

Little Language Learners

A Resource for Families and Teachers
of Bilingual Children



Child360TM One focus.
Every angle.

Who Are Dual Language Learners?

Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are children between 0-5 years old who are learning two or more languages at once. There are over 11 million Dual Language Learners living in the United States, and approximately 1 in 3 preschool-aged children in the U.S. speak two or more languages.

If a person speaks and understands two languages, they are **bilingual**. If they can speak and understand three or more languages, they are **multilingual**.



Learning more than one language builds children's attention, problem solving, and social skills. As they grow into bilingual and multilingual adults, they are able to communicate with people from many different backgrounds, giving them unique advantages.

Early language development, in any language, creates a strong foundation for children's achievement in school and in life.

Learning Language at Home

The language most often spoken by a child's family is their **home language**. Even if a child's home language is different from the one taught at school, children can easily learn two or more languages at the same time, which promotes brain development and communication skills. Here's how parents and families can help:

Sing songs, play games, and recite rhymes in children's home language to teach them new words.

Read stories aloud to children in their home language. Building a solid foundation with their home language will make it easier for them to learn others.



In the early years, language develops alongside children's social and emotional development. In all social interactions and daily activities, you can speak with children, introduce new words in their home language, and also share those same words in different languages. These opportunities can be during playtime, mealtime, bath time, reading at bedtime, and more.

Supporting Language Between Home and School

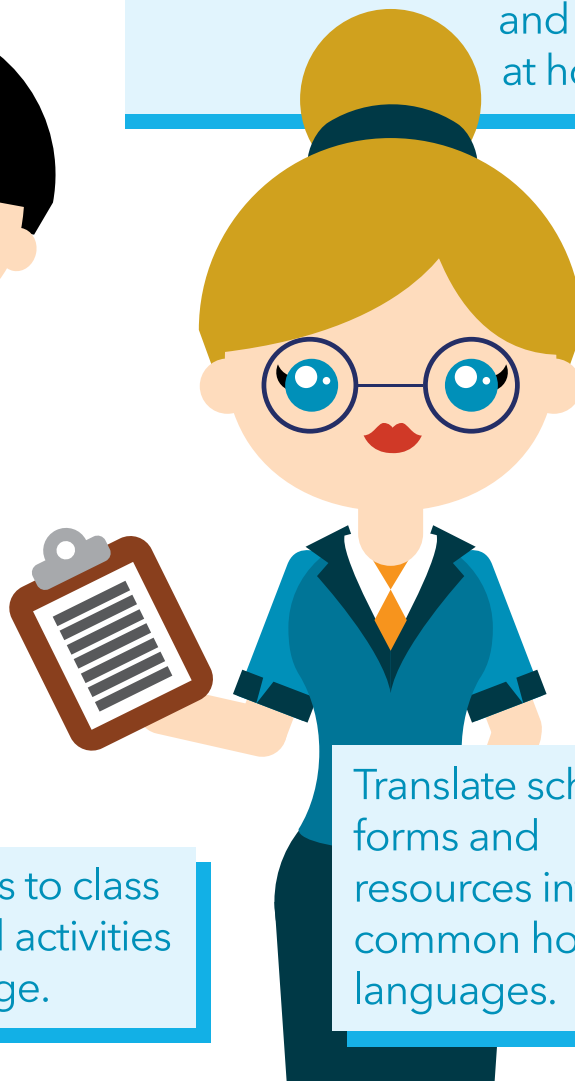
Family engagement at school leads to better outcomes in a child's social skills, brain development, and academic achievement. Regardless of their language background, here's how early education providers at culturally responsive programs can work together with families to promote language learning:

Arrange meetings or potlucks so families can meet each other, network, and socialize.

Create a library of bilingual books for families to borrow and read at home.



Invite family members to class to read books or lead activities in their home language.



Translate school forms and resources into common home languages.

Build community partnerships with family liaisons and translators to create a support network for families whose home language is different from the language taught at school.

Dual Language Learning Classrooms

Using children's home languages in early education settings supports their brain development. There are several ways to include more than one language in the classroom:

In **dual immersion classrooms**, children hear more than one language from their *teachers*. These classrooms can be taught by a single bilingual teacher, OR by two teachers who speak different languages working together.



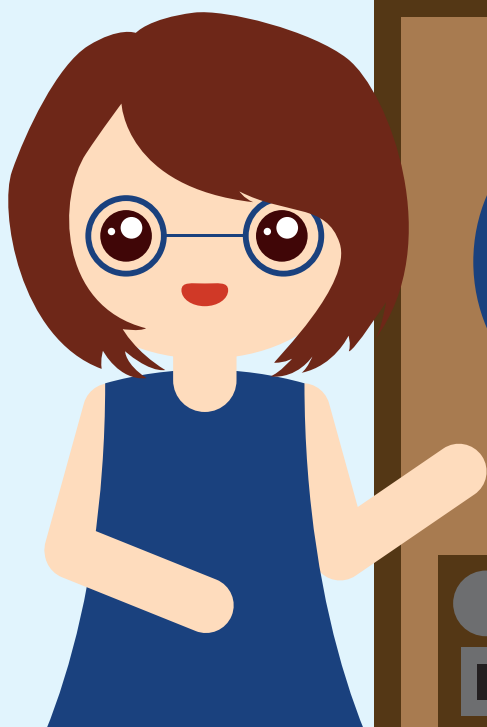
In **two-way immersion classrooms**, children hear more than one language from their *classmates*. An example is a classroom where half the children speak mostly English, and the other half speak mostly Spanish. By interacting with their classmates, children will learn both languages.

Sometimes, children may use two languages within the same sentence, or use different languages when talking to different people. These are examples of **code switching**, which is common and useful as children develop their language skills.

Learning Language at School

Teachers who are monolingual, or teachers whose home language is different from common home languages in their community, can still support early language development in children of all backgrounds! Regardless of how many languages you speak, here's how:

Learn basic words in a child's home language (such as "please," "thank you," "yes," "no," "help," "bathroom," and "outside") to make classroom communication easier. This also demonstrates respect for home languages.



Use nonverbal communication to bridge language barriers. Hand gestures, drawings, and other visual cues can help children connect with each other and with adults in the classroom.

Hands-on group activities encourage talk, and also allow children to participate nonverbally. Children will learn new words by listening, and bilingual children may be able to help their monolingual friends who speak the same home language.

Read the same book multiple times in different languages. First, build understanding by reading in the children's home language (with help from a family member or community member, if needed). Then, expand their vocabulary by reading the book in a language most commonly used in the classroom.



Create social opportunities for children to practice language with a partner. Set up a dramatic play center with costumes and household items. As they imitate familiar scenes, allow children to use their home languages to communicate and learn from each other. This can also happen when you pair children up to complete small tasks, such as setting up for snack time or watering the classroom plants.



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Child360 is committed to supporting the development of the whole child, beginning at birth, to create a future where every child has the opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

Child360 believes in the benefits of bilingualism for the developing brain. We support Dual Language Learners by creating home-school connections, encouraging teachers to incorporate multiple languages and cultures in the classroom, and helping to develop a skilled and diverse early education workforce.

For more resources, please click here:

**Head Start's
Dual Language
Learners Toolkit**

**Colorín Colorado's
Tip Sheets for Parents**

**First 5 California's
Dual Language Learner
Resource Guide**