

FACTS and TIPS



Young Dual Language Learners (Birth through 5 years)

Topic # 5.2 Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Practices for On-going Assessment

FACT # 1: *On-going assessment practices, including methods for gathering authentic linguistic and cultural information for children who are dual language learners, will need to be carefully planned.* Programs and practitioners will benefit from developing a plan for collecting relevant language and cultural information on children who are dual language learners on a consistent and systematic basis. Remember, although assessment data is recorded on an assessment instrument to measure growth over time, the most authentic approach for *gathering information* for ALL children is through the systematic and consistent observation of children during their daily routine. In short, programs will want to consider and appropriately utilize *all* of the linguistic and cultural resources available to them when assessing young dual language learners.

FACT #2: *On-going assessment data provides practitioners with important information on what, where, when, and how to scaffold for language and cultural “gaps” with children who are dual language learners.* Remember that simply placing children who are dual language learners in high-quality English-speaking programs is not enough to guarantee that they will be able to fully access your preschool curriculum and learn English proficiently. In fact, young children who are dual language learners need “extra enhancements” or language scaffolding in order to comprehend and participate in your program’s learning activities to the greatest extent possible (August & Shanahan, 2008; Castro, et al, 2011; Espinosa, 2010). This is not only a question of educational equity but of making sure that young dual language learners continue developing conceptually--in an uninterrupted fashion--as they acquire English (Stechuk & Burns, 2005). Of course the entire purpose of on-going assessment for ALL children is to monitor their progress so that changes can be made to instruction as needed. However, in the case of dual language learners, on-going assessment is also key to determining the *level and types of language supports and/or cultural scaffolding* that need to be in place in order for them to fully understand and participate in learning activities.



Instructional Tips Related to On-going Assessment Practices

- ❖ Administrators, practitioners, and interpreters will need to collaborate to determine how they will systematically observe and document children’s progress when English is not their home or first language. Programs will want to determine what “in-house” or community resources are available to help gather relevant information about children’s progress in all developmental areas. If bilingual staff is unavailable, programs might consider training bilingual community volunteers to help practitioners observe and document young dual language learners’ skills as they interact with materials, their environment and others. Trained interpreters could also be used to help practitioners analyze children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social-emotional skills on video or audio recordings of the children at play. Programs may also consider utilizing interpreters to schedule periodic home visits to gather information from parents, extended family members, or

Instructional Tips Related to On-going Assessment Practices (con.)

other primary caregivers about their children's development over time. In summary, steps to consider when planning include:

- ✓ Determine if linguistic and cultural gaps exist in current curriculum, instruction, and assessment tool.
- ✓ If gaps exist, what adaptations are necessary throughout children's daily routine to accommodate those differences so that the curriculum is accessible to young dual language learners?
- ✓ Determine program and community bilingual resources that are available to incorporate home language support within children's daily routine and to help with on-going assessment procedures.
- ✓ Assess the types of professional development and/or training that may be necessary to help gather relevant and specific assessment data on children who are dual language learners.
- ✓ Schedule days and times for bilingual adults to regularly observe and document children's performance within both structured and unstructured play activities.
- ✓ Determine methods for gathering accurate assessment information on dual language learners including audio recordings and videotapes, photos, work samples, and anecdotal notes.
- ✓ Determine who can help interpret audio recordings and videotapes of children.
- ✓ Involve parents and families in the on-going assessment process.



- ❖ While gathering on-going assessment information on dual language learners, practitioners will want to note if and when the children don't appear to understand or are having difficulty demonstrating what they know in English. This information is essential so that practitioners can make appropriate adjustments and adaptations during their instruction and/or during the children's daily routine. Practitioners will also want to be sensitive in their observations as to how different topics, methods of instruction, or expectations for children's responses may be a "cultural disconnect" for some children (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010) so that they can adapt their methods accordingly. Again, depending on the information obtained, practitioners will want to provide more or less visual, gestural, and interactive supports to help dual language learners participate to the fullest extent possible during structured and unstructured learning activities. (Please see future FACTS & TIPS on "Supportive Instructional Practices for Dual Language Learners" for specific ideas).



Connecting with Families

- ❖ It will be important to connect with families about their cultural values and beliefs around child rearing, child-adult interactions, and self-help skills in order to determine what if any cultural gaps exist within your program's curriculum, assessment and instructional model for their children. This is especially important information to have for children who are struggling or if practitioners have questions about specific children's rate of learning. For example, if a 4 year-old continues to resist or is very slow to put their coat on independently after months of demonstrations, it is important to find out if this is a valued behavior by the family. If not, the practitioner may want to meet with the family and talk about why their child is expected to put their coat on independently when he/she is at the program even if this isn't a requirement at home. Then the practitioner and parents might problem solve *together* how to best communicate these two very different sets of expectations on a consistent basis to the child.
- ❖ Consider lending small and easy to operate audio recorders and/or "flip" video cameras to parents to record their children talking and playing at home or in the community. Of course, practitioners (accompanied by interpreters) will want to clearly explain why they are asking parents to do this—to get authentic samples of their child speaking, listening, and thinking in their home language so that you have a more complete picture of their child's development (see Topic #5.1). Practitioners will also need to clearly explain how to record and/or videotape their child so that the recordings are as natural as possible and not contrived. While this may not be a perfect method for gathering authentic data on dual language learners' play, language, social interaction, and conceptual development from multiple sources, it is one alternative. This method also assumes that practitioners have developed a somewhat trusting relationship with the family. Finally, this exchange may set the stage for building a deeper relationship with parents as well as foster future parent involvement in their child's education.

TOPICS #5.1 & 5.2: Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Practices for On-going Assessment

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