

Developmentally Appropriate Academic Language: The Language of Experience

The language of experience for young children is:

- Grounded in developmentally appropriate practice
- Guided by the concept that cognitive and linguistic development is socially-constructed
- Informed by the stages of early second language acquisition (WIDA, 2013)

How do EEC educators effectively support young Dual Language Learners (DLLs)?



Basic Principles for Supporting Dual Language Learners (DLLs)

SCAFFOLD FOR LANGUAGE.

- Speak clearly and at a normal pace. Pause as needed.
- Simplify your language (not the content).
- Build on children's language by adding a word to their comments and questions.
- Use lots of repetition.
- Allow for extra "wait time."
- Use tiered questions that are appropriate to the level of English development.

INTENTIONALLY PLAN FOR LANGUAGE SUPPORTS.

- Use real objects and provide first hand experiences as much as possible.
- When using visuals, try to include photographs.
- Plan opportunities to work with language partners.
- Intentionally plan how you will model and use language. Remember that language use and adult-child interaction patterns vary from culture to culture!

- Use gestures and body language. Note that gestures and body language are culturally grounded and are not always shared from culture to culture.
- Use home language support as much as possible. Invite families to volunteer, share commonly-used words, etc.

BUILD ON CHILDREN'S BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE.

Children's experiences are embedded within the culture and language of their families. Their sociocultural experiences may vary significantly from yours and the culture of your program. Even at their young age, children have acquired large amounts of knowledge and experience.

- Tap into children's knowledge and experience. Involve families to gain understanding.
- Invite families to share their cultures through stories, objects, and literacies.
- Use non-fiction books to share information about children's backgrounds.

INCREASE MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS.

- Allow ample time to use language in context.
- Create a safe and supportive environment for language learning.
- Plan consistent times to interact with DLLs in thoughtful and meaningful ways.
- Use your knowledge of linguistic strengths and needs when partnering children.
- Provide lots of opportunities for children to practice oral language and make sense of what they are hearing.

PROMOTE HIGHER LEVEL THINKING THROUGH CONVERSATION.

Simplifying the linguistic demand does not mean that we simplify the cognitive function! Children at all language levels can engage in higher level thinking according to their developmental capacity. The number and complexity of language functions used by children increases as language develops.

- Utilize the Model Performance Indicators (MPIs) in the WIDA Early English Language Development (E-ELD) standards framework. The MPIs provide examples of how children are able to process or produce language within specific sociocultural contexts at three levels of early English language development within three age clusters.