, reflects and applies their understanding (Virmani, & Mangione, 2013) to be more responsive to the needs of their families and children. In the self-reflection process educators should take into account how their own personal background influences their understanding and perceptions. How does their own linguistic and cultural background interact with their perceptions and classroom practices and how open are they to confronting their own bias and possible misperceptions?

Dual Language Development Competency Performance Area:

    1. Dual Language Development Program Models and Strategies

Preschool programs considered to be "high quality" have been linked to multiple positive short- and long-term outcomes (Barnett 2011; Camilli et al. 2010). Longitudinal research shows that children who participate in such programs have higher academic achievement, less grade retention, less involvement in special education, delayed parenthood, higher and consistent employment rates and, in some cases, reduced involvement with the criminal justice system in childhood and adulthood than children who did not participate in these types of programs (Schweinhart et al 2005; Yoshikawa et al., 2014). Effects of these programs are impressive across a range of outcomes: cognitive, social, and school-based (e.g., grade retention). Following on these findings of high quality in general, the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* conclude, "The elements that make up high-quality preschool are important for all children, including young DLLs." (p.81).

High-quality early childhood programs include such features as the following: intentional teaching and support of integrated learning, positive teacher–child and home–school relationships, play as a context for learning, teacher planning time, qualified teachers, appropriate child–teacher ratios, individualized adult–child conversations that promote language and positive relationships, opportunities for children to learn and practice new vocabulary, frequent assessment that documents individual progress and informs instructional planning, and parent engagement. All of those features are important for young DLLs but are not sufficient to close the achievement gap at kindergarten entry or provide the necessary language supports to improve long-term achievement.

The state of California has recommended two basic language models to promote the language, cognitive, and academic development of dual language learners. In order to achieve the goals of early bilingualism, two program approaches have been recommended: 1) Balanced English and Home Language, and 2) English Language Development with Home Language Support.

Current research has identified certain ECE program features and instructional practices that promote school readiness and help reduce the achievement gap between DLLs and their

English-only peers at kindergarten entry. An underlying principle for the effective education of DLLs is that they need both early and systematic exposure to English as well as intentional support for home language maintenance and development (NASEM, 2017). Early balanced and intentional exposure to both languages supports early bilingualism which is important for kindergarten entry and later academic success.

Home language preservation should be considered a priority for all ECE programs. When very young DLL children are exposed to English, they often start to show a preference for speaking English and a reluctance to continue speaking their home language. ECE professionals and program administrators should know that there are developmental risks associated with loss of a child's first language. Several recent studies have also shown that lower levels of English proficiency at kindergarten entry are related to later school and specifically English reading difficulties (Galindo, 2010; Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012). These studies underscore the importance of systematic exposure to English during the preschool years as also being important to future school performance of DLLs.

Oral language skills, including vocabulary skills, listening comprehension, grammatical knowledge, and expressive vocabulary have been found to be especially important for DLLs' future reading abilities. Research with young Spanish-speaking children from low socio-economic backgrounds has found that these young dual language learners might be at risk for delays in their early literacy development due to their weaker oral language abilities (Mancilla-Martinez, & Lesaux, 2011). This research with dual language learners demonstrates the importance of oral language development by providing rich and engaging language environments in both languages, while at the same time focusing on building early literacy skills. In light of this research, it is essential for preschool programs to recognize the critical importance of oral language and vocabulary development for young dual language learners.

An important way that early educators can assist in the development of oral language and vocabulary development is through interactive and dialogic book reading strategies. Through these strategies children develop and expand both their knowledge of concepts and associated vocabulary, recognize a narrative sequence, and begin to understand the meaning of print (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The use of interactive and dialogic book reading techniques has been shown to improve children's oral language capacity (Mol, Bus, & de Jong, 2009) and research evidence shows that strong oral language skills correlate with later reading ability

(Shanahan, & Lonigan, 2013). One of the goals of interactive and dialogic book reading is to develop children's comprehension of a story so that they can re-tell it themselves. This is achieved through repeated book reading, posing who, what and where questions and asking children to recount what happens at the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. Although all children can benefit from interactive and dialogic book reading, DLLs, in particular, benefit as it gives them a chance to practice their emerging language skills in small groups. For DLLs, the interactive book reading techniques need to include an intentional focus on scaffolding from the home language to English. DLLs also benefit from integration of props and additional visuals during book reading as well as the use of books reflective of their culture.

When working with DLLs, there is tendency to solely focus on how best to assist in language and literacy development. However, because language is the medium of communication across all human interactions, it is important that the language of instruction consider the learning needs of DLLs across all early learning content areas. Teaching strategies such as the definition of key vocabulary terms in the home language during book reading is equally applicable to activities centered on numeracy, science and art.

An important context for language development for all children is having ample opportunities to play. Children's physical, social and cognitive development is enhanced during activities where they can explore the physical world around them and interact with others. For DLLs, child directed play not only provides occasions to practice their communication skills to problem-solve and share with others, but also most importantly, play permits DLL children to move at their own pace and engage in activities of interest to them personally. The open-ended nature of play is particularly important for DLLs as it provides authentic activities where children can practice their language skills and build their vocabulary. Unstructured play also allows time and space for DLLs to take a break from concentrating on a second language.

Like all young children, DLLs benefit from opportunities to participate in activities using technology and interactive media. In selecting technology and interactive media, educators need to ensure that the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of DLLs are reflected in the selection of media and technology. There are many media resources that can provide access to children's home language and culture, especially when there are no other ways to obtain such information (NAEYC and FRC, 2012). For example, children can listen to electronic books in their home language, record songs and stories, and create digital stories in their home language and English.

Educators can collaborate with family members and colleagues who speak children's home language to gain access to appropriate interactive media in children's home languages.

Additional Early Childhood Educator Competencies:

- Can articulate the main features of high-quality early childhood education and why it comprises the foundation for high quality ECE for dual language learners
- Understand and can describe the two main program approaches for DLLs: 1) Balanced English and Home Language, and 2) English Language Development with Home Language Support
- Demonstrate the ability to successfully implement at least one program approach
- Know and can articulate the importance implementing specific strategies that support the ongoing development of DLLs first or home language while also intentionally exposing DLLs to English
- Know how to select and implement technology and interactive media with DLLs.

Resources for Dual Language Development Program Models and Strategies

California Preschool Program Guidelines, Chapters 6 and 7, CDE (2015)

California's Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners (2013). CDE

Espinosa, L. *Early Education for Dual Language Learners: Promoting School Readiness and Early School Success.* (2013). MPI

Faculty Initiative Project *Instructional Guide for* the *Preschool English Learners Resource Guide: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy and Learning Second Edition (2009)*

NASEM (2017). *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English.* National Academies Press

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. *Planned Language Approach (PLA).*

Toolkit provides resources for supporting Dual Language Learners
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/ article/planned-language-approach

Resources for Interactive Reading

Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC). *Dual Language Learner Toolkit.*
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/dialogic-reading-supports-children-who-are-dual-language-learners-their

Loyola Marymount University, Center for Equity for English Learners.
online modules reviewing the dialogic reading approach with DLLs
https://sites.google.com/site/lmudoingwhatworksonlinemodules/online-module-1

Dual Language Development Competency Performance Area:

2. **Development of Home Language and English**

An important recent finding from neuroimaging studies of early bi/multilingual development is evidence that all infants, toddlers and preschoolers have a universal human capacity to learn two languages as easily as one (NASEM, 2017). Many educators and the general population believe that young children, especially those from low-income backgrounds or those with special needs should be exposed to only one language, ideally their first or home language, during the ECE years. However, the recent National Academies report states:

"Current evidence suggests that dual language learning does not appear to pose communicative or cognitive challenges, and to the contrary, it may under some conditions enhance the child's cognitive resources." (p.121)

Therefore, we need to re-think our approaches to the education of DLLs that both recognizes their capacity to learn more than one language and views their emerging bilingualism as a strength. In fact, the first 5 years of life are an ideal time for children to become bilingual.

Neurological imaging studies have also shown that experiences with multiple languages during the early childhood years literally shapes the organization of the brain during language processing (NASEM, 2017). Dual language learners when compared to monolinguals, have greater activation in the right hemisphere as well as more brain activity that is distributed across the brain. This early exposure seems to alter the way in which the young brain processes and acquires language in future stages of development and results in some cognitive advantages.

Children learning two languages from birth or within the first three years of life exhibit many similarities and go through the same developmental progression as monolingual children. They babble at the same time, say their first words at the same time, and combine words into phrases at about the same time (Nicoladis, & Montanari, 2016). It is important that educators have a strong knowledge of the typical language milestones in child development as all children, regardless of what language they speak, will follow a universal pattern. However, many DLLs are not systematically exposed to their second language (English) until they enter some type of an educational setting, and they are attempting to master two different languages while also learning basic concepts, the rate and speed at which 'typical' milestones occur will vary.

There are well documented cognitive, academic, linguistic, and social benefits to becoming fully bilingual (NASEM, 2017). Children who are provided with sufficient language supports to become proficient in more than one language early in life demonstrate enhanced linguistic flexibility, more advanced executive function skills, expanded communicative abilities, as well as improved academic outcomes in the long run. However, these benefits can only occur if DLLs achieve relatively high levels of proficiency in both of their languages (Gordon, 2016).

Multiple Pathways to Bilingualism

There are multiple routes to becoming bilingual. In early childhood bilingualism can occur by learning two or more languages at the same time (i.e., simultaneous) and/or learning a second language while continuing to develop a first (or home) language (i.e., sequential or successive) (Office of Head Start, 2009). The characterization of the developmental trajectory of bilingualism as simultaneous or sequential, generally drawn from work with older children, has been criticized for not unpacking the timing of simultaneous bilingualism in early childhood. The confusion lies in the age in which a child is exposed to a second language. Various ages of introduction of the second language have been posited as constituting a simultaneous bilingual (Paradis, Genesee, & Crago, 2018). While the exact definition and implications of the terms simultaneous and sequential bilingualism can be debated, the consensus of most studies is that the earlier children are introduced to a second language, the better are their chances of becoming fully proficient in that language.

Phonological development among monolingual English speakers has been linked to future literacy abilities such as decoding, reading comprehension and spelling (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008), as well as young bilingual children and contributes to their future ability to read (NASEM, 2017). Language development experts have studied the language trajectory of bilingual preschool children in relation to how well they understand the sound system of the language or phonology, their language's grammar or syntax, and the social rules associated with language use or its pragmatics. Research on Spanish-English bilingual preschoolers suggests that they have phonetic inventories that differ in degree of complexity (Fabiano-Smith & Barlow, 2009). In addition, research has demonstrated that bilingual children may have slower rates of acquisition when compared to monolinguals (Fabiano-Smith, & Goldstein, 2010). Although there are many factors that contribute to convergence with English norms, recent research suggests that for elementary students it takes approximately 5 ½ years of English exposure for such convergence to occur (Paradis, & Jia, 2017) while for those DLLs exposed to a second language during the preschool years, most are able to achieve reclassification to proficient by second grade, after approximately 2 ½ years of systematic English exposure (Kim, Curby, & Winsler, 2014). Some research suggests that phonological abilities in preschool children's first language facilitate the transfer to phonological abilities in children's second language (Kuo, & Anderson, 2012). A factor in the transfer of knowledge from one language to another is not only the strength of the child's phonology but also their knowledge of semantics and syntax in the first language. Research has shown that children who show greater ability in their second language have an established foundation in their first language (Rodriquez, Carrasquillo, & Lee, 2014). However, specific skills and proficiency in either language is largely influenced by the amount and quality of language exposure the child has experienced, particularly the patterns of language usage in the home.

It is important to note that throughout the preschool period bilingual children will exhibit code-mixing, that is, the use of two languages when speaking. Research suggests that the developing bilingual child combines languages to fill in gaps in their word knowledge, uses code-mixing to show sensitivity towards the individual with whom they are speaking, and code-mixes to demonstrate differential identities through their word choice (Hoff & Shatz, 2009). Code mixing is a common strategy used to bridge knowledge between two languages, but the rates of code-mixing vary by individual differences in children, such as their language

dominance or risk status (Greene, Pena, & Bedore, 2012). Code-mixing should not be viewed as a deficiency in a child's language development, but rather is evidence of intelligent behavior as children are integrating two language systems.

Influences on the rate of second language acquisition; individual differences

There are a number of important factors that influence the level of bilingualism that a child can achieve. For monolinguals, it has been noted that the degree to which they will learn language is contingent on the quality and quantity of their language input (Hart & Risley, 1995). This presumption of language input holds true for bilingual language development as well. However, in bilingual development, language input is influenced by a host of individual and contextual factors that affect language maintenance and loss (Hoff, 2018). These factors include the age of first exposure, the amount and quality of language input, familial attitudes towards bilingualism, familial use of the primary language, familial socio-demographic factors, such as generational level, and maternal education, and societal context factors, such as the status of the minority language.

For a child to learn a language they must have systematic exposure to it and opportunities to practice speaking it. Research has demonstrated that the relationship between the amount of language input is critical to subsequent language development (Hoff, & Shatz, 2009). However, for bilingual children the role of language input is more complicated and the quantity of exposure in any one language by necessity will be less when compared to monolinguals. Thus, depending on the amount of language exposure in any particular language, bilingual children will demonstrate differential development in each of their languages (Hoff, & Core, 2013).

Whether a child develops bilingually may also depend upon individual factors that emanate from the child. According to Pearson (2007), if the developing bilingual child does use their home language, that action invites further development in the child's second language leading to increased proficiency. However, if the child chooses to use English then it is likely that they will receive less input in their home language leading to decreased proficiency.

Differences between social and academic English

Educators of young children are often asked to promote 'academic English' in their pedagogy. Academic English refers to specific and general vocabulary and grammatical abilities that are needed to access school content (Bailey, & Huang, 2011). Whereas academic English is used within the context of schooling, social language is used in everyday interpersonal communication outside of school tasks. DLLs will acquire social English more readily in order to meet their needs for friendship and peer interaction. Just as it will take some time for monolingual English speakers to acquire academic English, DLLs will need both appropriate quantity and quality of English input to develop academic English. One very important input strategy for this development by early educators is a strong focus on oral language development.

Additional Early Childhood Educator Competencies

- Understand that all young children have the capacity to become bi/multilingual with sufficient language and social supports
- Can discuss the neurological impacts of early bilingualism
- Can describe the stages of second language acquisition
- Know the components of language
- Can describe the interdependence theory of first language influence on second language acquisition
- Understand the multiple paths to bilingualism
- Can identify and differentiate between simultaneous and sequential bilingualism
- Can articulate the influences on rate of second language acquisition; individual differences
- Understand the role of code-switching for DLLs
- Understand how social and academic English differ

Resources for Development of Home Language and English

Byers-Heinlein, K., & Lew-Williams, C. (2013). Bilingualism in the early years: What the science says. *Learning Landscapes, 7*, https://www.learninglandscapes.ca/index.php/learnland/article/view/632

Dombrink-Green, M, & Bohart, H. (2014). Spotlight on Young Children: Supporting Dual Language Learners. National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington, DC.

Espinosa, L. M. (2013). *Pre-K-3rd: Young English Language Learners. An Update to the Seminal 2008 Report.* PreK-=3rd Policy to Action Brief. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development. https://www.fcd-us.org/prek-3rd-challenging-common-myths-about-dual-language-learners-an-update-to-the-seminal-2008-report/

Espinosa, L. M. (2013). Early education for Dual Language Learners: Promoting school readiness and early school success. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/early-education-dual-language-learners-promoting-school-readiness-and-early-school-success

Gillanders, C., & Procopio, R. (2019). *Equity and Diversity.* NAEYC: Washington, DC.

Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (2016). Video. *Module II: Bilingual Language Development.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington iLab. http://modules.ilabs.uw.edu/outreach-modules/.

NAEYC (2019). Cultivating bilingualism: The benefits of multilingual classro*oms. Young Children, 74, 2,* Author.

OHS, 2017 Office of Head Start. (2017). *Home Language Support.* Retrieved from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/home-language-support

Too Small to Fail (2017). The Benefits of Bilingualism. http://mailchi.mp/toosmall/the-benefits-of-bilingual?e+7e6efba24f.

US Department of Health and Human Services (2017). *Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children who are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs.* https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/dll_guidance_document_final.pdf

Dual Language Development Competency Performance Area:

   3.   Observation and Assessment of Dual Language Learners

Knowledge of linguistically appropriate assessment practices, for DLLs, is particularly crucial. The valid and comprehensive assessment of young dual language learners' development and achievement is essential and often challenging for ECE professionals (Espinosa & Garcia 2012). Individualized instruction enhances young children's learning opportunities and promotes the important developmental and achievement outcomes necessary for school success. Individualized instruction, however, requires comprehensive, ongoing assessments that are fair, valid, and linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate. Such assessments show educators what DLLs already know and what needs to be taught.

For DLLs, the language in which an assessment is given often determines how school personnel judge their knowledge and skill levels as well as the educational services they receive. Because DLLs acquire their knowledge of the world around them through two languages, they must be assessed in each of their languages. A DLL child may know some words and concepts in one language and other words in the second language. Depending on DLLs' experiences and learning opportunities, they may not perform as well as monolingual speakers of each language in all domains. This pattern is a typical and, most often, temporary phase of emergent bilingualism (Paradis, Genesee, & Crago 2018).

Any conclusions about the developmental progress or need for special services must be based on knowledge about the DLL child's abilities in both languages as well as what should be expected of preschool DLLs and how they differ from monolinguals. Program staff need to assess the proficiency level of a young DLL in the child's home language and in English-language development by using input from various sources, multiple sources of data collected over time, and a team that includes at least one member who is fluent in the child's home language.

An appropriate approach to the assessment of DLLs should consist of both formal and informal methods (Espinosa, & Magruder, 2015).   Initial assessment should include a formal family interview or questionnaire about the languages spoken in the home and by which family members to better understand the child's early language experiences and family values and strengths (see family languages interview for an example of a family interview questionnaire,

Appendix A). Other formal child assessments such as the preLAS or Pre-IPT- 2 Oral both measures of language proficiency that have shown good psychometric features when used with Spanish-English DLLs, can be administered to individual children to more specifically inform ECE personnel about a child's receptive and expressive language abilities. In addition to formal assessment, ongoing informal observational assessment (DRDP) that is conducted across the preschool setting and over time provides ECE teachers a means to monitor a child's progress and plan appropriate learning activities. According to the DRDP administration manual, when a teacher does not speak the language of a DLL child, a fluent speaker of the child's language must assist with the assessment.

Additional Early Childhood Educator Competency:

- Know and can administer assessment methods and tools that are valid for DLLs and collect accurate information about what DLLs know and can do

Resources for Observation and Assessment of Dual Language Learners

Espionosa, L. & Gutierez, V. (2013). *Assessment of Dual Language Learners in Preschool*. In California Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners (2013). Paper 5. CDE

Espinosa, L. (2018). Facing the Challenge of Accurately Assessing Dual Language Learners' Learning and Achievement. In Spotlight on Young Children: Observation and Assessment, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Espinosa, L. M., & García, E. (November, 2012). *Developmental Assessment of Young Dual Language Learners with a Focus on Kindergarten Entry Assessments: Implications for State Policies*. Center for Early Care and Education Research-Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL).

Dual Language Development Competency Performance Area:
4. Relationships with Families of Dual Language Learners

The field of early childhood education consistently emphasizes the value and importance of strong and supportive relationships between teachers and the families of the children under their care. The evidence is clear, teachers who form strong relationships with families are better able

to foster a child's healthy development and school readiness. Similarly, families who are actively engaged with their child's education, communicate school's importance. This engagement correlates with future school success. While the value of establishing positive relationships with families is a well-accepted tenet of early children education, its significance increases when serving young DLLs and their families. Because DLLs come from cultural and linguistic backgrounds that may differ from that of the early educator, the family as a resource is magnified.

It is essential that early educators develop trusting, reciprocal relationships with families particularly when they come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Although family engagement is a shared responsibility between families and educators (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014), the onus to initiate contact and provide opportunities for parents to engage with educators should begin with educators themselves. As many DLLs come from immigrant families where not much English is spoken in the home and, to differing degrees, may be unfamiliar with the operation of educational and social services, they are unlikely to take the first step in establishing educator-family partnerships. Educators need to develop and incorporate procedures and processes for routine communication with families. One of the most effective ways to learn about a particular child is through some form of family interview conducted by the teacher. During the interview, information about the child's early language experiences can be explored as well as gauging parental preferences for language development. The interview will provide an opportunity to inquire about any special hobbies or talents the parent possesses that they may want to share with the children. Conducted early in the program year, a family interview provides an important foundation upon which the educator can build culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. Although there are a number of family interviews available, the *California Preschool Program Guidelines,* (2015) offers a sample interview that programs may want to adopt/modify.

Educators who acknowledge that families possess "funds of knowledge" reflective of their own culturally derived skills and competencies (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), can ask parents to share their special skills and abilities in the early learning setting. This could range from sharing particular skills (e.g., shoeing horses, creating crafts, etc.) to assisting in translating educational material. Viewing parents as resources who can contribute to children's learning outside of the home not only helps reduce incongruity for the young DLL but also demonstrates

to all children that a particular culture and language are valued.

When speaking with parents of DLLs, educators may note that parents are often conflicted about the value of bilingualism. There are a number of factors that influence their decisions including the opinions of family members, school policies and prior parental experiences (Lee, Shetgiri, Barina, Tillitski, et al., 2015). The decision to nurture bilingualism is a parental prerogative, however early educators can provide information about the advantages of bilingualism and explain how maintaining the home language can contribute to a child's well-being and school success.

For effective communication with the families of DLLs, it is imperative that written material developed for parents be available in their home language. When needed for parental conferences or presentations, it is important to utilize interpreters who are knowledgeable of the terminology used to describe preschool development and learning.

In addition to speaking with parents about their priorities for their children, early educators' knowledge about the children and families they serve will benefit from understanding the neighborhoods and communities in which they reside. The broader community in which young DLLs reside can offer meaningful opportunities for learning. Field trips to such places as the library, the local market, bakery, or the fire station, communicates to children that learning takes place all around them. Apart from parents, there may be individuals in the community that may possess an interesting talent or hobby that they could share with the children. Adults who speak the child's native language or are bilingual, provide important role models for DLLs.

Additional Early Childhood Educator Competencies:

- Is able to establish warm, respectful relationships with dual language learner families by valuing a child's home language and culture
- Apply information gained from families in teaching and learning activities
- Partner with parents to preserve the child's home language
- Ensure that written materials are available in the parents' home language; engage appropriate interpreters when needed
- Utilize community as a resource for children's learning

Resources for Family Engagement

California Department of Education (2016). *Family partnerships and culture: Best practices for planning curriculum for young children.* Sacramento, CA: Author.
https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/familypartnerships.pdf

Californians Together initiative, "The Alas y Voz" Campaign
Campaign designed to raise awareness among parents of English Learners about the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy.
https://www.californianstogether.org/alas-y-voz/campaign/

Tabors, P. O. (2008). *One child, two languages: A guiding early childhood educators of children learning English as a second language.* Brookes: Baltimore, MD.
Related DVD available from the publisher.

TESOL (n.d.). *Community and Family Toolkit: Engaging the family of English Learners in Classrooms, Schools, and Communities.* TESOL PRESS.
https://www.tesol.org/docs/default-source/advocacy/tesol-community-and-family-toolkit.pdf?sfvrsn=0

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Appendix A

Sample Family Languages and Interests Survey

Today's Date: _____/_____/_____
                    Month   Day   Year

CHILD'S NAME (first, middle, last):

_____

Gender: Boy ☐   Girl ☐   Child's Date of Birth: _____/_____/_____
                                                      Month   Day   Year

1. Who are the members of your family?

_____

2. How many family members live with you and child?

_____

3. Who is the primary caregiver of your child?

_____

4. What language does the primary caregiver speak most often with child?

_____

5. What language did your child learn when he or she first began to talk?

_____

6. Can you tell me what language(s) each of the following people in your household speak to your child?

	Only English	Mostly English, some other language (identify)	Mostly other language (identify), some English	Only other language (identify)
Mother (or you)				
Father (or you)				
Older siblings				
Grandmother				
Grandfather				
Aunt/Uncle				
Others, after school, community members				

7. What are your feelings about maintenance of your home language?
_____

8. What special talents or interests does your child have?
_____

_____

9. Who does your child play with most often?
_____

_____

10. What are your aspirations for your child?
_____

_____

11. What are your expectations for the preschool year?
_____

_____

12. Do you have any hobbies or interests that you would like to share with your child's class?

_____

_____

13. Would you be interested in volunteering in your child's class?

_____

   If yes, preferred day and time

_____

Appendix B

Suggested Activities for Four DLL Performance Areas

1. **Performance Area**: Dual Language Development Program Models and Strategies

   Background for Instructor

   The state of California has recommended two basic language models to promote the language, cognitive, and academic development of dual language learners. In order to achieve the goals of early bilingualism, two program approaches have been recommended: 1) Balanced English and Home Language, and 2) English Language Development with Home Language Support.

   Current research has identified certain ECE program features and instructional practices that promote school readiness and help reduce the achievement gap between DLLs and their English-only peers at kindergarten entry. An underlying principle for the effective education of DLLs is that they need both early and systematic exposure to English as well as intentional support for home language maintenance and development (NASEM, 2017). Early balanced and intentional exposure to both languages supports early bilingualism which is important for kindergarten entry and later academic success.

   Activity

   At the start of the year, ask how many of the students had a first language that was not English. Then, ask for a few volunteers to describe their experiences learning English. Did they learn English at home, in school, or in the community and at what age? How were they treated during this early process of learning English? What were the messages from their family members, and what were their feelings about being a DLL?

   Through this process, it will be possible to identify students' attitudes and dispositions toward becoming bilingual during the early years. It may also be possible to detect the students' deeper feelings about how young children should be exposed to English.

Throughout the discussion, be sure to clarify the experiences and surface the explicit or implicit assumptions or values expressed by the students. Chart the number of languages of the students and classify their experiences by:

- Age of first exposure

- Where and by whom they first experienced English

- Their feelings about not speaking English

- How they did or did not maintain their home language

After this discussion, review the two main program approaches to serving DLLs: 1) Balanced English and Home Language, and 2) English Language Development with Home Language Support. Make sure students have read Chapter 6 of the *Preschool Program Guidelines*, pp. 75-92. As a class, preview the *California Preschool Program Guidelines, DVD,* "Dual Language Learning Program Approaches, Part 1: Considerations for all Programs with Young Dual Language Learners". This DVD is available from the California Department of Education for a nominal fee at: https://www.cdevideos.org.

Once you have viewed the video with all students, ask them to identify the main features of the two program approaches. Then have them break up into dyads and discuss with their partner which of the models most closely resembles programs in which they have taught. Make sure they discuss which of the program features and classroom strategies they are familiar with and which ones they need additional training to implement with confidence. By recording their strengths and areas of need, you can start to design a plan of coursework that recognizes and reinforces their strengths and is targeted to their individual needs. As the semester progresses, be sure to refer back to these areas and document the students' growing competence in this Performance Area.

Additional Videos Available from California Department of Education at, https://www.cdevideos.org.

California Preschool Program Guidelines DVD, 2: "Classroom Practices for Supporting Young Dual Language Learners".

2. **Performance Area:** Advantages of Bilingualism

Background for Instructor

There are a number of studies that document advantages for individuals reared bilingually. These advantages are not just about language, per se, but also important socio-emotional and economic benefits that optimize an individual's development. These include better focus and attention on cognitive tasks, better metalinguistic awareness, ease with learning additional languages, ease with expanding their social networks with peers who speak different languages and better self-control. In addition, bilingual individuals who are also biliterate have an economic advantage in securing employment.

Activity

In order to engage students, first identify those individuals who are bilingual. Ask those individuals to share how they became bilingual. Now provide a worksheet with boxes and headings. Ask students to write down as many **advantages of bilingualism** (one response per box) that they can think of in the next 5 minutes! Ask students to pair share their responses. Now, ask for pairs to share and discuss. After the brief discussion period, the instructor writes down the main points on chalkboard or other writing surface. Follow-up this activity with a video clip that discusses the advantages of bilingualism.

Suggested Videos:

Cognitive Advantages of Bilingualism - Maria Polinsky
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-ml2dD4SIk

The Advantages of a Bilingual Brain
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9JvbVm7IMQ

Bilingual and Monolingual Baby Brains Differ in Response to Language
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7Gn_ImK4_Y&t=98s

3. **Performance Area**: Observation and Assessment of DLLs

<u>Background for Instructor</u>

While most early care and education (ECE) providers are fluent in only one language, typically English or Spanish, all can learn strategies to support young dual language learners as they are acquiring English as well as help them continue to grow in their first or home language. Through careful observation and documentation of young DLL's growth in English language and literacy skills as well as their progress across all other developmental domains, ECE providers can improve the quality and appropriateness of their learning opportunities. Accurate and valid assessment is essential to good teaching.

The careful observation and assessment of DLLs should tell us:

- How is each child progressing?
- What does the child need to learn next?
- How can we adapt our instruction to better meet the needs of young dual language learners?

<u>Activity</u>

Ask each student to select one DLL child in their work environment or if they are not working, they can observe in a local community ECE program. The assignment is for each student to use steps 1 and 2 to assess the DLL child's level of English language development and home language development. Be sure to emphasize that dual language

learners are learning the features of two different linguistic systems **at the same time they are** learning basic concepts through two languages, this is not a simple task.

It is important to remember that students will need to choose different instruments and methods depending on the purpose for the assessment. For example, classroom observational assessment for the purpose of documenting strengths and making instructional adaptations requires different methods and skills than developmental

screenings to determine if a child may have a developmental delay and should be referred for further evaluation.

Early childhood teachers will need to know how to conduct assessments to promote learning and development and to conduct developmental screenings to determine if a referral for a complete evaluation is needed (Espinosa & Gutierrez-Clellan, 2013). Students will need to assess to determine DLLs' language abilities so they can plan individualized instruction and conduct a developmental screening to see if a DLL may need further language evaluation.

When a dual language learner first enters a program, it is important to determine the child's level of functioning in the first or home language as well as the level of English language development (ELD). See Step 1 below for questions you will answer as you begin the assessment process.

Step 1: Which language should you use for assessing the child?
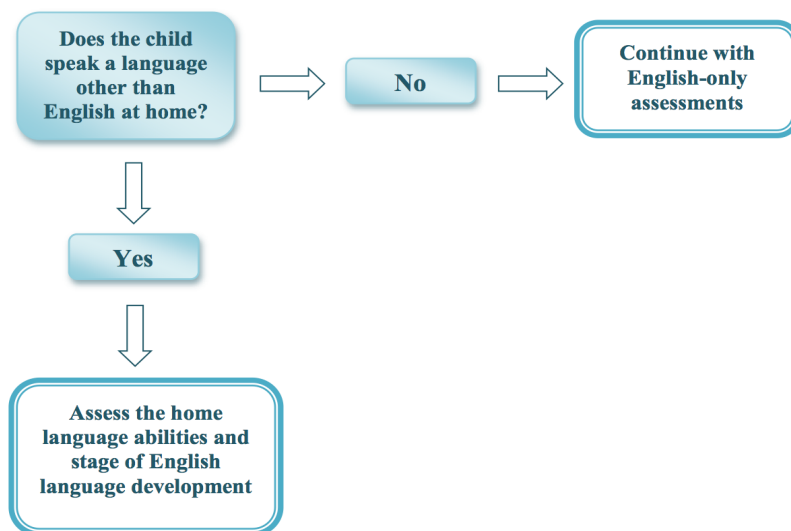
One of the best ways to get to know about a DLL child's language development is to have a discussion with the family about the child's early language exposure. A sample family language interview is provided in Appendix A. This is an important first step when assessing a DLLs language experiences.

If a young child has a language delay or impairment, she will have the delay in both languages, not just in English.

If a DLL is demonstrating age-appropriate levels of language development in her first or home language, and is not speaking any English, then she is most likely in a very early stage of English language development (ELD) but will be able to acquire English with sufficient opportunities to learn the new language.

To accurately determine a DLL's level of proficiency in both languages, students will need to collect observational data on the child's use of each language during everyday activities as well as use a more formal assessment of the child's language abilities.

Step 2. Should the child be referred for evaluation for a possible language delay?

What is the child's level of English language development?

Examples:
- Minimal—only a few words
- Limited—speaks using some phrases
- Not proficient—can describe a picture but has difficulty retelling a story
- Not age appropriate—shows errors in expressive language or some difficulty comprehending directions

⬇

Need English development

⬇

Provide a focused vocabulary and language curriculum

In addition to assessing the child's level of English language development, students should assess the level of home language development. See decision chart below for some recommended procedures.

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ What is the     │
                    │ child's level   │
                    │ of home         │
                    │ language        │
                    │ development?    │
                    └─────────────────┘

Examples:
  • Parent gives examples of the child's utterances
  • Child was observed talking in the home language
    to a peer
  • Child tells parent about a past event
  • Parent reports appropriate comprehension of
    questions and expression in the home language
  • No problems being understood
```

```
   ┌──────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
   │   Limited    │              │ Age-appropriate  │
   │    home      │              │ home language    │
   │  language    │              │ development?     │
   └──────────────┘              └──────────────────┘
         │                              │
         ▼                              ▼
 ┌────────────────┐            ┌──────────────────┐
 │ Initiate a     │            │   Encourage      │
 │ referral       │            │   continued      │
 │ for an         │            │   language       │
 │ evaluation     │            │   stimulation    │
 └────────────────┘            └──────────────────┘
```

There are several standardized preschool language assessments that can be used with Spanish speaking dual language learners that will give students information about the child's fluency in both Spanish and English.

For example, the state of Illinois recommends ECE programs use the Pre-IPT® Oral English Language Proficiency Test as a language screener to identify which children are dual language learners and their levels of English language proficiency The Pre-IPT is available in both Spanish and English. This measure is a standardized assessment that can be administered by teachers or paraprofessionals who have been trained on the instrument.

It is important that those who give the assessment in Spanish be fluent Spanish speakers and those who give it in English are fluent in English—and that all assessors are trained in proper administration procedures. (Flow chart taken from Espinosa & Gutierrez-Clellan, 2013).

4. **Performance Area**: Family Engagement

Background for Instructor

A child's family is a critical contributor to their success in life. Families can support the positive socio-emotional and cognitive development of their children in multiple ways. For families whose home language is not English and whose culture varies from the mainstream, it is important that their strengths and abilities are recognized in order to engage them with early learning and care programs.

In order to support families of DLLs, it is important that early educators have a clear understanding of a child's previous language experience and the goals and objectives that parents hold for a child's success.

Activity

Present students with a list of strategies to engage parents of children whose home language is not English. Divide students into groups of 3 to 5 depending on the total size of group. Ask the group to choose the top three strategies and provide a rationale for why they chose the top three or how those strategies could be more appropriately modified. Facilitate a report out session afterwards and determine if there is any consensus on the top strategies or whether there were additional strategies that merit consideration.

Possible strategies include:

1. Creating warm, welcoming environments through the use of pictures and labels in their home language

2. Provide books that parents can take home to read to children

3. Interviewing parents about what their child likes to do with them and what they like to do with their child (e.g., cooking, watching TV together)

4. Sending home a parental newsletter describing some of the activities that are going on in the classroom

5. Providing parent workshops that focus on various learning activities that parents can incorporate into their daily lives

6. Surveying parents about special abilities or talents that they may want to share with the children

7. Asking parents to volunteer in the classroom

Suggested Video for Enrichment

Dual Language Learners

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/home-language-success-school-life