

WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development

1. Dual language learners are learning more than one language at the same time and adjust the use of their languages to different sociocultural contexts.

(Abell, 2007; Bialystok, 2001; Comeau, Genesee, & Mendelson, 2007; Edelsky & Jilbert, 1985; Genesee, Boivin, & Nicoladis, 1996; Genesee, Nicoladis, & Paradis, 1995; Green, Peña, & Bedore, 2012)

2. Dual language learners learn language and culture through their experiences at home, in the community, and in early care and education.

(Bornstein, 2012; Castro, 2011; Cuéllar & Garcia, 2012; Gillanders, Castro, & Franco, 2014; Magruder, Hayslip, Espinosa, & Matera, 2013; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Sawyer, Scheffner Hammer, Cycyk, Lopez, Blair, Sandilos & Komaroff, 2016; Scheele, Leseman, & Mayo, 2010; Smith, 2001; Tabors, 2008)

3. The languages and language varieties used by dual language learners and their families are valuable resources to be considered and incorporated into early care and education and into everyday routines and activities.

(Buyse, Castro, & Peisner–Feinberg, 2010; Castro, Espinosa, & Paez, 2011; Collins, 2010; Farver, Lonigan, Eppe, 2009; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Heng, 2011; Lugo-Neris, Jackson, & Goldstein, 2010; Michael-Luna, 2013; Michael-Luna, 2015; Naqvi, McKeough, Thorne, & Pfitscher, 2012; Reyes, Da Silva, & Feller, 2016; Rowe & Fain, 2013)

4. Dual language learners benefit from continuous home language development at all levels of English language development.

(Montelongo, Hernandez, & Herter, 2011; Prieto, 2009; Restrepo, Castilla, Schwanenflugel, Neuharth-Pritchett, Hamilton, & Arboleda, 2010; Rodriguez, 2001; Schwartz, 2014; Simon-Cerejido & Gutierrez-Clellen, 2014)

5. Dual language learners follow different paths for language development than monolingual learners.

(Andruski, Casielles, & Geoff, 2014; Bialystok, 2007; Davidson, Raschke, & Pervez, 2010; De Houwer, Bornstein, & De Coster, 2006; Dickinson, McCabe, Clark-Chiarelli, & Wolf, 2014; Dodd, So, & Lam, 2008; Fabiano-Smith & Goldstein, 2010; Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003; Hirata-Edds, 2011; Maneva & Genesee, 2002; Nicoladis & Marchak, 2011; Nicoladis, Pika, & Marentette, 2009; Smithson, Paradis, & Nicoladis, 2014; Yelland, Pollard, & Mercuri, 1993)

6. Dual language learners follow unique paths of language development according to their exposure to and opportunities for using their multiple languages.

(Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung, & Blanco, 2007; DeHouwer, 2009; Genesee, 2001; Genesee, 2010; Gibson, Peña, & Bedore, 2014; Hammer, Davison, Lawrence, & Miccio, 2009; Jones & Shue, 2013; King & Fogle, 2013; Nicoladis, 2002; Place & Hoff, 2011; Scheele, Leseman, & Mayo, 2010; Soltero-Gonzalez, 2008)

7. Dual language learners approach learning language in different ways, with each learner bringing a unique set of attitudes, habits, and preferences for language use.

(Baroody & Diamond, 2013; Chesterfield, Chesterfield, & Chavez, 1982; Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, Barrows & Chavez, 1983; McDermott, Rikoon, & Fantuzzo, 2014; Piker, 2013; Rikoon, McDermott, & Fantuzzo, 2012)

8. Dual language learners, like other children, develop language through play-based activities that invite rich language interaction.

(Bell, Greenfield, Bulotsky-Shearer, & Carter, 2016; Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Bulotsky-Shearer, Bell, Romero, & Carter, 2012; Cohen, Kramer-Vida, Frye, & Andreou, 2014; Huerta & Riojas-Cortez, 2014; Konishi, 2007; Piker, 2013; Riojas-Cortez, 2000; Riojas-Cortez, 2001)

9. Dual language learners are developing language and literacy at the same time that they are also developing physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

(Barac, Bialystok, Castro, & Sanchez, 2014; Bialystok, 2009; Bialystok & Martin, 2004; Halle, Whittaker, Zepeda, Rothenberg, Anderson, et al., 2014; Jordan-DeCarbo & Galliford, 2001; Lee, 1996; Oades-Sese & Li, 2011; Okanda, Moriguchi, & Itakura, 2010; Vygotsky, 1986; Winsler, Burchinal, Tien, Peisner-Feinber, Espinos, et. al., 2014; Winsler, Fernyhough, & Montero, 2009; Winsler, Kim, & Richard, 2014; Yang, Yag, & Lust, 2011; Yazejian & Peisner-Feinberg, 2009)

10. Dual language learners' development of social and developmentally appropriate academic language is a complex and long-term process.

(Alanis, 2013; Gort & Pontier, 2013; Gort, Pointer, & Sembiente, 2012; Hakuta, Butler, Goto, & Witt, 2000; Lewis, Sandilos, Hammer, Sawyer, & Méndez, 2016; Palmer, Martinez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014; Scheffner Hammer, Hoff, Uchikoshi, Gillanders, Castro, & Sandilos, 2014; Tsybina, Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2006; van Kleeck, 2014; Walsh, Sanchez, & Burnham, 2016)

Research Highlights

The WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development provide practitioners with a broad perspective on key concepts related to the language development of young children learning multiple languages. To further clarify the guiding principles, these research highlights provide practitioners with research-based descriptions and examples of effective practices.

Guiding Principle

1. Dual language learners are learning more than one language at the same time and adjust the use of their languages to different sociocultural contexts.

Research Highlights

- Children ages 2 and 3 years correct language-based miscommunications by switching languages to match the language of their speaking partner (Genesee, Boivin, & Nicoladis, 1996; Comeau, Genesee, & Mendelson, 2007).
 - Young children follow the lead of adults in their life with regard to language. If their mother speaks one language and their father speaks another, the child's language choice most often matches that of the interacting parent (Genesee, Nicoladis, & Paradis, 1995).
 - At the beginning stages of bilingualism, 5-year-old preschoolers switch between their languages to fill gaps in vocabulary in order to communicate more clearly (Greene, Peña, & Bedore, 2012, p. 27).
2. Dual language learners learn language and culture through their experiences at home, in the community and in early care and education.
 - Research shows that in early care and education settings, DLLs can be supported to learn English via the strategic use of their home language during learning and care routines. This includes gestures, the use of props, realia (real objects), and pictures (Sawyer, Scheffner-Hammer, Cycyk, et. al., 2016; Tabors, 2008).
 - Mothers of Mexican American DLL preschool children expressed a strong desire to instill a sense of Mexican identity in their children by speaking Spanish at home, listening to Spanish radio, and having *pláticas* (conversations) on the importance of having Spanish-speaking abilities (Cuéllar & Garcia, 2012).
 - Teachers should explore children's experiences outside of school and use this knowledge as a foundation for learning (Gillanders, Castro, & Franco, 2014). Successful out-of-school linguistic funds of knowledge activities include trips to key locations within the neighborhood (i.e., a local market) where children live and the minority language is spoken, reading newspapers in the minority language, and inviting parents and others in the community to read to children in the home language (Smith, 2001).

Guiding Principle

3. The languages and language varieties used by dual language learners and their families are valuable resources to be considered and incorporated into early care and education and every day routines and activities.

4. Dual language learners benefit from continuous home language development at all levels of English language development.

Research Highlights

- The language of the home should be incorporated into early care and education activities. For example, when children’s family members read the home language portion of bilingual books with practitioners in early care and education settings as a routine activity and not a novelty, children are motivated to learn both languages and improve their awareness of language components (metalinguistics) (Naqvi, McKeough, Thorne & Pfitscher, 2012).
- The funds of knowledge of DLLs’ families include using the home language for conversations, reading, writing, rhyming and singing. Young children become aware of phonetic (sound), semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammar), morphemic (form), and pragmatic aspects of language. Another key language-rich, culturally based activity in the homes of Spanish-speaking DLLs is sharing oral stories about when the adults were young; “Dime una historia cuando tú eras niño” (Reyes, Da Silva, & Feller, 2016).
- The continued development of the home language allows young Spanish-speaking DLLs to improve their vocabulary by easily recognizing and learning English–Spanish cognates (words that sound similar in both languages such as giraffe and jirafa) (Montelongo, Hernandez, Herter, 2011).
- Highlighting the similarities and differences between the languages of DLLs is an effective literacy learning strategy that teaches young children about their bilingualism. For instance, some languages have similar alphabets, printability, and words. Other languages vary in the language family that they belong to and the number of tones used (Rodriguez, 2001).
- Research shows that when young DLLs use their home language during vocabulary instruction, their depth of vocabulary knowledge improves in both the home language and in English. Key strategies include asking children to extend their description of a target word by answering stimulus questions such as, what is a dog? What does a dog usually look like? What types of dogs do you know? Where can you usually find a dog? (Schwartz, 2014).

Guiding Principle

5. Dual language learners follow different paths for language development than monolingual learners.

6. Dual language learners follow unique paths of language development according to their exposure to and opportunities for using their multiple languages.

Research Highlights

- There is evidence that the babbling of bilingual infants is different from that of monolingual infants, as their babbling is linked to common sounds in the syllables of both of their languages and their languages' overall stress patterns (Maneva & Genesee, 2002; Andruski, Casielles & Geoff, 2014).
- How and when monolingual and bilingual children learn words is different. As early as 13 months, simultaneous bilingual children can understand words for the same object (translation equivalents) (De Houwer, Bornstein, De Coster, 2006).
- Simultaneous bilingual children tend to have smaller vocabularies in each of their two languages when compared with children learning one language (monolingual) (Bialystok, 2009). It is important that we consider bilingual children's conceptual knowledge and the vocabularies of both their languages when assessing them (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1999).
- The relative amount of exposure to each of their languages is a strong predictor of preschool aged DLLs' rates of development in each language (Scheele, Leseman, & Mayo, 2010).
- The bilingual development of young DLLs is positively influenced by their exposure to native speakers of the home language and English (Place & Hoff, 2011).
- In a 3-year longitudinal study of language practices of mothers of preschool DLLs, it was found that their increased usage of English did not impact children's English vocabulary or emergent literacy development. However, increased usage of English slowed the growth of children's Spanish vocabulary (Hammer, Davison, Lawrence, & Miccio, 2009).
- The development of DLLs' languages is dependent on their exposure and use of each language. DLLs in the U.S. often know more vocabulary in English that is associated with academic contexts and know more language used in "everyday" interactions in the home language (Gallanders, Castro & Franco, 2014).

Guiding Principle

7. Dual language learners approach learning language in different ways with each learner bringing a unique set of attitudes, habits and preferences for language use.
8. Dual language learners, like other children, develop language through play-based activities that invite rich language interaction.
9. Dual language learners are developing language and literacy as they also develop physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally.

Research Highlights

- "English development is influenced by DLLs' personal preference for playing with peers who speak the same home language and who also play well with English speaking children" (Piker, 2013).
- Key learning behaviors in preschoolers associated with better learning outcomes in elementary school include child motivation to learn, persistence in learning tasks, and cooperation with other children (Rikoon, McDermott, & Fantuzzo, 2012).
- Dramatic play provides preschool DLLs with an opportunity to develop their language skills while interacting in culturally relevant activities that showcase their funds of knowledge. The funds of knowledge include the use of the home language and representation of their families' values, beliefs, and traditions (Riojas-Cortez, 2001).
- Story reenactment is a play-based, language-rich activity that improves preschool DLLs' English language development and story recall (Cohen, Kramer-Vida, Frye, & Andreou, 2014).
- In Head Start the following peer play behaviors improved literacy for DLLs: sharing toys, helping settle peer conflicts, encouraging others to join play, showing positive emotions and verbalizing and making up stories during play (Bell, Greenfield, Bulotsky-Shearer & Carter, 2016).
- Dual language learners in early childhood have been found to show higher cognitive performance than monolingual children specific to executive function. This is because thinking in two languages promotes focused attention and inhibition, as well as working memory and theory of mind (Barac, Bialystok, Castro, & Sanchez, 2014; Bialystok, & Martin, 2004).
- The social–emotional development of young DLLs has been found to be equal to that of their monolingual counterparts. Additionally, the use of the home language in early childhood classrooms allows for the strong familial ties between young DLL children and their parents, which is considered a base for normative social emotional development (Halle, Whittaker, Zepeda, Rothenberg, et. al., 2014).
- Close teacher–child relationships (e.g., teachers display affection, warmth, and open communication) significantly predicted preschoolers' English and Spanish language competence (Oades-Sese & Li, 2011).

Guiding Principle

10. Dual language learners' development of social and developmentally appropriate academic language is a complex and long-term process.

Research Highlights

- Research suggests that it takes between 4 and 7 years for DLLs to achieve both oral and academic proficiency in English (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000).
- Preschool children, particularly those from linguistically diverse backgrounds, need to have access to academic talk, defined as “the broad pattern of language (use)... allowing children to develop and display ideas and knowledge. This register usually includes lots of talk, sentence complexity, long utterances, elaborated language, discussion of concepts, and decontextualized knowledge (van Kleeck, 2014).
- In dual language preschool classrooms, pairing children who vary in language skill to work together creates a zone of proximal development where children can practice both social and academic language skills in a safe and relaxed environment (Alanis, 2013).
- The development of the academic vocabulary of Spanish-speaking, preschool, dual language learners is positively impacted by read aloud questions that require children to make inferences, predictions, hypotheses, and explanations (Walsh, Sanchez, & Burnham, 2016).

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