Instructional Strategies to Support Children with Disabilities Who are Dual Language Learners

Viewer's Guide

This viewer's guide will help you capture your ideas as you engage with the webinar content. During this webinar we will focus on strategies to support children with disabilities who are dual language learners (DLL). We will clear up some common misconceptions about children with disabilities who are DLLs, share information about how to distinguish between a language difference and a language delay, and explore evidence-based instructional strategies. Helpful resources can be found in the Resources section of this guide.

Disability & DLL: What Do We Know?

Exposure to more than one language can result in many positive outcomes for children with disabilities who are DLLs. When provided with early language, literacy learning opportunities, and instructional supports, children with disabilities who are DLLs can develop communication and early literacy skills.

What does research tell us about children with disabilities who are dual language learners?

- Children with disabilities can learn more than one language! Similar to their typically developing peers, children with disabilities who are also DLLs have the capacity to learn multiple languages and should have the opportunity to maintain their home language while also learning English (DEC 2014)

- Children with disabilities who are DLLs and are taught in both or all their languages benefit more than DLLs with disabilities who are only taught in their second language (Duran et al., 2016)

- Children who are DLLs and have a disability need both languages to develop and communicate effectively in all their environments (Cheatham, Glibertz, and Kerkutluoglu, 2012)

- Children who are DLLs and have a disability or a suspected delay may need individualized supports in their home language, in English, in sign language, or in other ways to help them learn and communicate effectively (Park, Cheatham, and Jimenez-Silva, 2017)

Disability & DLL: Myth Busting!

Do you have questions about children with disabilities who are dual language learners? You're not alone! Take a look at some common questions… and answers!

- **Question**: Should we only focus on one language at a time?
- **Answer**: No, children who are DLLs with disabilities can learn two languages at the same time! Research supports that children with Down syndrome and autism spectrum disorder, for example, can still learn two languages. Learning two languages do not place them at risk for greater delays or learning difficulties.

- **Question**: Do children need a certain cognitive level to be bilingual?
- **Answer**: No, children with different cognitive abilities can still be bilingual, they just need support to develop language. Oftentimes, we hear this idea that "bilingualism is a superpower." This is an encouraging phrase to remind people of the value of being bilingual. However, sometimes there's a misconception that it requires a certain cognitive level to be bilingual, and that's not true.

- **Question**: How can we know whether a child has a language difference versus a language disorder or disability?
- **Answer**: Children with language disorders or delays will show difficulties in both languages, even if the difficulty looks different across languages. If a child only shows difficulty in one language but is meeting communication milestones in the other language, they don't have an actual language delay or disability.

Did any of these answers surprise you? What questions do you still have?

Distinguishing Between Language Difference and Language Delay

Reflect: What happens in your program when there are concerns that a child who is a dual language learner might have a developmental delay or disability? What strategies shared in the webinar could be incorporated into your program's approach?

Disability & Bilingualism: Reframing Inclusion

Traditionally, inclusion means that we use strategies to ensure that children with disabilities receive equitable and high-quality learning experiences and instruction alongside children who do not have disabilities. However, when we reframe inclusion to also focus on bilingualism it means that we also use strategies to ensure that children's home languages are supported, even when program staff may not speak that same home language.

Reflect: Why do you think that reframing inclusion to also focus on bilingualism is important for children with disabilities?

Effective Strategies: Learn About Home Language

Home language inventories are a great way to learn about a child and family's home language, family preferences and values. A home language inventory is a tool used to gather information about the languages the children hear and respond to, and who they communicate with during weekdays and the weekend, as well as to gather information regarding whether they have experienced schooling/child care in an English speaking environment.

Here are some key questions/indicators of a good home language inventory/etc.

- 1. At what age was your child exposed to their home language? How about English?

- 2. Has your child attended a childcare or preschool where teachers only spoke English?

- 3. Think about your child's daily routine from Monday to Friday. Write down who speaks to the child, in which language(s), and what language(s) the child uses to respond. (For this question, it is helpful to present families with hourly schedule showing hours from 8AM-10PM).

- Think about your child's daily routine during the weekend. Write down who speaks to the child, in which language(s), and what language(s) the child uses to respond. (For this question, it is helpful to present families with hourly schedule showing hours from 8AM-10PM).

Effective Strategies: Supporting Learning Across the "Big 5"

Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing
Adapt strategies to support learning needs
- Show letters using different modalities
- Present one letter
- Repeat the letter multiple times across the day
- Review letters in small groups or individually

Background Knowledge
Adapt strategies to support learning needs
- Show key concepts using visuals or objects.
- Teach vocabulary that is key to understanding concepts first
- Review concepts again in small groups or individually

Book Knowledge and Print Concepts

Adapt strategies to support learning needs

- Adapt books so they are accessible to children
- Use knobs or sponges so it's easier to turn the pages
- Include additional pictures or objects with key vocabulary
- Use audio recordings of books, switch devices, or communication boards

Oral Language and Vocabulary

Adapt strategies to support learning needs

- Incorporate home language in communication devices
- Introduce new words and concepts using various modalities, such as visuals, objects, audio recordings, etc.
- Use evidence-based strategies language learning, including milieu teaching and dialogic reading

Phonological Awareness

Adapt strategies to support learning needs

- Focus on one skill at a time
- Start with visuals, gestures, then auditory only
- Start with easier skills, then progress in difficulty
- Feedback for responses

What's Next?

Which of the instructional strategies would you like to try first to support children with disabilities who are dual language learners? Will you try representing words, letters, or stories using multiple modalities? Will you use visual supports to present key words or concepts? Will you learn about and use dialogic reading?

Reflect: What strategy will you try first?

Reflect: How will you address both the home language AND the individual learning needs of the child when you use the strategy?

Helpful Resources

Online Resources

****Indicates that the resource is available in Spanish*

Head Start Program Performance Standards Definitions
See Dual Language Learner for HSPPS definition:
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1305-2-terms

Planned Language Approach: Big 5 for All
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/planned-language-approach-pla-big-5-all

Home Language for Success in School and Life
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/home-language-success-school-life

Supporting Children with Disabilities and Suspected Delays
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/supporting-children-disabilities-or-suspected-delays

Supporting Children with Disabilities Who Are Also Dual Language Learners
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/supporting-children-disabilities-who-are-also-dual-language-learners

Screening Dual Language Learners in Head Start and Early Head Start
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/screening-dual-language-learners-early-head-start-head-start-guide-program-leaders

Special Considerations: Developmental Screening of Children Ages Birth to 5 Who Are Dual Language Learners
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/special-considerations-developmental-screening-children-ages-birth-5-who-are-dual-language-learners

Habla DLL**
https://www.habladll.org/

Dual Language Learners with Disabilities: Supporting Young Children in the Classroom
https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dll/?cid=a381aa409e39f5d3d13b399628b11718

DLLs and ELs with Disabilities
https://www.nap.edu/resource/24677/toolkit/dlls-and-els-with-
disabilities.html?cid=a381aa409e39f5d3d13b399628b11718

Individualized Teaching Strategies

Adapting Enhanced Milieu Teaching
https://kidtalk.vkcsites.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Adapting-Enhanced-Milieu-Teaching.pdf

Dialogic Reading
https://www.readingrockets.org/article/dialogic-reading-effective-way-read-aloud-young-children

Conducting Dialogic Reading
https://connectmodules.dec-sped.org/connect-modules/learners/module-6/step-3/b-definition/conducting/

Use of Visual Supports
https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dll/cresource/q3/p06/

Visual Supports
https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1287/

Universal Design for Preschool (Using Multiple Modalities)
https://www.nausetschools.org/cms/lib/MA02212418/Centricity/Domain/679/Universal%20Design%20for%2
0Preschool.pdf

Mobile Apps

Ready DLL Mobile App
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/ready-dll-mobile-app

Online Communities

MyPeers: Head Start Disabilities-Inclusion Network
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-
community