Harnessing the Potential of Multiple Languages & Family Partnerships in Early Childhood Intervention & Special Education

Webinar Moderators:
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National Center for Systemic Improvement

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Webinar Format & Questions

- Throughout the presentation, submit your questions into the question pod.
  - For technical issues/questions, a webinar team member will try to assist you as soon as possible.
  - For content related questions, there will be a time for **Q&A** at the end of the presentation. Submit your questions and we will share them with the presenters.
Today’s webinar is the second in a series on language learning following NCSI’s Part B webinar:

“What Research Says About Identification and Assessment of English Learners with Disabilities”

https://ncsi-library.wested.org/resources/20
Presenters

Doré LaForett
- FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-Chapel Hill

Lorraine Cooke
- Egenolf Early Childhood Development Center

Mercedes Rosa
- Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Topics of Today’s Webinar

• What research says about dual language learners (DLLs) in early childhood (0–5 years):
  – Capacity and developmental trajectories
  – Benefits across developmental domains

• Voices from the field on what works:
  – Early childhood program success story
  – Partnering with families of DLLs
Webinar Objectives

• Summarize current research on capacity and developmental trajectories of young DLLs.

• List the developmental domains that benefit from learning more than one language when children are young.

• Identify components of an early childhood center-based program that support DLLs and their families.

• Explain how family organizations can support families with limited English proficiency, their children, and early childhood programs.
DLLs and the SSIP

• Part C SIMRs—Majority related to social-emotional skills and knowledge and skills
• Part B SIMRs—Many focus on outcomes up to and including the third grade; 2 states are focusing on preschool outcomes
• ALL states serve DLLs, and ALL SIMRs will be affected by the success of DLLs
NASEM Report—A KEY Resource

http://www.nap.edu/24677
Research: Normative Dual Language Development

Doré R. LaForett, PhD
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Dual Language Development—Capacity

- No evidence that exposure to two languages is a developmental risk
- Capacity for competence in both languages with adequate exposure, developing skills in:
  - Vocabulary
  - Morphology
  - Syntax
  - Pragmatics

(National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017)
Dual Language Development—Trajectories

• Exposure to both languages before age 3, milestones:
  – Have many of the same language trajectories and skills as monolinguals
  – Reach language milestones at the same time

• Past age 3, milestones come months or years later.

• What’s different for DLLs?
  – May take longer to learn differences in languages
  – May use alternate learning strategies
  – Proficiency may reflect varied input and quality

• This is normative—does not indicate a language disorder, impairment, or disability.

(NASEM, 2017; National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning [NCECDTL], n.d.)
Dual Language Development—Language Discrimination

- Strong language discrimination abilities, beginning in infancy
- May take longer to learn certain phonological properties
- May use alternate learning strategies to discriminate between the two languages

(NASEM, 2017)
Dual Language Development – Vocabulary & Grammar

• Appear to have smaller vocabularies – when assessed on one language
• Total “conceptual vocabulary” - when assessed on both languages - exceeds monolinguals’ vocabulary
• For grammar, same as monolinguals on:
  – General developmental patterns
  – Rates
  – Milestones
• But separate grammatical systems from early development

NASEM, 2017
Dual Language Development—Codeswitching

- **Normal** part of dual language development, bilingual talk
- Often strategic:
  - To substitute unknown words
  - To adjust to the listener’s language
  - For emphasis

(NASEM, 2017)
Dual Language Development—Cognitive Capacity

• “Executive function” advantages:
  – Focus attention
  – Reason about others’ mental states
  – Metalinguistic awareness
  – Spatial and working memory

• Practice with cognitive flexibility

• Occurs when both languages are strong

(NASEM, 2017; NCECDTL, n.d.)
Dual Language Development—Math Skills

• Descriptions of math concepts can differ by language:
  – Can affect understanding

• Knowing a math concept in one language:
  – Potential to know or learn same concept in other language

(NASEM, 2017)
Dual Language Development—Social and Emotional Skills

• Underresearched
• Comparable to or better than monolinguals
• Advantages:
  – Greater self-control and interpersonal skills
  – Fewer behavior problems
  – Better approaches to learning

(Center for Early Childhood Education Research–Dual Language Learners [CECER-DLL], 2011; NASEM, 2017)
Dual Language Development – Benefits

- More communication capacity
- Improved cognitive skills
- Maintain family & cultural ties
- Learning
  - Home language skills predict school success
- Economic
Dual Language Development – Language Loss

• When exposed to English in preschool, preference for it over home language

• Risks of home language loss:
  – May lose ability to communicate with family members
  – Risk becoming estranged from cultural & linguistic heritage
Questions?
Voices From the Field: Supporting Young Children’s Dual Language Development

Lorraine Cooke, EdD
Executive Director
Egenolf Early Childhood Center
The Egenolf Early Childhood Center

History
Demographics
Commitment to quality
Egenolf Staffing to Support DLLs

- Teachers
- Teacher Assistants
- Family Workers
- Security Guards
- Before and After Care Staff
Intake Procedures

• Identify the family home language and language preference(s).

• Explain program design.

• Tour the classroom.
Classroom Assignment

• Match child’s placement to teacher/teacher assistant:
  – Language
  – Strive for classroom diversity:
    • Gender
    • Language
    • Culture
  – Classroom environment supports home language:
    • Labeling
    • Books
    • Pictures
Curriculum Delivery

• Home language used whenever possible
• Morning meeting and individual and group story book reading in multiple languages
• Children placed in small groups by home language
• Children can choose different groups during worktime
Parent/Family Conferences

• Conducted by staff skilled in language of family choice.
  – Interpreters provided if/when necessary.
• Parent/family group meetings always include an interpreter.
• Center staff accompany all families to school special education meetings on evaluation or intervention.
Collaborations

• Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)
• Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ)
• Children’s Specialized Hospital
• Elizabeth School District
Outcomes

• Children supported in English and native language communication

• Parents/families build pride and confidence in communicating and partnering in an educational setting:
  • Families’ native language is respected.
  • Desire to learn English is inspired.
Celebrations

• Multicultural days in the classroom
• Parent/family engagement activities:
  – Book readings
  – Performances
  – Clothing
  – Art
  – Music
Questions?
Voices From the Field: Role of Family Organizations

Mercedes Rosa
Project Director
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Is to children with the greatest need due to disability; poverty; discrimination based on race, sex, **language, or immigrant status**; involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system; geographic location; or family or other special circumstances.
SPAN Focus

- Engaging families at individual and systems improvement levels
- Changing demographics and disparities
- Measuring impact and outcomes
- Providing targeted parent and professional development
SPAN Activities

• Parent trainings in multiple languages:
  – Early intervention (EI)
  – Transition from EI to preschool special education
  – Rights of immigrant and limited English proficiency (LEP) families and children in EI, education, and health
  – Leadership development
SPAN Activities

• Individualized assistance to families with LEP:
  – Navigating systems
  – Partnering with EI, special education, and other professionals
  – Advocacy skills
  – Resources

• Partnering with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and providers
Underlying Principles

- Strengths-based
- Family-centered
- Building empowerment, not dependence
- Relationship-based
- Solution-focused
- Continuous quality improvement
Starting Place

- Identify small group of parents from targeted community and community cultural liaisons.
- Communicate with them in their preferred language and provide them with support.
- Ask for their help in planning, implementation, and evaluation.
Factors Affecting Family Partnership

• Immigrant and LEP parents’ beliefs and perceptions
• Specific professional practices that encourage immigrant and LEP parent involvement at all levels and guide their engagement
How do we get there?

- Engaging and partnering with immigrant/LEP families requires:
  - Vision, leadership, partnership, and investment
  - Active listening and cultural reciprocity
  - Tangible, emotional, and environmental supports
  - Mechanism(s) to track the contributions and outcomes of their engagement—“You treasure what you measure”
Critical Supports

• Start where families are
• Connect to peers
• Focus on empowerment through relationships and capacity building
• Lead together!
Partner With Immigrant CBO and Parent-Led Organizations

• These organizations help systems:
  – Recognize and understand the barriers to participation by families
  – Make changes to address barriers
  – Engage families in all processes

• Fundamental ingredients:
  – Mutual respect for skills and knowledge
  – Mutually agreed-upon goals
  – Trust and honesty
  – Clear and open communication
  – Shared planning and decision making
Our Lessons Learned

• Identify and partner with CBOs and service delivery systems.

• Ensure that representative staff are involved.

• Ask immigrant/LEP families what they need and what works for them:
  – Don’t assume or presume readiness, capacity, language ability

• Be flexible and determined.

• Conduct ongoing evaluation and debrief learnings to improve outcomes.
Questions?
Discussion
References


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Helpful Resources

Center for Early Care and Education Research–Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL), http://cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu/
Center for Parent Information & Resources, www.parentcenterhub.org
Equity Alliance, www.equityallianceatasu.org/about
Equity Assistance Centers, www2.ed.gov/programs/equitycenters/contacts.html
IRIS Center, Dual Language Learners with Disabilities: Supporting Young Children in the Classroom, online module, https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dll/
IRIS Center, resource locator, https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/iris-resource-locator/#content
National Center for Cultural Competence, https://nccc.georgetown.edu/
  – Self-Assessments, https://nccc.georgetown.edu/assessments/
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