



Nurturing Bilingual Infants and Toddlers

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What do infants and toddlers need?

POLL #1

What do infants and toddlers need?



- 1. Support of their home language & culture
- 2. While also learning English
- 3. Prepared and supported teachers/carers
- 4. A properly prepared environment
- 5. Partnership between program and family

June 2, 2016



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



POLICY STATEMENT ON SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN WHO
ARE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Federal Recommendations (pp. 20-29)

- Use a strength based approach that embraces diversity.
- Partner with families.
- Identify and implement a plan for how languages will be used in the classroom to provide a rich language environment.

- Establish a culturally responsive learning environment.



- Ensure the workforce has competencies to support DLLs.
- Ensure that screenings and assessments are appropriate.
- Ensure the curriculum is appropriate.

- Promote positive teacher-child or provider-child relationships.
- Support monolingual staff in serving children who are DLLs.
- Accurately identify and serve children with disabilities who are DLLs.
- Facilitate smooth transitions within and across programs.

What do infants and toddlers need?



1. Support of their home language & culture
2. While also learning English
3. -
4. -
5. -

It is NOT our job to teach children English...

It is our job to teach children!



1st & 2nd language development begin before birth!

- Brain's ability to catalog speech sounds from 2 languages is evident from birth
- Brain's preparedness to learn in more than one language exists from birth

The Linguistic Genius of Babies

Share this video

2,209,867 views

Patricia Kuhl shares astonishing findings about how babies learn one language over another — by listening to the humans around them and “taking statistics” on the sounds they need to know. Clever lab

The New York Times

Sunday Review

Why Bilinguals Are Smarter

Gray Matter

By YUDHRIT BHATTACHARJEE MARCH 17, 2012



Dual Language Learners
Research Informing Policy

Dina C. Castro
Eugene E. García
Amy M. Markos

Center for
Early Care and Education Research
Dual Language Learners

Language and Literacy

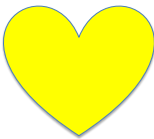
- DLLs have 2 separate language systems from early in life, but they are not negatively impacted from use of the 2 languages

Cognitive Benefits

- Bilingual development can have important positive effects in metalinguistic awareness, cognitive flexibility, and enhanced executive functions.

Research → to → Practice

- Features of high quality ece (intentional teaching, integrated learning, positive teacher-child and home-school relationships, low ratios, assessments, parent engagement) are important for DLLs,
BUT NOT SUFFICIENT!



strawberry



- “It’s not just about shoving words in”

Kathy Hirsh-Pasek in NYT interview
<http://nyti.ms/2c5qUIB>



**Key strategy: Always build connections
Between familiar words and new words!**



How does language develop?

Think about that very first spoken word



Young children are **NOT** sponges.



... and to help them be the active language learners they need to be....

What do infants and toddlers need?



1. -
2. -
3. Prepared and supported teachers/carers
4. -
5. -

How do we prepare teachers/carers for the populations they'll serve?

- Pre-service training and coursework?
- Hiring bilingual staff?
- Job-embedded, in-service PD?
- Well-informed bosses supporting their work?
- Well-informed curriculum supports and professional development providers?

What do infants and toddlers need?

POLL #2

If you hire a person because they have additional language assets... you need to talk with them about how to USE those assets. Seriously.



Prepare those teachers & paras!

- Talk about language use during interview
- Have written language plan/policy
- Provide orientation to bilingual staff
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities

Prepare those teachers & paras!

They need to know:

- When to use each language
- How to handle conversations with families
- How to build language through responsive conversations and explicit connections between words.

How to build language through responsive conversations and explicit connections between words.

- Wait a minute... What was that???
- Let's talk about some examples.

Conversations? With babies?

- Echo sounds
- Connect sounds with meaning
 - You’ll need families to help with this!
- Focus, eye-contact, joint attention, clear reference
- Songs with useable, meaningful words
- Baby sign language to bridge languages

Explicit connections between words:

Words don’t help if the child doesn’t know what you’re talking about

No matter how many millions of words you use.

Seriously.

Explicit connections between words:

- Pictures don’t help if they don’t mean anything to the child



Explicit connections between words:

- Narrate what you're doing IF the child is paying attention.
- Respond to child's interest REGARDLESS of what you had planned
- Using words in home language is good IF you use them intentionally to build connections to meaning

... And to support first and second language development, these prepared teachers/carers need stuff to talk about...

What do infants and toddlers need?



1. -
2. -
3. -
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5. -

Features of culturally and linguistically responsive environment:

- Images, materials and displays that children can relate to
- Items from home
- Items with intrinsic meaning
- Items that are used and talked about
- Reduced visual and auditory clutter
- Easily changed in response to interests and needs





Photos courtesy of King's Daughters Day School and Bigstock.com



Just remember these:





What do infants and toddlers need?

POLL #3

Digital resources

My Story app



Wheels on the Bus

By Duck Duck Moose



Digital cameras, devices



...And, of course, technology gives us lots of ways to...

What do infants and toddlers need?



- 1. -
- 2. -
- 3. -
- 4. -
- 5. Partnership between program and family

What do infants and toddlers need?

POLL #4

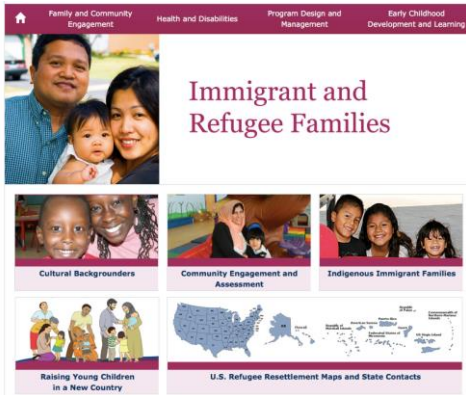
Reasons for supporting home language:

- Academic/Cognitive advantages
- Identity/Self-Esteem
- Family Strength
- Social Status & Relationships



Considerations for families when you don't understand:

- **Believe** they want the best for their child – but they may not agree with you
- **Believe** they are not having an easy life and you may not know the challenges they've faced
- **Believe** that there is no one book on "cultural awareness" that's going to help you relate to each individual family







Insert video clip from movie Babies

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Thank you!

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