

Building Partnerships Series

For Head Start and Early Head Start
Professionals



Partnering with Families
of Children Who Are
Dual Language Learners



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Parent, Family and Community Engagement

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ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement



Partnering with Families of Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

Families are their children’s first educators. From birth, families nurture their children to be healthy and successful in school and in life. Head Start and Early Head Start program staff share these goals and partner with families as they work to meet these goals.

There are unique ways in which these partnerships matter for children who speak languages other than English. When families and staff partner closely to support home languages, and when they embrace families’ cultures and traditions, young children can thrive. They experience the richness of learning and understanding many languages. Programs promote children’s language proficiency in their home languages and in English when they support and acknowledge home languages as a family asset.

“Parent” and “Family”

We use the words *parent* and *family* to honor all adult caregivers who make a difference in a child’s life.

Parents refers to biological, adoptive, and step-parents as well as primary caregivers, such as grandparents, other adult family members, and foster parents.

Families can be biological or nonbiological, chosen or circumstantial. Members of families are connected through cultures, languages, traditions, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support.

What You Will Find in This Resource

Explore this resource for scenarios and information to help you partner with families of children who are dual language learners. This resource may also be helpful for individual or group learning in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

The resource provides:

- Related Head Start Program Performance Standards
- The Head Start PFCE Framework as a guide to partnering with families of dual language learners
- Practice scenarios and information to help you implement family engagement strategies in five Program Impact Areas:
 - Program Environments
 - Family Partnerships
 - Teaching and Learning
 - Community Partnerships
 - Access and Continuity
- Helpful resources and references

If your program uses the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment instrument (DLLPA), you will find this resource helpful in implementing the family-related practices identified throughout that tool.



Head Start Program Performance Standards

The Head Start Program Performance Standards include specific requirements for programs to support children who are dual language learners. These standards ensure that

- communication with children and families is provided in their preferred language,
- family engagement services are conducted in the family’s preferred language,
- families of children who are dual language learners receive information about the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy, and
- programs reflect the unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds of families.

The following requirements point programs to use research-based strategies to support the strengths and address the needs of children who are dual language learners and their families.

Family engagement approach, 45 CFR

- §1302.50 (b)(2) Develop relationships with parents and structure services to encourage trust and respectful, ongoing two-way communication between staff and parents to create welcoming program environments that incorporate the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families in the program and community;
- §1302.50 (b)(5) Conduct family engagement services in the family’s preferred language, or through an interpreter, to the extent possible, and ensure families have the opportunity to share personal information in an environment in which they feel safe.

Parent activities to promote child learning and development, 45 CFR

- §1302.51 (a)(3) For dual language learners, [share] information and resources for parents about the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy.

What the Research Says

Children and families enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs speak more than 140 languages. Children who are dual language learners make up at least one-third of all children in Early Head Start and are in more than 85 percent of programs. (Head Start, n.d.).

Research shows that supporting bilingualism and multilingualism from the early years can result in wide-ranging benefits—from cognitive, academic, and social advantages in the preschool and school years, to health and economic ones later in life (Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

Learning home languages increases family unity, helps children to strongly identify with their families and cultures, and in many families is the only way that children will be able to communicate with some of their family members.

Communication with dual language learners and their families, 45 CFR

- §1302.90 (d) Communication with dual language learners and their families. (1) A program must ensure staff and program consultants or contractors are familiar with the ethnic backgrounds and heritages of families in the program and are able to serve and effectively communicate, either directly or through interpretation and translation, with children who are dual language learners and to the extent feasible, with families with limited English proficiency.

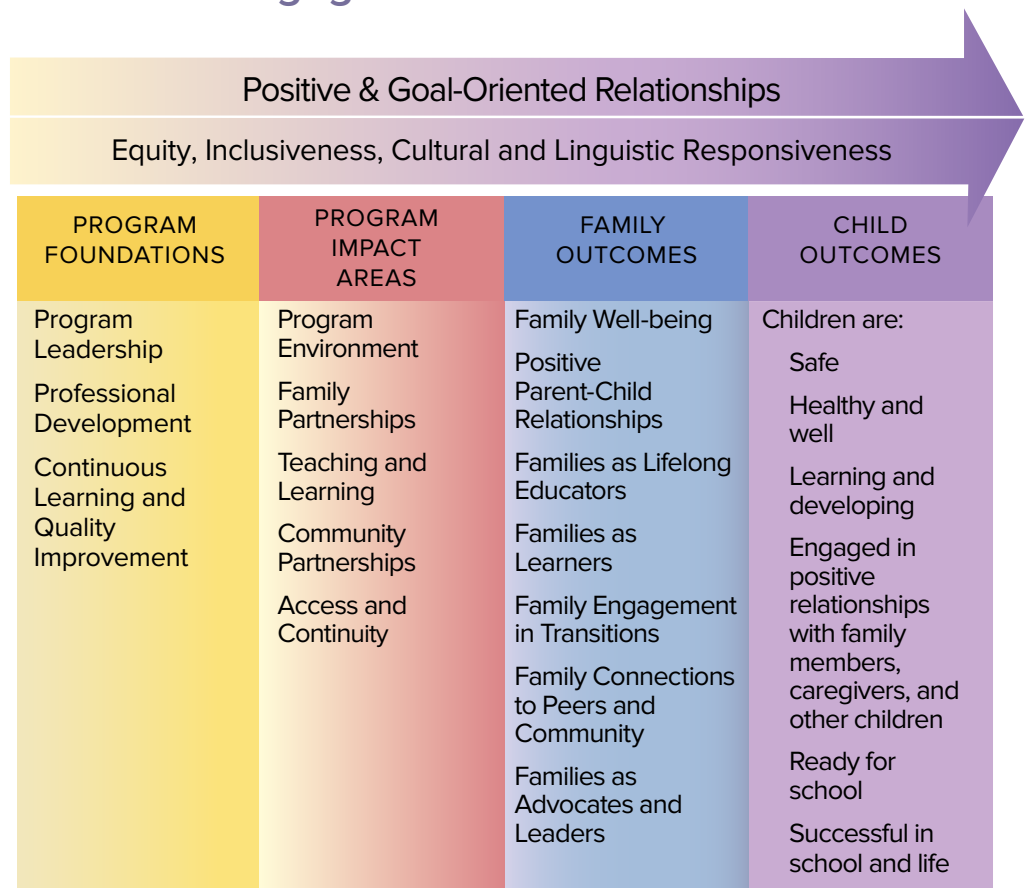
Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

Family engagement is an interactive process through which program staff and families, family members, and their children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and professionals that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. Family engagement means doing with—not doing to or for—families.

Head Start and Early Head Start staff partner with families in ways that promote equity, inclusiveness, and cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Recognizing the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families in the program and the community promotes family engagement and encourages trust and respect between staff and families.

The Head Start PFCE Framework is a visual guide for understanding how professionals, programs, and systems can work together to promote positive, enduring outcomes for children, families, and communities. It describes program elements that work together to positively influence child and family outcomes. And it serves as a guide for family engagement practices that are systemic, integrated, and comprehensive.

Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework



Creating *Program Environments* That Enhance Partnership with Families of Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

Program environments that welcome and support children who are dual language learners and their families provide children, families, and staff with opportunities to learn and grow together. Families who are active, respected participants in their children's learning environments can help providers see new ways to build safe, welcoming, and trusting environments (Powell, Son, File, & San Juan, 2010; Reedy & McGrath, 2010).

Guiding Questions:

- What qualities help make program environments responsive to the unique strengths and needs of children who are dual language learners and their families?
- What is the role of program staff in creating environments that contribute to strong partnerships among programs, families and communities and support the development of both home and English languages?

Program leaders and staff can support children who are dual language learners and their families when they recognize and show respect for families' home languages and cultures.

Program leaders and staff recognize home language when they

- expect that families in the program may speak many different languages;
- encourage families to speak in their own words, and in their own languages;
- speak each family's languages, or use highly skilled, professional interpreters to ensure clear, accurate, supportive communication; and
- are warm and encouraging when children and families speak their home languages.

Program leaders and staff convey respect for families' cultures when they

- recruit and welcome all families to the program;
- promote strengths-based attitudes and relationship-based practices;
- are respectful of families' ideas and ways;
- encourage two-way communication;
- understand that families have many ways of expressing themselves and experiencing their community life, their ethnicity, and their heritage;
- avoid making assumptions about families and communities;
- are comfortable with learning from families and others in the community about the cultures and languages of the community;
- foster opportunities for families to get to know and collaborate with each other; and
- create physical spaces and emotional climates that foster a sense of belonging and reflect families' cultures.

Environments that support children who are dual language learners focus on the strengths of children and families. A program's environment can reflect that it values the rich diversity of its community through its physical spaces, emotional climate, and the quality of the interactions among children, families, and staff. These environments also integrate culturally and linguistically responsive practices into all of their activities and efforts.



Scenario: Practice and Reflect

Read this real-life scenario about a child and mother's first experiences with a Head Start program. As you read, consider these questions:

- What does this program do to create a welcoming environment for children who are dual language learners and their families?
- What evidence do you see of this program's efforts to include responsive practices with families of children who are dual language learners?
- What are some of the strengths of this program's approach?

A child and his mother walk down the sidewalk on the way to the child's first day at a Head Start program. The boy's mother gestures toward a building that is just ahead of them. "See!" she says, "There is your new school." The boy slows his pace, looking closely at the building as they draw closer to it. He thinks back to his father waking up early and wishing him "good luck" for his first day. "You can tell me all about it tonight when we have dinner," he'd said to the boy as he prepared to leave for work.

As they walk closer, the boy sees people coming and going from the front of what seems to him to be a big, busy building. Some people arrive in cars, others walk or ride bicycles. The mother and son come to the block in front of the building and wait as a crossing guard directs traffic. The boy continues to watch carefully as people come and go. He hears different languages being spoken around him, but doesn't hear anyone speaking his home language.

Walking through the front door of the building, the boy squeezes his mother's finger. There are new faces everywhere. Suddenly, he thinks he sees a familiar face at the end of the hall. It looks like a man whom he and his mother met one afternoon at the grocery store. Talking in the check-out line, they had discovered that they both came to the United States from the same region of the same country. The man was also born in a small town close to where the boy's grandparents live. He told the boy's mother about a small, local grocery where she could find some special ingredients for a favorite dish she planned to make for her husband's birthday.

The boy nudges his mother and points toward the man. She recognizes him right away and smiles. When he sees the boy and his mother standing together, his face breaks into a big smile. “Hello! Good morning!” he says in English, extending his hand first to the mother and then to the child. He bends down to look at the boy and says in their home language, “Welcome, son! I’d heard that today is a special day for you! We’re so pleased you’re here.”

The man then turns to the boy’s mother and asks, “Have you been to the office to check in yet?” They walk and talk together, stopping near the entrance to a waiting area. The man knocks gently at the door, peeking through the glass pane and looking at the person inside.

“Well,” he says. “She is on the phone. But make yourselves comfortable here. I know she is expecting you.” The boy watches as his mother speaks with the man a little more. They talk about her husband’s upcoming birthday. When they finish, the man looks toward the boy and says, “I am off to work now, but I leave you both in good hands. Enjoy your first day!”

The man then turns to the boy’s mother and says, “I hope we’ll see you and your family here this Friday. There is a parent meeting and dinner planned for the end of the week. I’m sure that you’ll hear more about it this morning. Please feel free to contact me or my family if you have any questions about it.” He shakes hands with both the mother and child and leaves.



The mother sits on a chair in the waiting area with her son on her lap. There is a bulletin board across from them that is decorated with a big green and blue map. “Look,” she says, “A map of the world . . . and lots of pictures of children. Maybe these are some of the children here at school.” The children in the photographs are doing different things—looking at books, playing in an area with lots of blocks, eating together, and walking outside.

As they continue to wait, the boy’s mother looks at him and says, “What a big world! Do you remember how to find our country on the map?” He looks at her. She stands up and moves closer to the map. “See this piece of big, blue ocean?” she says, pointing to a spot on the right of the map. “Isn’t it a pretty shape? There is our country, right next to it.”

She sweeps her finger across the map and points to a yellow pin. “And here is where we live now,” she says. “Sometimes it seems far . . . but sometimes it feels so close. We bring pieces of our home with us wherever we go.”

“Oh, look!” she says to her son. “There are a few words in our language here, too! I wonder who wrote them?” Just then, the office door opens and a smiling woman comes out. She greets both of them, saying “Hello!” Then she bends down toward the boy, greeting him in his family’s language.

Scenario Reflections

Take a moment to write down your reflections to the following questions:

What does this program do to create a welcoming environment for children who are dual language learners and their families?

Blank space for reflection on the first question.

What evidence do you see of this program’s efforts to provide responsive services to families of children who are dual language learners?

Blank space for reflection on the second question.

What are some of the strengths of this program’s approach?

Blank space for reflection on the third question.

Ensuring That *Family Partnerships* Support Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

Effective family engagement is built on respect for families as capable and competent partners, including if and when they may be struggling with adversity. This engagement depends on genuine relationships among staff and families, and builds on families' and children's strengths to make progress toward the goals they set for themselves.

Young dual language learners thrive when families and programs work together to support them to learn English and continue to develop their home languages (Halgunseth, Jia, & Barbarin, 2013). Children whose home languages are not fully supported may have a harder time learning English (Lopez et al., 2013).

Parents and families can best support a child's language development when they speak the language in which they are most fluent with their children in all settings. When families use these languages, their children learn words and ideas, how languages work, cultural ways of being and thinking, and how information can be expressed differently in each of their languages (McCabe, 2013).

It is important to understand and respect the full range of experiences that influence families' attitudes about their languages and cultures. While families may recognize that promoting dual language learning has both short- and long-term benefits for children, families' experiences with their languages may affect their views about passing them on to their children.

Some families whose languages and cultures have been a target for discrimination may have concerns about speaking their home language, or teaching it to their children. This may also be true for families who have been forced to leave their home countries and have bad memories associated with the language they spoke there. In both instances, families may hesitate to reveal knowledge of their home language to people outside of their family or community. These families may prefer instead to communicate in those outside settings in another language. It may be hard for families to imagine that it could be safe to share their families' cultures, heritages, or languages.

It is important to avoid assumptions about families' language preferences and abilities. It is also important to take the time to learn about each family's choices and cultures. Individuals or families may speak more than one language. Sometimes one member of a family will speak one dominant language, and another will speak a different language. In other cases, one or several individuals may know multiple languages. In addition, different members of a family may have different levels of fluency in a language. An observer who does not speak the language or languages may not be aware of these many variations. Understanding the linguistic and cultural make-up of each child's family will help give program staff a clearer view of the factors involved in what languages a child may speak or learn.



What the Research Says

- There are many expressions and variations of a single language. For example, people who live in El Salvador, Spain, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic all speak Spanish, but their accents, word choices, slang, local terminology, and other local variations create different meanings and expressions of the language.
- People may not be aware of languages spoken by language minorities, particularly when one or all of the family members also speaks a more common dominant language. For example, a family from Mexico or Central America may speak to program staff in Spanish, but use an indigenous language, such as Mixtec, Kekchi, Kakchiquel, or Mam at home or with family elders.
- There are many languages other than English that are not “foreign” languages. American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) people come from many different communities inside what is now the United States. Each community has its own distinct culture, and many have their own languages that have been spoken here long before English. Many AIAN families include members who identify with one or more of these cultures and who speak one or more one of these languages.

Guiding Questions

- How can programs foster strong partnerships with families of children who are dual language learners?
- What can programs and families do to enhance language learning?

Program leaders and staff can be effective partners with families of children who are dual language learners when they

- encourage families to share their goals for, and observations about, their children;
- promote positive parent-child relationships;
- recognize families as lifelong educators for their children;
- recognize parents and families as learners and inquire about adults’ preferred learning styles;
- encourage parents to share their experiences in supporting their home language(s) with other families;
- include families in the development and implementation of inclusive procedures, policies, protocols, and activities;
- provide a variety of opportunities to engage in program activities and governance; and
- consider ways to improve program practices and engage families and community members in their continuous learning and improvement processes.

Staff can support literacy, home language, and language learning when they recognize that

- oral language ability and literacy are separate and different,
- individuals may have oral mastery of a language but may not be able to read or write it,
- some languages are spoken but do not have a common written form, and
- families may choose to communicate with program staff in a language other than their dominant or home language.

Families can best support a child's language growth when they

- understand that learning a home language does not interfere with a child's ability to become fully bilingual or multilingual and achieve English language proficiency;
- have access to key information about the ways they can support their child to become bilingual or multilingual;
- have opportunities inside and outside of the home to tell stories, read books, sing songs, and teach dances, rhymes, and games in their home language; and
- partner with extended family and friends, when possible, to support the child's ability to maintain and advance their home language(s).

Partnering with Families to Promote *Teaching and Learning* Practices That Support Dual Language Learners

Family engagement is important for school readiness and success. Every person in an early childhood program has a role in engaging with families to support children's learning. While teachers will take the lead in providing language support and instruction in the classroom, all staff contribute to a climate and practices that support language growth and proficiency for children, families, and staff.

Guiding Questions

- How can staff partner effectively with families of children who are dual language learners?
- What can program leaders do to ensure that the commitment to partnering with families in language teaching and learning is embedded in all aspects of a program?

Program staff can

- emphasize the value of home and community-based interactions in the child and family's home language(s),
- partner with families to promote home-based learning strategies to support each family's home language(s) and English,
- ensure that families have access to books and learning materials that they can use at home,
- create welcoming environments that provide opportunities for families to connect with each other, and

- understand that it may take time for families to trust that children can learn their home languages and English at the same time.

Program leadership supports children who are dual language learners when they

- recruit and hire qualified staff who represent the cultures and languages of the families and community;
- ensure that all staff can clearly communicate their specific roles in supporting home languages and cultures;
- support all staff to use practices that enhance both home languages and English learning;
- support ongoing mentoring and coaching for all staff;
- develop opportunities for family and community members to share their pride in, and knowledge of, their languages and cultures with the children;
- encourage families to share ways the program and community can support their home languages and then work together to implement their suggestions;
- partner to create opportunities for family engagement, such as story times, library visits, parenting classes, and computer and technology learning; and
- partner with families and community members to ensure that the classroom environment and activities support and reflect each child’s languages and cultures.



Family services workers can

- learn about the languages that the members of each family speak;
- create family services plans that include each family member’s learning goals, strengths, needs, and interests;
- facilitate the family’s access to and collaboration with organizations, services, and community activities that support their learning goals, strengths, needs, and preferred learning styles; and
- create and provide opportunities for families to get to know each other and work together.

Scenario: Practice and Reflect

Read this real-life scenario about a mother's involvement with her children's Head Start and Early Head Start program. As you read, consider these questions:

- How did this program use the mother's knowledge of her home language as an asset for the children in the program?
- How is the mother experiencing her time as a volunteer?
- The scenario includes a description of a misunderstanding between staff and parents that is complicated by language. What could have been done differently to avoid the kind of misunderstanding that occurred here?
- Why is it important that the lead teacher understand what happened in the interaction between the parents?

A mother has two children in a local Head Start and Early Head Start program. Her daughter is enrolled in an infant classroom, and her son in a pre-k classroom. She volunteers at the center twice a week. Staff are flexible with her volunteer schedule to support her commitments to work, continuing education, and family.

She is at first hesitant to participate in program activities because she worries that her English is not "good enough" to make her a useful volunteer. Staff assure her that she is always welcome, and that English is not a requirement for volunteering or participating in program activities. They say that her participation is an asset to the program and that they hope she will use her home language with children and parents as she volunteers.

She meets other parent volunteers and notices that each person brings a different set of skills and energy to the role. One volunteer is a firefighter. He visits a number of classrooms to talk about fire safety, and can speak to children and staff in both English and his home language. He has helped classroom staff arrange field trips to the fire station to meet the fire squad and see fire protection equipment. Another parent volunteer was trained as doctor in her home country. She came to the United States with a refugee resettlement program, and does not currently have a medical license in the United States. She works with program staff to create weekly learning activities related to health and wellness for children, families, and staff.

The mother begins volunteering in her infant daughter's classroom. She enjoys being able to be near her daughter during the day, particularly when it is time to feed her or put her to sleep. She is able to share information with classroom staff about her daughter's routines and their family and community's food preferences, and to sing her daughter to sleep with a favorite lullaby that her mother used to sing to her when she was a baby.

She particularly enjoys her time volunteering in the mobile infant classroom. There are a number of children in the group who speak the same home language as hers. She recognizes some of the children's vocalizations as early attempts to form common words in her home language. She shares the observation with classroom staff. She is encouraged by staff to tell the children stories and to sing to them. Staff helps her record songs and stories in her home language, so children can listen to them when she is not there.

She begins to bring items to leave in the classroom that are written in her home language, such as a calendar with pictures of sites in her country, and children's books. One of the teachers asks if she might have anything to contribute to the dramatic play area. She brings in a scarf and shirt that are typical of the area where she grew up, and some empty boxes from the local grocery store with writing in her home language.

One morning as she volunteers in the infant room, a mother she recognizes comes in to drop off her child for the day. While they are neighbors and often see each other in the street, they have never spoken. They are from the same country but come from different communities and speak different languages. When the lead teacher sees the parent come in, she walks toward the parent volunteer and asks her to accompany her to speak with the mother and help transition the baby into the program for the day. "She is from your country," she says. "Maybe you can help us translate so we can learn a little bit about the baby and how she is doing this morning."



The mother suddenly feels overwhelmed and isn't sure how to explain to the teacher that even though they come from the same country, they do not speak each other's languages. She doesn't feel like she and the other mother have very much in common. In fact, in their country of origin, their communities live segregated from each other because of a history of conflict.

She walks with the lead teacher toward the mother and her baby. The mother looks at her and smiles uncomfortably. She passes her baby and her clothes to the lead teacher and says in English, "A change of clothes for my baby. She ate in morning. She is not too hungry now. She is sleeping very good." The teacher wonders why the mother and volunteer are not talking to each other and why the mother seems to prefer to speak directly to her in English.

As the mother prepares to leave, the three women say goodbye in English. The volunteer parent feels uncomfortable. She isn't sure she can clearly explain what has happened to the lead teacher. She feels even less confident about being able to explain the situation in English. Suddenly, she hears her own baby begin to cry in her crib. She has woken up from a morning nap. "I'll go to pick her up," she says to the teacher, and she walks toward the crib.

Scenario Reflections

Take a moment to write down your reflections to the following questions:

How did this program use the mother's knowledge of her home language as an asset for the children in the program?

How is the mother experiencing her time as a volunteer?

What could have been done differently to avoid the kind of misunderstanding that occurred?

Why is it important that the lead teacher understands what happened in the interaction between the parents?

Creating and Sustaining *Community Partnerships* That Support Children Who Are Dual Language Learners and Their Families

Early childhood programs can partner with community members and agencies that are respected by families and understand the families' cultures, languages, practices, and resources. These partnerships can help program staff to increase their capacity to provide responsive, comprehensive services to children and families (Lopez, Hofer, Bumgarner & Taylor, 2017).

Guiding Question

- How can programs and staff partner with community leaders, members and families to support the needs of families of dual language learners?

Community leaders, community members, and families can help Head Start and Early Head Start staff find culturally responsive ways to support parents and families. They may be able to help staff learn about

- cultures, customs, and traditions of families and their communities;
- backgrounds of families who may be refugees or have had traumatic experiences;
- what education and care settings are like in the home countries or communities of the families in their programs;
- traditional expectations regarding the roles of family caregivers and educators;
- strategies to encourage families to support their children's home languages;
- access to translators and interpreters who are skilled and culturally compatible with the families;
- demographic shifts and trends in their community;
- resources that can provide help, information, and enrichment, such as local communities of faith, foreign embassies, universities, and cultural groups; and
- community assessment data.

Parents' connections to peers and community can strengthen their capacities as advocates and leaders, and help advance their language learning goals for their children.

What the Research Says

Stressors can make it more difficult for families to develop relationships with early childhood providers. When parents live in communities that support learning and development, children have better outcomes and show resilience through childhood and adolescence (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).



Promoting Program Access and Continuity to Support Dual Language Learners and Their Families

Head Start and Early Head Start eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance procedures are developed by using community assessment data and engaging former and currently enrolled families, staff, and community members. These policies and procedures help Head Start and Early Head Start programs to provide services for those most in need of them.

Programs use several strategies to ensure access into and continuity beyond Head Start and Early Head Start programs. These strategies will be most effective for families of dual language learners when programs consider and plan for families' language needs.

Guiding Question

- What steps can programs take to strengthen access and continuity efforts for families of dual language learners?

Programs and staff can

- ensure that recruitment and enrollment happens in families' home languages, either directly or in partnership with qualified translators;
- provide access to program and enrollment information in families' home languages;
- identify and use a families' preferred learning methods;
- identify all languages spoken in families' households;
- maintain strong relationships with community agencies and entities that may have contact with families and children in need of services. These may include health clinics, public and private schools, child care providers, cultural centers, refugee resettlement organizations, homeless shelters, emergency food providers, community service agencies, community and social clubs, places of worship, libraries, employers, restaurants, and stores;
- partner with community agencies and service providers to ensure that families have access to services in their home language or languages; and
- ensure that activities and information related to transitions between child care programs and schools are accessible in families' home languages.



Scenario: Practice and Reflect

Read this real-life scenario about a center director, family services worker, and community leader and the new relationships they form with each other to support the families in their community. As you read, consider these questions:

- What structures and routines do program staff have in place to enhance their responsiveness to the interests, strengths, and needs of the families they work with?
- What additional resources might be helpful?
- What did staff learn in their conversation that might inform their plans or practices?

The director of a Head Start center and family services staff talk with each other during their regular weekly meeting about partnering with the growing number of Muslim families in their community. Family services staff would like to deepen their understanding of the interests, strengths, and needs of the many new Arabic- and Farsi-speaking families at the center.

In conversations with families and community members, staff has learned about an Imam in the community who is highly respected. Staff ask the director about the possibility of reaching out to him as a step in increasing their knowledge of the community.

The director agrees and calls the Imam to see if he might be interested in meeting. The Imam tells her that he is familiar with the program and has seen members of his congregation playing on the playground outside of the Head Start center when he drives by. The Imam invites the center director to meet with him at his home office, and they agree that the program’s family services worker will join them as well.

When the director and family services worker arrive at his house, a young woman greets them at the door. She invites them in, and an older woman then comes to greet them in a language that neither of them understand. The young woman introduces her as her mother. The older woman then turns to speak to the young woman, gesturing gently toward the kitchen.

The young woman turns toward them saying, “My father is finishing with another appointment that is running over a little bit.” She walks toward the kitchen, returning with two glasses of fruit juice that she offers them. “Maybe you’re thirsty,” she says. “It’s hot outside. I don’t think my father will be long.”

Soon after, a door opens at the side of the living room, and a man and woman come out. They are speaking with an older man in a language other than English. As the couple passes through the living room, the young woman and her mother say goodbye to them.



The older man approaches and warmly greets the Head Start director and family services worker. He apologizes for starting late, saying he hopes they have been comfortable. He says he is pleased that they have met his wife and daughter and then leads them toward his office door. They enter and sit next to his desk.

After a bit of conversation, the Imam begins to share some thoughts. “Honestly,” he says, “it can be a little confusing for our members to understand what is happening with different children’s programs. People are not sure how to know which programs provide good quality services and preparation for kindergarten.” He adds, “This is a new community for many members of our congregation. While some are familiar with programs for babies and young children, others are not. Some of our members prefer to keep their children at home with family members, or with babysitters when they go to school or work.”

He continues candidly, “People are cautious. We hear people express concerns about whether their children will be safe in child care programs, or if they will be cared for in familiar ways.” He says people also wonder if programs will be accepting to newcomers in the community.

The director and the family services worker listen carefully as the Imam shares more of his thoughts and observations. “I have a very diverse congregation,” he says. “Our members come from different regions and countries and speak different languages. We gather together under one roof, to share our common purpose and beliefs. And our mosque has become a center of cultural life for many of our members.”

As she listens, the director begins to wonder if it would be helpful to invite the Imam and some members of his congregation to visit the Head Start center. She thanks him for making time to talk. “Conversations like these are important in helping us respond to all of the members of our community,” she says. “I realize you are busy,” she adds, “but I wonder if you or anyone in your congregation would consider a visit to our program to meet some of our staff and families, and to get a sense of the environment and program.” He smiles and says, “The mosque has a Child Life Committee that meets monthly. I appreciate the invitation and wonder if one or two of the members of the group might like to join me.”

The family services worker tells him about an upcoming parent dinner and meeting. “Maybe you could join us before the meeting,” she offers. “We could tour the program and you could speak with some of our families and children. You would be welcome to stay for the dinner. The parent group that organized the event has invited a number of community members to join us,” she adds.

Realizing that they have been talking for more than an hour, they begin to finish the conversation. They are pleased to have some potential next steps in place to continue to familiarize themselves with each other’s organization. The director shares written materials that include information about the program, and points out the program’s Web address. “The website can be helpful,” she says. “It includes materials in many languages that families and others can use to learn more about the program and services. Maybe you could share these materials with your Child Life Committee as well.”

They say goodbye, walk back into the living room, and thank the young woman and her mother for their hospitality.

Driving back to the center, the director and family services worker talk in the car. The director has recently started reviewing the program’s intake process. Program staff have been concerned about potential gaps in information collected at enrollment. The director wonders if this potential new relationship with the Imam and his colleagues might provide an opportunity to consult with them as they finalize the review.

Scenario Reflections

Take a moment to write down your reflections to the following questions:

What structures and routines do staff have in place to enhance their responsiveness to the interests, strengths, and needs of families?

What additional resources might be helpful to access?

What did staff learn in their conversation that might inform their plans or practices?



Reflective Practice Opportunity: Questions to Consider

After reviewing the information and scenarios described above, it can be useful to reflect individually about your work or with your team on your program practice. You can use the questions below to initiate or guide your conversations and thoughts.

- Does your program address all five of the PFCE Framework’s Program Impact Areas in support of children who are dual language learners and their families? Which one(s) does the program address? Are there others that you would like to focus on?
- How do you coordinate strategies between Program Impact Areas or within each Program Impact Area to make all of your efforts more effective?
- What are your program’s strengths in supporting children who are dual language learners and their families?
- Did you identify any areas that you would like to grow or expand in your program and community to support children who are dual language learners and their families?
- Are there individuals in your community, parent, or family group with whom you would like to enhance partnerships in order to support the strengths and needs of children who are dual language learners and their families?

- Are there staff members and other professional colleagues you would like to consult with to increase your program’s capacity to address the strengths, interests, and needs of children who are dual language learners and their families?
- Is there anything you would like to do immediately to enhance your ability to address the strengths, interests, and needs of children who are dual language learners in your program?
- Do you have any long-term goals to increase your program’s ability to address the strengths, interests, and needs of children who are dual language learners and their families? If so, what are these goals?
- Can you identify any perceived barriers in your community that could affect children who are dual language learners and their families? If so, who or what could help to reduce those barriers?
- Are there resources you do not have now that you think would help you to enhance your ability to partner with families of children who are dual language learners? How could you begin to access those resources?

Early childhood professionals and their situations are unique. How might you use the PFCE Framework to guide your work with children who are dual language learners and their families?

What strategies do you already use to engage children who are dual language learners and their families?

What new strategies can you plan for and implement in the future to support children who are dual language learners and their families?

Resources

Planned Language Approach (PLA) Selected Resources

The Planned Language Approach (Overview)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/planned-language-approach>

The Benefits of Being Bilingual (PLA)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/benefits-of-being-bilingual.pdf>

Classroom Language Models: A Leader's Implementation Guide (PLA)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/pps-language-models.pdf>

Home Language for Success in School and Life

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

Home Language Support: The Gift of Language (PLA)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/gift-of-language-eng.pdf>

Including Children's Home Languages and Cultures Tip Sheet (PLA)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/dll-childrens-home-languages.pdf>

Inviting and Supporting Cultural Guides and Home Language Models Tip Sheet (PLA)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/planned-language-approach/docs/dll-ts-supporting-cultural-guides-language-models.pdf>

Language at Home and in the Community (PLA)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/language-home-families-eng.pdf>

A Systems Approach to Language and Literacy Organizational Capacity Checklist (PLA)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/pps-organizational-capacity-checklist.pdf>

Additional Resources

California's Best Practice for Young Dual Language Learners

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf>

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute: Research Reports and Briefs—Dual Language Learners

<http://cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu/document-library>

Integrating Refugees into the Head Start Community

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/integrating-refugees-head-start-community>

Dual Language Learners: A National Demographic and Policy Profile

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/dual-language-learners-national-demographic-and-policy-profile>

Migration Policy Institute: Resources and Publications on Immigrant Families

https://www.migrationpolicy.org/search?search_api_views_fulltext=immigrant+families&field_publication_type=All&created%5Bdate%5D=09%2F01%2F2001&created_%5Bdate%5D=

Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures Toolkit.

<https://www.nap.edu/resource/24677/toolkit/introduction.html>

Same, Different, and Diverse: Understanding Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/fcp/docs/same-different-diverse.pdf>

Suggested Reading

Child Language Research and Revitalization Working Group. (2017). *Language documentation, revitalization, and reclamation: Supporting young learners and their communities*. Waltham, MA: Education Development Center.

Espinosa, L. M. (2015). *Getting it right for young children from diverse backgrounds: Applying research to practice with a focus on dual language learners* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Vermani, E. A., & Mangione, P. L. (2013). *Infant/toddler caregiving: A guide to culturally sensitive care* (2nd ed.). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

Zero to Three. (2008). *Revisiting and updating the multicultural principles for Head Start programs serving children ages birth to five: Addressing culture and home language for Head Start systems and services*. Washington DC: Zero to Three Press.

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