ELLLEY Guiding Principles & Core Strategies for Young Dual Language Learners

Be a Strong Language Role Model

As children develop their home language and English in the preschool setting, we as teachers must be intentional about how we model language. We are scaffolding their language learning. Children can learn about language through our example.

- Use **rich, complex language** in both the home language and English
- Model **common, useful language structures**, e.g. how to ask for things, key phrases, how to ask a peer to play – **everyday language**
- Introduce and use **academic vocabulary** – novel words, rare words, content words
- **Stay in one language.** While it is normal for young bilingual children to code-switch, teachers should model one language at a time
- **Anchor language for children.** Use props, real objects, nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, pantomime, gestures to scaffold children's access to meaning

Create a Language-rich Thematic Curriculum

Organizing our curriculum around a central theme provides a natural structure to recycle language and scaffolds content learning for dual language learners.

- Identify **everyday words and academic words** related to your theme
- Weave the theme **throughout the day**—e.g. small group time, outdoor time, dramatic play time, etc.
- Elect **3-4 core books** for every theme, drawing on different types of books. What is the target vocabulary for each book?

Engage Children in Read Alouds

When we read aloud to children we support their early literacy development by introducing and reinforcing concepts about print, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, and story narrative. What we do in the home language transfers to their early literacy development in English.

- **Read books** in the **home language**, **in English**, and other bilingual books.
- **Read different types of books**—predictable books, alphabet books, rhyming books, etc..
- **Ask children to discuss books** by prompting them to recall, infer, and evaluate
- **Storywalk** to build comprehension
- Use **props, realia, and non-verbal cues**, charts, and graphic organizers to scaffold comprehension
- **Engage children in role play** based on books

Create Environments to set Children at Ease

When we create predictable routines and transitions for young dual language learners, we prove socio-emotional scaffolds. These scaffolds are essential to their learning and development.

- Establish a predictable **daily schedule** and follow predictable routines and transitions
- Dedicate time to work with children in **small groups**
- Dedicate time to **engage with children one-on-one**
- Allow children to **use home language throughout the day** to socialize with peers and to engage in activities.

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Foster Home Language Development and Partnerships with Parents

We foster home language development in any way possible, both in the classroom and at home. This is especially important in the preschool years when children are still building a foundation in the home language. When we forge partnerships with parents, we create a network of support that will reinforce classroom efforts at home.

- Tap into the **language resources of your community**
- **Focus on home language development with children in small groups**
- Encourage children to **speak in their home language**
- **Allow children to code-switch.** It shows how resourceful a child can be!
- **Know your students and their families**—what languages do they speak? What are their stories?
- **Communicate** to parents about the **benefits of bilingualism**
- **Invite children's families** to participate in the classroom
- Provide parents with a **list of key vocabulary words in English and their home language** so they may practice with their child at home.

Create Opportunities to Recycle Language

Recycling language helps reinforce vocabulary, engages children in extended talk, and creates scaffolds for children to learn content.

- Talk with children for **lots of reasons**—not just to get things done!
- **Initiate conversations** with individual children
- **Follow the child's lead** in a conversation
- **Engage children** in conversations in multiple settings **throughout the day**
- Encourage children to **talk with their peers**
- **Scaffold extended talk**—adjust and anchor your language; expand on what children say; think aloud; explain key vocabulary; and share feelings.
- Engage children in **songs, chants, and finger plays**
- Provide opportunities for children to use **target vocabulary throughout the day** in multiple contexts—e.g. during activities, circle time, etc.

Engage Children with Purposeful Written Language

Young children learn about writing when it is meaningful and purposeful. The writing we model should serve a purpose and the writing we post in the classroom should be used or referenced regularly. We should also create opportunities for children to write in various contexts throughout the day.

- Post a **daily schedule** in the classroom
- **Label key areas** of the classroom
- Use drawings, illustrations, icons, and graphics to **support comprehension**
- Provide **examples of written language** in the home language and English
- Provide **meaningful opportunities for children to write** to communicate with their peers, their family, and you!
- **Take dictation from children** in their home language and English—and think aloud as you write

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