

How to get a successful bilingual education at home

Early Edge California provides virtual tools for teachers of students that are growing up between two languages.



Using gestures in teaching is fundamental.

PHOTOGRAPH: EARLY EDGE CALIFORNIA / COURTESY

By: Iliana Salguero / Special for La Opinión | April 21, 2020

Distance learning is now a daily occurrence in California homes after the schools' closure for the rest of the school year in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19; for this reason, Early Edge California is offering seminars to assist teachers with tools to facilitate bilingual learning.

Through a digital platform, Dr. Carola Oliva-Olson, professor and researcher at California State University, Channel Islands and expert in bilingual learning met with Anna Arambula, lead instructor of the California State University, Channel Islands, Language Learning Project, so that they could share techniques to enrich children's learning in Spanish.

"What we do is advocate for young children's programs, one of the areas that is our priority is bilingual children and we have been fighting to get funds to train teachers on how to work with these children," the Executive Director of Early Edge California, Patricia Lozano, explained. "So, that's why we think that the teachers that are home or working with the children of essential workers must be needing tools for how to work remotely, which is why we have created this initiative."

During the seminar called "Distance Learning: How to Read Books with Preschoolers," the experts shared techniques to keep the children entertained and ensure that they have a successful bilingual education.

"These strategies were created with a panel of experts and what we wanted to do was to bring a model that would help teachers tend to the needs of the children that are learning a second language", Oliva-Olson explained.

Using Personalized Oral Language Learning Strategies (POLLs), three ideas emerged to use with young students to keep them attentive and for them to develop their language: Extend vocabulary related to emotions, teach and use gestures, and arouse interest and curiosity.

"Today more than ever, our families need emotional support to promote health and well-being, the virus crisis has caused a lot of anxiety, concern, and stress in children and families, so the suggestions we provide are important at this time," said Arambula.

Lozano assured that this is just a sample of all the support and tools needed by the teachers, whom she described as one of the most important work forces.

“This is a new reality and the teachers are an essential part of our society at this time, just as many other workers, and they need tools because nobody was prepared for distance teaching, distance teaching is difficult because nothing replaces in-person interaction; and they need a lot of support, so we are giving them these techniques that they need and we are all learning together,” added the director of Early Edge California.

To learn more about Early Edge California: <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org>