

English Learners: Working with Families of Young Children

Est. Time: 30 Minutes

Objective

Understand the importance of supporting a child's home language in the classroom and of involving families in decisions about how to support their child's language development.

DEC Recommended Practices

This activity addresses the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices topic areas outlined below. (DEC is a division of the Council for Exceptional Children.)

Family

F1. Practitioners build trusting and respectful partnerships with the family through interactions that are sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity.

F8. Practitioners provide the family of a young child who has or is at risk for developmental delay/disability, and who is a dual language learner, with information about the benefits of learning in multiple languages for the child's growth and development.

Environment

E1. Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

E3. Practitioners work with the family and other adults to modify and adapt the physical, social, and temporal environments to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

Overview

The families of young English learners (ELs) are an important resource for classroom teachers. Families are a critical partner in helping children to maintain their home language. In addition, teachers can enlist the assistance of families in supporting their classroom learning environments in a variety of ways, including inviting them to share stories, songs, or foods from their culture. Asking families to share materials shows a value and respect for the families and their cultures. Further, if specific linguistic and cultural materials are not readily available, teachers can create these with the help of families using photographs and other materials from the children's homes.

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Activity

The DEC Recommended Practices (DEC-RP) can help families to understand the benefits of maintaining children's home language as they learn English. Click the image below to visit a web page where you can watch the video *The Best of Both Worlds: Nurturing Multiple Languages*. After you have done so, answer the questions that follow.



Credit: National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (2015). Washington, DC: Office of Head Start.

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Why is it important to involve families in decisions about how to support young children's language development?
2. What suggestions do you have for working with the families of young ELs?