



Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take?

Head Start Dual Language Report



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All photos were taken by J. Brough Schamp at the following Head Start programs: Child Care Associates of Fort Worth (pages 14, 36); East Coast Migrant Head Start (pages 21, 35); Higher Horizons, Inc. (pages 7, 18, 38, 44); Immokalee Community Migrant Head Start Center (pages 9, 11, 13, 24, 28, 39, 40, 42); and San Xavier Head Start (pages 10, 11, 13, 16, 20, 23, 33).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	1
Overview	5
Basis for Action: The Head Start Act & The Head Start Program Performance Standards.....	7
Head Start – Recent History of Serving Dual Language Learners.....	8
Methodology	10
Demographics	12
Summary of Relevant Research.....	14
Findings.....	24
I. Ensuring Positive Outcomes for Children	24
I.A. Dual Language Acquisition.....	24
I.B. Assessment for Children Learning Two Languages	25
I.C. Transitions for Young Dual Language Learners.....	26
II. Strengthening Program Planning & Professional Development	27
II.A. Attracting & Retaining Skilled Bilingual Early Childhood Staff.....	27
II.B. Assessing Staff Language Proficiency.....	30
II.C. Organizational Change.....	31
II.D. Implementation of Head Start Program Performance Standards	32
III. Enhancing Family Involvement	32
III.A. Parent Involvement in Child’s Language Development	32
III.B. Staff/Parent Communication— Translation, Interpretation, and Relationship Building	35
IV. Building Community Resources	37
IV.A. Accessing Family Support Services	37
IV.B. Supporting Home Language in an Environment of Native Language Revitalization and Cultural Maintenance	38
Recommendations from the Field.....	39
I. Ensuring Positive Outcomes for Children	39
II. Enhancing Family Involvement.....	40
III. Strengthening Program Planning & Professional Development	41
IV. Building Community Resources.....	42
Final Recommendations	43
Appendix A—References to Language, Culture and Diversity—Head Start Act & Head Start Program Performance Standards.....	45
References.....	51

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the winter of 2005-2006, the Office of Head Start (OHS) conducted a review of program needs with respect to serving young dual language learners, ages birth to five years. The purpose of this project was to assess program needs, opportunities, and barriers; gather existing resources and innovative programming; and outline recommendations and suggestions from the field.

Dual language learners are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language. For the purposes of this report, the term dual language learners encompasses other terms frequently used, such as Limited English Proficient (LEP), bilingual, English language learners (ELL), English learners, and children who speak a language other than English (LOTE).

OHS recognizes that dual language learners enter Head Start programs with unique challenges and opportunities. The goal of this review was to determine what Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian Alaska Native Head Start programs needed—in terms of knowledge, skills, and resources—to address these challenges and maximize opportunities as they support dual language learners in learning English and in continuing to develop their home language. OHS' interest in this topic arose from its understanding of the importance of language development for learning in all domains and as a precursor for literacy development. The development of language and early literacy are fundamental building blocks for achieving Head Start's legislated mandate of promoting school readiness for all children.

While Head Start has a long history of serving culturally and linguistically diverse populations, the numbers have been growing rapidly. According to Head Start Program Information Reports, almost three out of ten Head Start children come from families who speak a primary language other than English, and only 16% of Head Start programs serve exclusively English speaking children. In 1993, a survey of Head Start programs conducted by the ACYF Office for Policy, Research and Evaluation found that over 140 languages were spoken by Head Start children and families nationwide. The number of cultures represented would be higher still.

In addition to the increase in the numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families served by Head Start, the geographic distribution of these families is ever changing. Many communities throughout the United States have experienced rapid influxes of immigrant families. Head Start programs nationwide face significant challenges in obtaining the knowledge and rallying the resources and staff needed to effectively serve these children and families.

Rationale for Action

The Head Start Act, as amended in 1998, and the accompanying *Head Start Program Performance Standards* require that programs support children in the acquisition of their home language and English as well as provide the full spectrum of comprehensive Head Start services to families in culturally appropriate and respectful ways. Furthermore, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-134) emphasizes improving outreach and increasing enrollment and quality of services to children and families, particularly in communities that have experienced a large increase in speakers of languages other than English (LOTE). Research also unequivocally shows the importance of intentionally supporting the acquisition of English *and* the home language in young children. Knowledge of the home language facilitates learning a second language. Children who know two languages often have higher levels of cognitive achievement than monolingual children and almost certainly will have a broader array of social and economic opportunities available to them as they become adults. Through their home language and culture, families share a sense of identity and belonging. Children learn how to relate to and communicate with others. Loss of home language can interfere with these important aspects of a child's life, disrupting family communication, inhibiting relationship development, leading to the loss of intergenerational wisdom, negatively affecting a child's self-concept, and potentially interrupting thinking and reasoning skills.

Methodology

To determine how best to address the needs of children, families, program staff, and local communities with respect to supporting language development in children learning two or more languages, OHS conducted this assessment. In addition to reviewing research in the field of dual language acquisition for young children, OHS conducted focus groups, conference calls, and meetings with over 200 individuals within the Head Start community.

Seventeen focus groups, conference calls, and meetings were held with Head Start parents, program directors, teachers, home visitors, family service workers, Federal staff, Head Start-State Collaboration Offices, and Head Start training and technical assistance providers and other national contractors. Input was gathered from Head Start programs in each of the ACF Regions as well as from the American Indian Alaska Native and Migrant and Seasonal Program Branches.

Findings

The findings from the assessment were extensive and complex. As we read the research and heard from families, practitioners, and experts, it became increasingly clear that supporting language development in young children learning two or more languages requires a comprehensive approach that includes families, communities, and all levels and positions within Head Start. The following major challenges were voiced by participants—

1. Many Head Start programs reported struggling with knowing how best to promote children's language acquisition, both their home language and English, when children come from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Because of the inextricable link between culture, language, and learning, supporting children's language development is essential to attaining Head Start's mission of ensuring school readiness for all its children.
2. Local programs are required to conduct developmental screenings and ongoing assessments of enrolled children. Yet, there exist few valid and reliable assessment instruments for evaluating progress in language and literacy development, as well as development in other domains of learning for children who are learning two languages. Without accurate assessment information, staff are not able to properly support the child's development, identify progress, individualize the curriculum fully, or identify behavior or delays requiring further evaluation and possible intervention.
3. Many programs reported struggling with being uncertain about how best to support young English learners as they transition into or out of the Head Start program, as well as onto other child care arrangements or public schools. Transitions are important and often stressful times for children, often requiring extra support and scaffolding from staff and parents.
4. Head Start programs reported having great difficulty finding, attracting, and retaining bilingual staff qualified in early childhood education. Having staff who speak the language and understand the culture of the children and families is essential for communication and learning.
5. Many, if not most, monolingual Head Start managers reported having difficulty assessing the language skills of prospective bilingual staff, which is important to ensure that proper language usage is being modeled for children and clear and respectful communication occurs with parents.
6. Successfully serving children and families from various language and cultural backgrounds cannot be accomplished without a program-wide, comprehensive plan. Yet, many programs did not know how to undertake this process (and some did not understand its importance). As the full report clearly indicates, supporting children in the acquisition of two languages is a complex, multi-faceted task that requires intentional support at all levels of a program.

7. Many Head Start parents stated that they were unable to fully participate in their children’s education or in the Head Start program’s governance and parent involvement activities because they did not speak English well or at all. Additionally, parents often were concerned about their children continuing to speak the home language at home because of the pervasive, mistaken belief that doing so interferes with English language development. The costs to the child of losing the home language and the benefits of learning two languages overwhelmingly point to the value of (and feasibility of) nurturing the development of both English and the home language.
8. Many Head Start programs reported being unable to communicate fully and, at times at all, with parents, particularly when multiple languages and cultures were served by a program. This inhibited, at best, and prohibited, at worst, parents from participating in the education of their children and the governance of Head Start, cornerstones of the Head Start philosophy.
9. Many Head Start programs reported having difficulty helping families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds access the support services they need (medical, dental, mental health, English as a Second Language classes, speech therapists, social services, etc.) due to a lack of culturally responsive services and providers. At times, accessibility was aggravated by community biases. This limited the ability of the program to provide the comprehensive services and support to families that are a hallmark of Head Start.
10. Many American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities, as well as other native communities, reported facing the impending loss of their native languages. Supporting children in learning their community-wide languages and cultures, which are inextricably tied to the languages, requires a community-wide approach. In addition to supporting children’s language development as they learn their native languages and English, support must also be offered to the native communities to strengthen native language revitalization and expansion.

Recommendations

Each of the recommendations that follows addresses the needs cited above.

1. Establish a Head Start priority/initiative dedicated to improving staff knowledge and program performance with respect to promoting dual language learning for children, birth to five, and for providing the full range of comprehensive Head Start services to children and families who speak a primary language other than English. A Head Start initiative may include some or all of the recommendations that follow.
2. Commission, through the establishment of a National Head Start Center for Dual Language and Literacy Development and/or through partnerships, consortiums, or contracts with other organizations, the following activities—
 - a. Research, design, and develop resources and strategies to—
 - i. Support language development for children who are English learners,
 - ii. Promote family involvement, and assist families in identifying, addressing, and advocating for their family needs, and
 - iii. Help build community capacity and strengthen program planning as they relate to working with children and families who speak a primary language other than English.
 - b. Disseminate information on demographic trends in Head Start eligible populations and programmatic services for its children and families through analyses of Head Start PIR data, U.S. Census data, and other demographic data sources.
 - c. Provide translated core Head Start documents and templates of typical program documentation/information in multiple languages as well as funding options and strategies for accessing additional translation and interpretation services.

- d. Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate child development assessments in multiple languages for all domains of learning and development for young English learners.
 - e. Develop language and literacy assessments for children learning two (or more) languages in multiple languages.
 - f. Develop or identify strategies for assessing staff language skills to assist Head Start managers in knowing how best to evaluate the language competency of prospective staff based on the needs of the staff position and task.
 - g. Provide research-based resources and facilitate an online forum, through the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC), for programs to share information and resources related to dual language learning.
 - h. Liaison with Federal staff and TA providers to ensure that the expertise of the Center reaches the field and that TA providers have the knowledge and skills needed to assist programs in implementing appropriate program policies, procedures, strategies, and activities.
 - i. Collaborate with the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), and other Federal agencies to implement strategies for supporting native language acquisition among Alaska Native and American Indian children, as well as other native communities, and actively support native language revitalization and expansion.
 - j. Conduct, as needed, additional analysis to further define the extent, type, and distribution of program needs, as well as resource development priorities.
3. Enhance professional development opportunities to strengthen Head Start staff’s knowledge and skills related to serving young English learner children and their families, including support for online training and credentialing programs, such as—
 - a. Teaching certifications in dual language acquisition for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
 - b. Early Childhood Education degree programs (AA, BA) and early childhood credentials (CDA) offered in multiple languages.
 - c. Additional coursework for two and four-year institutions on language and literacy development theory and strategies for working with young children who are learning English and their home language.
 - d. Language courses designed for early childhood professionals to enhance their ability to communicate with children and families who speak languages other than English.
 4. Pursue and carry out appropriate research with ACF partners in the area of home language and English learning for young children, birth to five.
 5. Coordinate with other Federal and State agencies to ensure the efficient and effective dissemination of targeted resources and strategies that promote dual language acquisition for young children.

Conclusion

This national assessment of program needs related to supporting dual language development among Head Start children is intended to provide the Office of Head Start with the preliminary information it needs to direct resources in a targeted and efficient manner. Ultimately, effective program support for promoting dual language acquisition in children will result in more children eager to learn in Head Start as well as more children being prepared to begin school ready and eager to *continue* learning—an investment well worth making.

OVERVIEW

The impetus for this analysis came from the Office of Head Start's (OHS) recognition of the challenges Head Start programs face in ensuring optimal learning experiences and subsequent outcomes—including in language, literacy, and other domains of learning—for young children learning two (or more) languages. (These children are also referred to as *dual language learners* and *English learners* throughout this report.)

OHS' clear mandate—in keeping with research in the area of dual language acquisition for young children—is to support and strengthen the home language of children while also helping children progress in the acquisition of English. Oral language development is a precursor to literacy as well as to most other domains of learning (Dickinson & Tabors 2001; Joint Policy Committee 2001; Paez & Rinaldi 2006). Language (i.e., vocabulary, listening, and speaking) and literacy (i.e., reading and writing) development are fundamental building blocks for achieving Head Start's legislated mission of promoting school readiness for *all* children (Head Start Act, as amended 1998; Im et al., forthcoming).

Head Start has a long history of serving culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Over 140 languages are spoken by Head Start children and families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2000). The number of cultures represented is higher still. Almost three out of ten children enter Head Start speaking a primary language at home other than English. Those numbers have been growing in recent years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). In fact, in the Head Start 2004-2005 program year only 16% of Head Start programs nationwide served *exclusively* English speaking children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2005).

Among Head Start programs that serve children and families from diverse backgrounds, tremendous variation exists across the country—

- ◆ From programs that have been serving diverse populations since the beginning of Head Start to those that have experienced rapid demographic shifts in their community and programs within a handful of years;
- ◆ From programs that serve only a few children from diverse language and cultural backgrounds to programs that serve a majority; and
- ◆ From centers with only two languages spoken (most frequently Spanish and English) to centers with eight, or significantly more, languages spoken.

Head Start programs throughout the nation face significant challenges in obtaining the knowledge and rallying the resources and staff needed to reach out to, recruit, and fully serve these children and families. The complexity for managers and staff is enormous. The opportunities and benefits to children and families are of equal magnitude.

Supporting first and second language learning – an assessment. This project began as an assessment of local program needs with respect to supporting first and second language learning for Head Start children. After reviewing the research and listening to program needs, it quickly

The central mandate of Head Start is “to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of low-income children through the provision, to low income children and their families, of health, educational, nutritional, social and other services that are determined, based on family needs assessments, to be necessary.” (Head Start Act: Sec. 636, 42 USC 9831 et seq.)

Grantee and delegate agencies must support social and emotional development by:

- ❖ *Encouraging development which enhances each child's strengths by.....--Supporting and respecting the home language, culture, and family composition of each child in ways that support the child's health and well-being... (45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(E)).*

became apparent that supporting language learning for young children whose primary language is not English, or in the case of some native groups, language revitalization, requires a comprehensive approach that reaches out to parents and community partners, as well as to all levels of the Head Start community. It became clear that the vital connection between language, culture, and learning needs to be integrated into all aspects of a Head Start program—from program philosophy to classroom practices to family involvement and community partnerships. This is in keeping with the Head Start philosophy of providing comprehensive services for children, building strong partnerships with families, collaborating with community partners, and continuously strengthening staff knowledge and skills. This connection between language, culture, and learning must also continue to inform the policies and regulations that guide Head Start as a national program.

Dual language learners are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language. For the purposes of this report, the term encompasses other terms frequently used, such as Limited English Proficient (LEP), bilingual, English language learner (ELL), English learner, and children who speak a language other than English (LOTE). Thus, within Head Start, three out of ten children are *dual language learners*, children who are learning both English and their home language.

This assessment attempts to document how Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian Alaska Native Head Start programs (referred to throughout this report as Head Start, except where the information presented is specific to program type) have addressed the needs of young dual language learners and their families and where programs are struggling.

While this report refers generally to all of the languages and cultures represented among Head Start children and families, Spanish is overwhelmingly the dominant “second” language in Head Start, with almost one out of every four children coming from families who speak Spanish as their primary language at home (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). In addition, while perhaps obvious, it should be explicitly noted that Spanish-speaking families come from a wide variety of countries and cultures.

BASIS FOR ACTION: THE HEAD START ACT & THE HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Head Start regulations affirm the value of supporting children in learning two (or more) languages, the importance of reaching out to families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the link among culture, language, and learning. Both the Head Start Act as amended in 1998 and the related *Head Start Program Performance Standards* clearly speak to the need to support children in the acquisition of language—including English and the home language. The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* also require that Head Start services are provided to children and families in culturally appropriate and respectful ways. A few highlights from the Head Start Act, 1998, and the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* are distributed throughout the text of this report in the left margin. A full listing of relevant requirements from the Head Start Act, 1998, and the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* can be found in the Appendix of this report.

A note to the reader: This project was undertaken when the Head Start Act, 1998, and the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* were in effect. Therefore, references in the text are to these documents, which provided mandates and guidance to Head Start programs during the winter of 2005-2006 when the review of program needs was conducted. After the completion of this project, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 was signed into law on December 12, 2007, and the regulations are being reviewed and revised, if necessary, to reflect the new legislation. As of publication of this report, the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* are still in effect.



HEAD START—RECENT HISTORY OF SERVING DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has long recognized the importance of providing culturally responsive services to children and families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Since the early 1970s, Head Start has engaged in a number of activities to support English learners and their families. To name just a few highlights, the Office of Head Start (formerly the Head Start Bureau)—

- ◆ Developed the Multicultural Principles in 1990 and subsequently incorporated them into the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* in 1996.
- ◆ Surveyed Head Start programs to determine languages spoken by families in their programs and collect innovative practices for supporting these children and families (ACYF Office of Research and Evaluation and Head Start Bureau, *Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Head Start*, April 2000).
- ◆ Conducted a “Focus Group to Identify Strategies to Support English Language Learners in Head Start and Early Head Start” in 2002 (which echoed many of the same themes outlined in this report).
- ◆ Held the Early Head Start Expert Work Group on Dual Language Acquisition convened in 2005 and again in 2006.
- ◆ Published “English Language Learners” Head Start Bulletin (2005) and “Linguistic Diversity and Early Literacy: Serving Culturally Diverse Families in Early Head Start” EHS NRC Technical Assistance Paper No. 5 (2001).
- ◆ Funded two cohorts of CRADLE (Culturally Responsive and Aware Dual Language Education) pilot demonstration grant projects. CRADLE assists 44 Early Head Start programs in designing and implementing program-wide philosophies, policies, and practices to support children and families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.
- ◆ Funded two Head Start Innovation and Improvement Projects (2005-2008) that address the needs of programs in serving English learners, including—
 - University of Cincinnati’s Bilingual Bridge program, which offers an online early childhood AA degree taught in Spanish as well as an array of support services, and
 - Community Development Institute’s HELLP (Head Start English Language Learners Project) which provides a comprehensive training program to 44 Head Start programs to assist them in working with English learner children and their families.
- ◆ Developed infant/toddler learning online modules, translated into Spanish.
- ◆ Conducted the National Head Start Hispanic Institute (February 2005 & 2006) and the National Head Start Hispanic and Other Emerging Populations Institute (April 2007) to share research and innovative practices designed to support children and families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.



- ◆ Began a number of other activities that are in process, including—
 - The Community Assessment Workbook for Serving Hispanic and Other Emerging Populations (available on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC)).
 - The translation of the recently released “Professional Development” Head Start Bulletin into Spanish as well as the translation of other early childhood resources (each of which will be available on the ECLKC).

To assist programs in meeting the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by serving children and families of diverse backgrounds, to enhance outcomes for all Head Start children and families, and to ensure that *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and other regulations are being fully met, the Office of Head Start undertook this assessment.

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 notes the importance of increasing outreach and enrollment, and improving service delivery to children and families “in whose homes English is not the language customarily spoken.” The Act of 2007 also notes the importance of improving qualifications and skills of staff who work with these children and families and coordinating Head Start services with other entities to meet the needs of this population. Given the mandates in the new law, this report and its implications and recommendations are more relevant than ever before.

METHODOLOGY

The Office of Head Start's assessment on dual language learning was conducted during the winter of 2005-2006. The goal was to determine how best to address the needs of children, birth to five, and their families with respect to supporting the acquisition of children's home language and English. Participants were requested to share their direct experiences, and from that experience, to offer suggestions to the Office of Head Start that could enhance Head Start's ability to serve children and families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

The tasks undertaken in this assessment were to—

- ◆ Review the major research in the field of dual language learning for children, age birth to five years;
- ◆ Collect demographic information, in broad strokes, for the Head Start population;
- ◆ Gather information on existing resources and innovative programming within the Head Start community;
- ◆ Assess program needs, opportunities, and barriers; and
- ◆ Solicit recommendations from the field.

Of these, the primary emphasis was on assessing program needs, opportunities and barriers and soliciting recommendations for effectively addressing these issues. To gather information from the field, 17 focus groups, conference calls, and meetings were conducted, with over 200 participants in total. Whenever possible, face-to-face focus groups or meetings were held. When that was not feasible or cost-effective, conference calls were scheduled. Focus groups were held in conjunction with other conferences and meetings to minimize expenses.

Focus groups were conducted with—

1. Head Start and Early Head Start parents (Spanish speakers)
2. Head Start and Early Head Start parents (mixed language group, no Spanish speakers)
3. Head Start and Early Head Start program directors
4. Head Start and Early Head Start teachers, home visitors, and family service workers
5. Head Start Technical Assistance (TA) Managers
6. Head Start Child Development TA Specialists
7. Staff from the Migrant and Seasonal Program Branch and locally-based TA Specialists
8. Staff from the American Indian Alaska Native Program Branch and TA Specialists
9. Staff from the Office of Head Start and national Head Start contracts (focus group)
10. Staff from the Office of Head Start and national Head Start contracts (brainstorm meeting)





Conference calls were held with—

1. Head Start-State Collaboration Offices
2. Early Learning and Literacy TA Specialists
3. Early Head Start Liaisons and EHS Program Specialists
4. Locally-based TA Specialists

Additional information was gathered at two workshop sessions held during the 2005 Hispanic Institute and one meeting held at the Early Head Start CRADLE conference.

Questions for these groups generally followed the format outlined below—

1. Assessment project introduction
2. What is the need in [Head Start/Early Head Start programs in your ACF Region] for dual language learning support for—
 - a. Children?
 - b. Families?
 - c. Program staff?
 - d. Local communities?
3. Who [in your Region] is doing innovative work in these areas?
4. What types of support are needed (i.e., training, technical assistance, resources) in what specific areas (i.e., teaching strategies, assessment, working with parents, professional development, program planning, etc.)?
5. What should the Office of Head Start's role be in supporting these efforts?

The focus groups, conference calls, and meetings conducted in this preliminary assessment of needs allowed for rich, in-depth dialogue. Although we heard many barriers and recommendations repeated, we are not able to state the percentage of programs facing a particular challenge or recommending the value of a specific resource. A further study to survey programs with respect to these issues would be needed. Nonetheless, given the frequency, the logic, and the urgency of the comments we received, we are confident in the validity of the qualitative information collected through this process.

DEMOGRAPHICS

One of the first questions addressed by this report is what do national and Head Start demographic data tell us about the need, distribution of need, and emerging populations trends. The underlying question being: How might variations in demographics affect program needs and program planning?

The annual Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) presents aggregate data on all grantees, including information about enrollment and families' primary language. For Program Year (PY) 2006-2007, the PIR indicated that out of the 1,061,275 enrolled children, approximately 30.06 percent, or 322,126 children, spoke a primary language other than English at home (up from 29.2 percent in PY 2005-2006). Of these families, approximately 84.62 percent (up slightly from 84 percent in PY 2005-2006) were Spanish-speaking and the remaining families were identified as speaking, in order of frequency: East Asian languages, Middle Eastern/South Asian languages, European/Slavic languages, African languages, Native Central/South American and Native Mexican languages, Caribbean languages, Pacific Island languages, and Native North American/Alaska Native languages. An additional 733 children were identified as speaking other languages. The primary language of 6,875 children was unspecified. (Note that the PIR indicates families' primary language by language group rather than specific language.) Of the 11 non-English language groups tracked by the PIR for PY 2006-2007, 16 states served all language groups and another 25 states served at least eight language groups. A significant number of programs served families speaking eight or more languages.

Earlier PIR data from PY 2004-2005 also indicated that 84% of Head Start grantees served children and families from more than one language group. In five states, all the grantees in PY 2004-2005 worked with children whose families spoke a primary language at home other than English (DE, HI, NJ, RI, UT). In 36 states, three-quarters of the grantees served children from families whose primary language was not English. In nine states, one-quarter of the programs served a majority of children from families with a primary language other than English (AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, IL, MA, NJ, NY).

In addition to the PIR, other sources of data support the picture of linguistic and cultural diversity in the Head Start population. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services reported that Head Start children and families spoke a total of 140 different languages (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services 2000). Based upon trends in national Census data, it can be assumed that Head Start families have a wide range of English language proficiency, from fluently bilingual to "linguistically isolated."

General immigration data provide an indication of the demographic trends affecting Head Start programs. In the last 35 years, the immigrant population in the United States has tripled to 35 million people in 2005 (Dinan 2006). More than half the immigrants are Latino, and one-quarter are Asian (Dinan 2006). Geographically, "gateway states" including California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas account for 70% of the immigrant population. However in recent years, states such as

North Carolina, Georgia, Nevada, Arkansas, Utah, Tennessee, Nebraska, Colorado, Arizona, and Kentucky have seen rapid immigration growth (Capps, Fix, & Passel 2002). Many small communities throughout the country have seen immigrant population grow by as much as 600% in the last decade (Dinan 2006). Immigrants in these new communities tend to be younger, poorer, less educated, and more likely to be undocumented (Dinan 2006). Half of children under age six of immigrant parents live below the poverty level (Dinan 2006), in income eligibility ceiling for Head Start. Three-quarters of children in low-income immigrant households have parents who are married and at least one parent who works 1,000 hours annually. Yet, in part due to fear of interacting with government officials, many immigrant families do not access services such as health care and Head Start (Dinan 2006).

Demographic data also tell us that the geographic distribution of America's culturally and linguistically diverse families is changing—in some cases rapidly. A number of states, including New York, New Jersey, Florida, and the Southwest border states (Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California) have a long history of working with immigrant families. Yet more recently, and often within a matter of a few years, many communities throughout the United States are experiencing significant influxes of immigrant families—at times because a new industry has attracted a particular immigrant group, at other times because of refugee resettlements or changes in migration patterns. Programmatic needs vary significantly depending on the mix of the families they serve, but also on how quickly their service population has changed. This has implications for outreach, staffing, organizational culture, family involvement, community partnerships, educational resources and materials, and a host of other issues, many of which are delineated in the findings section of this report.



SUMMARY OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

Highlights from relevant research related to dual language learning in young children are summarized below. While a number of research-based teaching strategies are noted throughout, this summary is not intended to be a thorough review of program models, leading practices or research-based teaching strategies for promoting dual language acquisition in young children. Because of the insufficient number of studies on young children learning two languages, there is still much that is unknown about typical language and early literacy development during the preschool years (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, & Leos 2005). The task of compiling a resource on what is known, however, is essential for Head Start programs and is suggested as one of the recommendations of this report.



Culture, Language, and Learning. To understand how young children learn a first and second language and how Head Start can support their language development, it is necessary to understand the vital relationship among culture, language, and learning. Culture includes “ethnicity, racial identity, economic class, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child’s development and relationship to the world” (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE 2003). It may be self-evident that language and learning are inextricably intertwined; perhaps less obviously but equally important, language and culture are also integrally linked.

Culture and language are imparted to young children from their families and communities. Young children learn to “understand those around them and to express their own fears, needs, and desires in the distinctive vocabulary of a home language that includes not only words, but also rhythms, gestures, patterns of speech and silence” (Sanchez 1999). Language proficiency fosters cultural knowledge and learning, and at the same time, cultural experiences shape the way children learn and see the world. Background experiences and personal interests prepare children for “knowing how to engage in particular forms of language and literacy activities” (Gutierrez & Rogoff 2003).

When culturally and linguistically diverse children enter a classroom, they bring with them cultural ways of using language that may differ from those of their new school culture (Zentella 1997). Without proper understanding of children’s cultural backgrounds—including cultural expectations for how and when language should be used—teachers may perceive these young children as having difficulties learning when in fact, they are learning in ways that are culturally appropriate to them (Philips 1983). For example, some American Indian children believe that calling attention to oneself to participate or demonstrate one’s knowledge is overly assertive or arrogant (Philips 1972). Latino and Asian children often respond better to praise that reflects their cultural beliefs such as, “Your family would be proud of you,” rather than, “You should be proud of yourself” (McLaughlin 1995).

Benefits of Learning Two or More Languages. It is important not only for Head staff to understand the link among culture, language, and learning, but also for them to understand the benefits of knowing two

(or more) languages. The research makes it clear that children should be encouraged to retain and/or develop their home language as they learn English. Children who know more than one language have personal, social, cognitive, and economic advantages throughout their lives. Children who are proficient in their home language (or first language) are able “to establish a strong cultural identity, to develop and sustain strong ties with their immediate and extended families, and to thrive in a global, multilingual world” (Espinosa 2006).

Oral language skills, including vocabulary and listening comprehension in English and the home language, have been shown to be important precursors to literacy (Dickinson & Tabors 2001; Joint Policy Committee 2001). A strong foundation in the child’s home language and pre-literacy skills is key to school readiness (Im et al. forthcoming). Moreover, language and literacy development in the home language supports the development of language and literacy in English (Paez & Rinaldi 2006). Children who speak more than one language are thought to have greater mental flexibility and can use those skills to figure out math concepts and word problems (Zebsko & Antunez 2000). Bilinguals have also been shown to be better than monolinguals when it comes to learning a third language (Jessen 1999). Adults who speak more than one language can benefit from the increasing demand in the job market for multilingual candidates (Zebsko & Antunez 2000). Generally speaking, “knowing two or more languages and being able to use them appropriately and effectively is a personal, social, professional, and societal asset” (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004).

Cost of Losing the First Language. Most early childhood professionals and parents intuitively understand the value of learning English prior to beginning school, in order to ensure that children are ready to learn upon entry. And many recognize the value of maintaining a child’s first language. Yet, not only are there *benefits to maintaining* the home language while progressing in the acquisition of English, but there are also costs to losing the home language. It is important for our youngest children—our infants and toddlers—to have access to their home language while they are making sense of new experiences and concepts. Without this, both language and intellectual development may be adversely affected (Sanchez 2005). Linguistic continuity facilitates accessing the prior knowledge or concepts that children need to link with new learning and further their understanding of the world (Sanchez 2005).

As children grow, it is equally as important for them to continue to develop their home language. Preschoolers’ development and learning are enhanced when they are able to communicate at home what they have learned at school. Additionally, preschoolers’ classroom learning is enhanced when teachers support their home language use while they acquire English (California Dept. of Education 2007). Moreover, a strong foundation in the home language can facilitate young children’s second language learning (Cummins n.d.).

Additionally, loss of the home language could cause children’s thinking and reasoning skills to suffer and could have potential impacts on developing self-concept (Bialystok 2001). Use of the home language plays an



important role in supporting infant and toddler development by fostering their “sense of self as a member of the family and its community” and maintaining “strong ties, especially between the generations in the child’s home” (Pearson & Mangione 2006). Caregivers’ attitudes toward young children’s home language is very important to children’s development of values and sense of identity, making it essential for a welcoming, respectful attitude to be reflected in the classroom (Houston 1995). When linguistically diverse infants and toddlers are cared for by caregivers who do not speak their home language, there is also a risk that these children may mistakenly pick up the message that their home language has little value (Sanchez & Thorp 1998).

Through the home language and culture, families share a sense of identity, an understanding of how to relate to others, and a sense of belonging. Children who do not develop and maintain proficiency in their home language may lose their ability to communicate intimately with parents and grandparents (Wong Fillmore 1991). As these children start to speak English at home, some parents may feel forced to speak English at home even though they may have limited proficiency in the language and may be unable to express their thoughts and feelings fully to their children (Wong Fillmore 1991).

Parents who insist on speaking English to their children, when they themselves have not mastered the language, may in fact do harm to their family. Pueng Vongs (*Chicago Sun-Times*, May 28, 2006) wrote of the rift created in his immigrant family when his parents abandoned their native Thai and adopted an English-only policy in their home even though neither parent was proficient in English. His father’s soft speaking manner was replaced by loud, angry tones as he struggled to make himself understood. His stepmother, afraid of using incorrect syntax and grammar, spoke only in a whisper and over time, spoke less and less. As the children’s English improved and their Thai slipped away, they grew more distant from their parents.

Myth of Learning English Only. Many immigrant parents mistakenly believe that in order to succeed in school, it is better for their children to abandon their home language and concentrate on English. Parents may believe that if their children are proficient in English, the children will be treated better, be more successful in school, and have better employment opportunities (Orellana, Ek, & Hernandez 2000). This pressure to be “Americanized” (i.e., speak English) makes it very difficult for young children to hold on to their home language (Ada & Zubizarreta 2001).

Additionally, parents of infants and toddlers may fear that exposing their children to two languages at once may cause confusion. However, studies have shown that children who learn two languages simultaneously display language milestones similar to those for monolingual children (Stechuk, Burns, & Yandian 2006; Petito, et al. 2001)). A study of 100 Spanish-speaking children in Head Start also demonstrated that “strengthening the home language skills of children at an early age will facilitate both their transition into kindergarten and their acquisition of English” (Lopez & Greenfield 2004).

Another common myth is the assumption that a child with a disability would be confused if exposed to more than one language. Some teachers may insist that these children be exposed to only English and not their home language. But this approach may actually harm the child's learning and social development (California Dept. of Education 2007). Researchers have shown that children with disabilities can learn a second language and function in both languages as well as their peers who do not have disabilities (Candelaria-Greene 1996).

Children Can Learn Two Languages At Once. Young children can and will learn a second language in a supportive social setting. Rich and regular exposure to two languages during the early childhood years can help a child become a successful bilingual (Espinosa 2006). Consistent exposure to and multiple opportunities to hear and practice language in meaningful contexts that build meaning and vocabulary are critical components for young children learning a second language—whether they are learning the second language *simultaneously* or *sequentially* (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004). *Simultaneous acquisition* is exposure to two or more languages from birth. *Sequential acquisition* is exposure to a second language that begins at or after 3 years of age. Sequential language learners have learned conceptual knowledge in their first language and can make use of the prior knowledge, skills, and tactics in learning the second language (Ervin-Tripp 1974). For example, they may already understand concepts and classifications such as dogs and cats are “animals,” a concept that does not have to be relearned.

Whether “dual language learners” are children who are learning two languages at once or children who have made significant progress in one language and are learning a second language (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004), researchers agree that young children's *receptive* language is far more extensive than their *expressive* language (NICHD 2000). Receptive language refers to what children understand, while expressive language refers to what children are able to say. It is generally believed that at the beginning stages of language acquisition, *understanding* language overwhelmingly outpaces speaking.

Despite widespread fears as noted above, exposure to more than one language during the early childhood years does not cause confusion. Infant/toddlers who are exposed to two languages from birth attain language milestones comparable to their monolingual peers in each of their respective native languages. A small study of Canadian infants and toddlers exposed to French and English simultaneously found that “their milestones were also similar to the established norms for monolingual children's first-word, first two-word combinations, and first 50 words” (Petito et al. 2001). While the infant/toddler's vocabulary in each language is smaller, “the number of words that a bilingual child knows across both languages is comparable to that of monolingual (one language), English-speaking children” (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services/ACF 2001).

Code Switching. Children learning a second language or two languages simultaneously will often “code switch.” Code switching is the use of elements from two languages in the same utterance or same stretch of conversation and is a normal aspect of dual-language acquisition (Genesee,

Paradis, & Crago 2004.). Young children who are learning two languages tend to insert single items from one language into the other in order to resolve ambiguities and clarify statements (McLaughlin 1995).

In fact, rather than signaling language deficiency, code switching signals “the strategic and efficient use of linguistic and cognitive resources in the appropriation and management of two language systems. ... It is rule-governed and systematic, demonstrating the operation of underlying grammatical restrictions” (Toribio 2004). In other words, children who code switch, often do so by honoring the grammatical rules of both languages. Additionally, in communities where there is “intense and prolonged contact” between cultures and generations such as the Puerto Rican community in New York City, code switching is common and often identifies the most accomplished English-Spanish bilinguals (Zentella 1997). Code-switching is a sign of “linguistic vitality” and should not be mistaken as a sign of confusion (McLaughlin, Banchard, & Osanai 1995).

How a Child Learns a Second Language. It is very important that children who are learning two languages continue to learn vocabulary and conceptual skills in their home language because without this continued development in the home language, they will have greater difficulty developing skills in the second language (Collier 1988). A rich, expansive, and just challenging enough language environment facilitates language development. Children can learn a second language when they receive “comprehensible input” or scaffolding of language that they already understand, plus additional language and vocabulary at their next level of development (Krashen 1991). As the child begins to understand what is being said and feels understood when she tries to talk to others—in other words, as she finds it “rewarding” to communicate in the language—she will feel motivated to learn that language (Dopke 1997).

Preschool children work through a series of “revelations” as they adjust to a classroom setting in which their home language is not spoken:

1. Not everyone understands or speaks their home language.
2. Those who do not understand or speak their home language speak another language.
3. In order to communicate with these people, they must learn this new language (Tabors 1997).

Researchers (Tabors & Snow 1994; California Dept. of Education 2007) have noted a consistent developmental sequence for young children learning a second language:

1. *Home-language use.* There may be a period of time when children continue to use their home languages in the second-language situation. Younger children may spend more time than older children using their first language because it takes the younger children more time to realize that their first language is not being understood and that another language is being spoken.



2. *Observational and listening period* (referred to as ‘nonverbal period’ by Tabors & Snow). When they discover that their home language does not work in this situation, children enter an observational and listening phase as they collect information about the new language and perhaps spend some time in sound experimentation. Children who are in a nonverbal phase may stop speaking but do not necessarily stop communicating. Younger children, such as toddlers, may spend more time in the observational and listening phase than preschoolers because it may take the toddlers longer to form a strategy to break out of the nonverbal period.
3. *Telegraphic and formulaic speech*. Children begin to go public, using individual words and phrases in the new language. They begin to intentionally use individual words in the second language to form short phrases or sentences. Telegraphic speech refers to the use of a few content words as an entire utterance. Formulaic speech consists of young children using formulaic phrases in situations in which others have been observed to use them.
4. *Productive language use*. Children begin to develop productive use of the second language

These stages of second or sequential language development have implications for scaffolding language development with appropriate teaching strategies and activities as well as for assessment of language development and learning in other domains. Dual language development, especially for sequential learners, is subject to various factors including: the child’s age when second language exposure begins, motivation, personality, the amounts and types of exposure, family history, and environmental factors such as the status of the home language in the community (Espinosa 2006; Bialystok & Ryan 1985). Each of these factors has important implications for individualizing curriculum for young children learning two languages.

Supporting First and Second Language Development. Language and literacy do not develop in isolation. Staff should be aware of “how children learn languages and the context in which they learn languages to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to children” (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services/ACF 2001). In other words, Head Start staff need to understand—

- ◆ how language develops in children;
- ◆ how dual language development is similar to and differs from monolingual language development;
- ◆ how dual language development can be promoted through intentional teaching strategies and activities; and
- ◆ how teaching strategies, classroom and home-based activities and educational materials, and expectations for children can be crafted to be linguistically and culturally sensitive.

Head Start staff also need to understand how language development is “connected to all developmental domains: physical, social, emotional, and cognitive” (Stechuk & Burns 2005). “As children develop language, their cognitive or conceptual abilities are also developed” (Nelson 1996). As young

children’s conceptual knowledge expands, they are motivated to develop more sophisticated language. Language development also helps to facilitate social development, and “preschool children’s *social development* predict(s) long-range outcomes, including literacy” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998). Head Start staff should understand that while young children seem to pick up language rapidly, they still require intentional support to develop language. “To fully support children’s development, it is not enough to (simply) talk to children. Instead, children need and deserve exposure to a broad range of learning opportunities that include meaningful, sustained, rich, and varied language” (Stechuk & Burns 2005). Within classrooms, children should be encouraged to use the understandings they already have as they are exposed to new, more elaborate “forms, uses, and content” (Stechuk & Burns 2005).

At home, Head Start staff should encourage parents of all young children—whether infants, toddlers, or preschoolers—to speak in their home language. The language in which parents are most comfortable will facilitate richer conversation and a greater ability to impart the subtleties of culture, values, and family relationships to their children. Additionally, parents speaking in their home language are more apt to model grammatically correct phrasing and sentence structure.

Infants and Toddlers: Supporting Their First and Second Language Development. Supporting development of the home language facilitates development of the self-awareness that helps infants and toddlers make meaning of their environment and develop a sense of security (Pearson & Mangione 2006). However, while it may be preferable, it is not necessary for a teacher to speak the home language of infants and toddlers in order to effectively support the child’s dual language acquisition. For infants and toddlers, Early Head Start staff can support development by encouraging child-family interactions and supporting the use of the home language as parents talk to children; providing opportunities for infants and toddlers to “problem solve, test, and discover new knowledge,” and “partnering with families and members of the children’s linguistic community to involve them in creating rich and powerful learning environments and promoting learning goals” (Sanchez 2005).

Preschoolers: Supporting Their First and Second Language Development. Programs should facilitate regular language modeling opportunities for children, both in class and at home. For preschoolers, whenever possible, staff should speak the language of the children. When that is not feasible, at a minimum, Head Start staff should learn important words in the child’s home language in order to ease the child’s transition and facilitate low-level communication in the first few weeks of enrollment (Tabors 1997). Communicating in a language different from the child’s home language is appropriate “as long as an effort is made to support the child when he tries to communicate in his home language” (Pearson & Mangione 2006). Staff should be aware that preschoolers passing through the observational and listening period (nonverbal period) described earlier may be treated like infants by staff or ignored by their English-speaking classmates and should make efforts to ensure inclusion of these children in classroom activities (Dempsie 2000; Tabors 1997).





Implications for Families. Programs must help families make informed decisions about their child’s language goals and support families in those decisions (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services/ACF 2001). If the language goals that parents have for their child are different from the goals of staff, “then great potential exists for confusing the child and disrupting the parent-child relationship” (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services 2001).

Many immigrant families believe that to achieve success in school, children must abandon their home language and adopt English as quickly as possible, even if this means giving up linguistic, cultural, and personal identity (Worthy & Rodriguez-Galindo 2006). Parents should be informed, in culturally sensitive ways, about the benefits of speaking two (or more) languages and the costs of losing the home (or first) language. In helping parents set clear goals for their children, staff should take into account factors such as cultural expectations (some immigrant parents may be accustomed to trusting the school and having very little input in their children’s education) and possible family refugee trauma (Illinois State Board of Education 2003). Head Start programs can offer a foundation for supporting parents in maintaining their home language and culture as their children advance through school, where the pressure to speak only English may be greater (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services/ACF 2001).

Fostering a Rich and Meaningful Language Environment at Home.

Learning any language fully requires rich, sustained language exposure. Simply speaking the home language to children is not enough. Families must provide their young children with frequent opportunities to speak the home language outside the home in “settings in which there is high communicative demand” (Tabors 1997). Head Start staff should share specific strategies to promote language expansion and to ensure an enriching language environment at home. For example, staff should encourage parents to have daily conversations, tell stories, or otherwise communicate with their children in the home language (Houston 1995). Encouraging parents to read to their children in their home language can even help young children develop their English language skills because reading abilities learned in the home language can be transferred to English (Paez & Rinaldi 2006; Colombo 2005). Parents with limited English proficiency who read to their children in their home language are able to remain involved in their children’s literacy development (Colombo 2005).

Implications for Assessment. Assessing young children learning two languages can be challenging because language is such an important part of most assessments—whether the assessment is of a child’s language development in particular or the child’s overall development. Regardless of whether they are assessing language development or overall development, Head Start staff must understand first language and second language, and age-appropriate development (McLaughlin, Banchard, & Osanai 1995).

To assess *language development* of children learning two languages, programs should use linguistically and culturally appropriate language assessment tools that are designed to assess development in both languages. To conduct *child development assessments* in all domains of learning and development of children learning two (or more) languages,

the assessment instruments must be sensitive to the language(s) and culture of the child, as well as the child's language proficiency in each language. Children who do not understand what is being asked of them (receptive language skills) or do not have sufficient language proficiency to respond to questions (expressive language skills) are at a disadvantage unless the teacher is aware of the assessment tool limitations and can use "language-free assessments for cognitive, social-emotional, and physical understandings, and/or will need to be keen observers of children's activities as they occur in order to document what children can and are doing without being asked" (Tabors 1997).

Assessment must be culturally appropriate. Young children from different cultures may have varying ways of interacting and communicating with other children or adults. They may avoid initiating conversation with teachers or adults; may be unwilling to give individual response to direct questions; may avoid eye contact with adults; and may be uncomfortable working within groups with children of the opposite sex or engage other children in competition (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004; McLaughlin, Banchard, & Osanai 1995).

Assessment should consider the entire context of the child's language development. This requires involvement of parents and family members, Head Start staff, and the child in order to understand the child's language environment. It includes the extent to which adults and other children provide language assistance such as modeling, prompting, praising, or repeating (McLaughlin, Banchard, & Osanai 1995). Assessment should also factor in the family's home language, family's level of education, religious affiliation, country of origin, length of time the family has lived in the United States, degree of acculturation, and where the family currently lives (Santos & Reese 1999).

Without proper assessments, tools, and procedures, teachers may not fully understand the child's interests, abilities, and learning needs, and thus may be unable to individualize curriculum, experiences, and strategies appropriately. Additionally, inappropriate assessment may lead to misdiagnosis, over-diagnosis, or lack of identification of true language development concerns. Dual language learners are "often overrepresented in special education classes, arguably because their incomplete acquisition of the language of instruction has been misinterpreted as a learning problem" (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004).

Research can be used to discount many of the myths that surround dual language learning for young children, but as noted at the beginning of this section, much is still unknown. Yet what is clear is that Head Start staff must be responsive to cultural and linguistic differences when implementing curriculum and assessment. "Knowing what cultural differences make a difference for young children and finding out how they are expressed at home and in the [Head Start] setting will be necessary components for effective preschool education programs" (Tabors 1997).

Language Revitalization in Native Communities. Unlike teaching English to young children whose home language is another language, native

language revitalization efforts involve teaching native languages to children for whom English is the dominant language in their communities and even their homes. In the United States, the majority of indigenous (or native) languages are no longer being learned at home, and the last generation of native speakers are growing older and older (Hinton 2003). Young American Indian, Alaska Native, and other native children who are not taught their languages and cultures may find themselves “caught between two cultures [and] without a thorough cultural foundation laid in the home, they often don’t learn their tribal language or English very well” (Reyhner 1999). For older generations who grew up under English-only policies, “the loss of native languages has been linked to a sense of shame and a loss of cultural identity” (Goodluck, Lockard, & Yazzie 2000).

The less exposure that young children have to the native language at home, the more support they will need in the preschool setting to develop and/or maintain that language. Supporting young children’s native language development must go beyond simply teaching numbers, colors, and names of animals (Reyhner 1999). Reyhner (2003) suggests that the “best way to acquire a second language is the same way children acquire a first language.”

An additional set of strategies are necessary to successfully support native language development in children when most of their teachers are not fluent in the native language and the language is not spoken fluently at home or in the community. One strategy is to link teachers with elders in the community who can serve as “language mentors” (Hinton 2003). Ideally, teachers should be allowed months or years to develop language proficiency, but when that is not possible, their interactions with young children in the classroom should be limited to specific topics that they can teach efficiently until they can develop their own language proficiency (Hinton 2003). Beyond the classroom, in order for native languages to survive, “environments also must be created in indigenous communities where the indigenous language is used exclusively” (Reyhner 1999).



FINDINGS

The needs of Head Start programs with respect to providing comprehensive services to children and families whose home language is other than English are significant and complex. They range from the need for staff knowledge and skills related to language acquisition theory and strategies for children learning more than one language, to hiring and retaining qualified bilingual/bicultural staff, to effectively working with families from multiple language backgrounds and cultures.

The findings are categorized according to the four major areas reviewed:

- I. Ensuring positive outcomes for children
- II. Strengthening program planning and professional development
- III. Enhancing family involvement
- IV. Building community resources

Within each of the four areas, major challenges encountered by Head Start are noted in *italics*. Following each of these statements of need is more specific information on the challenges faced, resources needed, and, in places, strategies used by local programs to address the need.

I. ENSURING POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

Some participants expressed a clear understanding of the complexity and benefits of fully supporting children in acquiring a second language as they also progress in the development of their first language. Others were less aware of the complexity of the issue. A few thought that the only resource or strategy needed was hiring bilingual staff, regardless of their early childhood credentials. Several participants stated that some programs and staff did not understand the *value* of supporting both first and second languages, much less what it takes to do so. In other words, in many cases the connection among language development, culture, and learning was not fully understood or appreciated.

I.A. Dual Language Acquisition

Many Head Start programs struggle with knowing how best to support children's language development—as well as their learning in other domains—when children come from families who speak a home language other than English. Supporting children's language acquisition is essential to attaining Head Start's mission of ensuring school readiness for all its children.

Head Start program staff, TA providers, and other Head Start partners expressed a need to understand, in more depth, the benefits of, and principles and best practices for supporting first and second language development for young children. Focus group participants stated a need for information on—

- ◆ Basic theory in early language development as well as specific information related to dual language acquisition in young children, including the linkages between language and social and emotional development, cognitive development, and school readiness.



- ◆ Dual language program models, such as dual language immersion (one-way or two-way), one language, and gradual transition from home language to English, and criteria for effective implementation. (Participants also requested guidance on the less than optimal scenarios, such as whether it is better to speak proper but monolingual English to children rather than poor Spanish (or other language of the children) if staff are not available who speak proper Spanish.)
- ◆ Dual language research and teaching strategies for different circumstances, such as when working with different age groups, different temperaments, two versus multiple languages in a class/program, a few versus a majority of children in a class speaking languages other than English, and home-based versus center-based program options.
- ◆ Strategies and principles for further individualizing teaching strategies based upon child's developmental progress; child and family's environmental history, including degree and length of language exposure; family history; family language goals; community resources and attributes, and needs of each child.
- ◆ Strategies and principles for supporting children learning in all content domains given that language development affects a child's ability to learn about and participate fully in his or her world.
- ◆ Strategies and resources for implementing culturally respectful curricula (books, cultural artifacts, musical instruments, tapes, cultural symbols, toys, and other learning materials that illustrate the language, customs, rituals, values, tradition, and imagery of families' cultures).
 - Given the multi-cultural nature of American society, it was also suggested that all Head Start programs should be teaching about other languages, cultures, and races/ethnicities, including those not represented in the program.
- ◆ Strategies for native language revitalization, expansion, and promising practices (primarily for American Indian Alaska Native programs). (See further discussion on page 38.)
- ◆ Other national and state resources related to dual language learning for children, staff training, parent support, etc.

I.B. Assessment for Children Learning Two Languages

Focus group participants reported that most Head Start programs use monolingual language assessments to assess language and literacy development in children learning two languages. This is largely due to the lack of appropriate language and literacy assessments for children learning two languages, further complicated by the lack of knowledge regarding the problematic use of monolingual tools to assess these children. Additionally, the vast majority of child development assessments that assess all domains of learning and development rely heavily on the use of language to assess children. If these assessments are not linguistically and culturally appropriate, they cannot provide an accurate and comprehensive assessment of a child's development and learning.

Use of inappropriate tools and lack of understanding of language acquisition may lead to a misdiagnosis, over-diagnosis, or a lack of identification of true language development concerns. Using only monolingual tools cannot provide an accurate picture of total language and literacy development, nor correctly assess typical stages of second language acquisition.

In order to help children gain the social competence, skills and confidence necessary to be prepared to succeed in their present environment and with later responsibilities in school and life, grantee and delegate agencies' approach to child development and education must:

- ❖ *Be developmentally and linguistically appropriate, recognizing that children have individual rates of development as well as individual interests, temperaments, languages, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles;*
- ❖ *Provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition... (45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(i & iii)).*

Furthermore, children face a double layer of complexity and challenge if they are both striving to learn a new language while also dealing with special needs with respect to language learning or other developmental milestones. These children and their families require a great deal of support, which can be particularly challenging when language barriers limit full communication with parents.

Head Start program staff, TA providers, and other Head Start partners stated that there was a tremendous need in the field for culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments as well as for staff training in assessment skills. Participants specified the need for—

- ◆ Linguistically and culturally appropriate child development assessments in all domains of learning and development for preschoolers, infants, and toddlers who are learning two languages in multiple language sets.
- ◆ Language and literacy development assessments for preschoolers, infants, and toddlers learning two languages in multiple language sets (i.e., English/Spanish, English/Farsi, English/Vietnamese, etc.).
- ◆ Environmental assessments of the factors affecting language acquisition, such as—
 - Degree and length of exposure to English
 - Home environment language use
 - Parental language goals for child
 - Family/cultural language patterns and traditions
 - Trauma related to immigration or other experiences that may affect, language use or development
 - Child temperament
- ◆ Staff training (i.e., in the use of assessment tools, soliciting parent input, conducting observation, etc.), at the program level as well as the TA provider/consultant level, in conducting language and literacy development assessments, as well as child development assessments in all domains of learning and development for children who are learning two languages.
- ◆ Staff training in how best to learn from and speak with parents about their child’s assessments in culturally sensitive ways.
- ◆ Strategies and tips for distinguishing between the normal phases of dual language development and behavioral concerns or perceived language delays that may require intervention. For example, some children may be placed in speech therapy when in fact they are simply going through the typical “observational and listening phase” of learning a second language. Alternatively, staff may miss identifying a behavioral concern or developmental delay that requires intervention. At times, for instance, parents reported that they thought their child was ignored or not paid adequate attention by teachers because teachers may not have had the skills to work with children who are English learners.

I.C. Transitions for Young Dual Language Learners

Many programs reported struggles with and uncertainty about how best to support children learning two languages as they transition into or out of the program and other child care arrangements or public schools.

To train classroom teachers and other staff to meet the education performance standards as described in section 641A(a)(1)(B), through activities

- ❖ *to promote children's language and literacy growth, through techniques identified through scientifically based reading research;*
- ❖ *to promote the acquisition of the English language for non-English background children and families... (Head Start Act Section 640(a)(3)(C)(ii)(I-II)).*

Transitions are always important and often stressful times for children. This can be especially true for children who are new to a Head Start program, and even more so for those new to the language(s) and culture(s) of the program or to a group care setting. For a young child, experiencing the trauma of separation not only from one's family, but also from everything familiar, can be overwhelming. Transitioning into a Head Start classroom is less traumatic if a teacher or staff member speaks the language of the child and understands her culture.

Programs requested strategies and guidance for—

- ◆ Working with public school systems to facilitate the transition of children learning two languages—particularly when schools may not actively support the home language of children.
- ◆ Working with parents to help in the continued support of the home language even when public schools may not continue this support.

II. STRENGTHENING PROGRAM PLANNING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

II.A. Attracting & Retaining Skilled Bilingual Early Childhood Staff

When asked about program organizational needs—staffing needs, training needs, etc.—a consistent cry was heard: Head Start programs have great difficulty finding, attracting, and retaining bilingual staff who are qualified in early childhood education. In most communities, Head Start salaries are not competitive with the school districts and hospitals, for example, that compete for the same skilled staff. Furthermore, as the requirements for staff qualifications have increased, with the passage of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, it is becoming more difficult for programs to find and recruit bilingual staff who are also qualified in early childhood education.

The child development field, in general, suffers from high turnover. Coupled with the high demand for skilled bilingual staff, Head Start programs are regularly challenged in recruiting and retaining qualified bilingual staff. Head Start programs report that they invest heavily in staff training and increasing the qualifications and credentials of their staff. Yet they lose this investment as staff are lured away by organizations capable of paying higher salaries. Skilled, bilingual staff are particularly difficult to retain. To ensure that they had staff who spoke the language of the majority of the children as required by the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, but unable to find qualified bilingual staff, some programs reported that they have hired monolingual Spanish staff. At times, organizational tensions arose because the monolingual [English] program managers could not communicate adequately with the monolingual [Spanish] classroom staff, family service workers, and bus drivers. In these cases, the programs reported that the resulting language and cultural barriers created communication breakdowns that affected the quality of services provided to children and families.

It is essential that Head Start programs have access to the professional development resources they need in order to enhance staff skills and retain



qualified bilingual staff. This helps programs promote continuity of care for children while ensuring that staff are able to speak with children in the language with which they are most familiar and that those same staff members have a solid grounding in early childhood development. Bilingual/bicultural skills are not only needed in teaching staff, but are also necessary for family services workers, home visiting staff, bus monitors and other staff positions that regularly communicate with families. In fact, language and diversity should be reflected throughout the program and the larger Head Start community.

Focus group participants stated that programs need —

- ◆ Incentive strategies to attract and retain qualified bilingual and bicultural staff in all positions, not just direct teaching staff. Programs noted that financial incentives are only one of many strategies, and that effective strategies may vary according to the values and traditions of various cultures and communities. A culturally responsive repertoire of options would be a useful resource for programs.
- ◆ Reasonable wage compensation scales for financial incentives for qualified bilingual staff (i.e., bonuses and/or pay differentials for being bilingual).
- ◆ A menu of staffing and language assistance strategies that can be employed when multiple languages are spoken in a program. Some examples given include —
 - Programs pair bilingual staff who lack content expertise with those who have it, an expensive yet effective strategy.
 - Programs hire monolingual staff and support them as they take English as a Second Language classes. (However, it takes five to seven years to become proficient; consequently, it is important to also have early childhood education classes in their first language so that they can pursue both simultaneously.)
 - Programs hire a staff member whose specific purpose is to coordinate all translations and interpretations needs of the program (some reported reducing administrative staff in order to fund these positions).
 - Programs reach out to community groups for either paid or volunteer language assistance.
 - A program in a rural area in the West reported using a provisional professional visa program to recruit Spanish-speaking staff from South America.

Additionally, focus group participants reported needing access to an array of professional development options that enable staff to obtain the credentials they need to work within a multicultural child development program. Programs need —

- ◆ Early childhood education degrees and credentials (CDA, AA, and BA) taught in other languages. This may be particularly helpful in cultivating and nurturing Head Start parents as prospective employees — an option that has become more difficult for Head Start programs to do with the higher requirements for staff qualifications mandated by

the Head Start Act. The “loss” of this potential pool of Head Start staff limits programs’ ability to hire people with the most direct understanding of not only the language but also the culture and lifeways of the children and families in their programs. Several programs also mentioned the loss (or demotion) of excellent Spanish-speaking teachers who did not have the necessary credentials. Several projects are underway to assist in meeting this need, including—

- The University of Cincinnati has developed the Bilingual Bridge Early Childhood Education online AA degree, which is marketed nationwide (a Head Start Innovation and Improvement Project grant).
- The Council for Professional Recognition provides the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential in both English and Spanish. Additionally, the Council will work with students and/or programs so that the CDA can be taken in other languages. In these cases, the student or program arranges and pays for the required translation and interpretation services.
- Head Start Higher Education Grantees, and in particular the Hispanic Serving Institutions, provide college degrees in early childhood education.
- One program serving a large number of diverse immigrant populations set up a network of Family Child Care (FCC) providers for infants and toddlers and their families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. They trained the FCC providers who spoke the home language of the families in the early childhood content and FCC requirements and then matched families with providers who spoke their language and understood their culture.

Programs also could benefit from—

- ◆ Assistance with transcript analysis for course credits taken from multiple sources and affordable articulation processes for degrees from entities outside the United States.
- ◆ OHS allowing college-level degrees obtained from other countries to count toward the AA, BA mandate.

Ensuring that such programs have adequate numbers of qualified staff, and that such staff are furnished adequate training, including developing skills in working with children with non-English language background and children with disabilities, when appropriate (Head Start Act Section 640(a)(3)(B)(ii)).

Even staff with bilingual skills and early childhood education credentials are often not trained in strategies for supporting dual language development in young children. Thus, staff training is needed in dual language acquisition theory and strategies as noted above. A credentialing option was suggested as a way of verifying knowledge in this area.

At times, neither staff nor regular volunteers with the needed language skills are available in the community. In these cases, program staff could benefit from basic language training targeted to early childhood professionals for simple communication with children (i.e., greetings and good-byes; standard language needed for child routines such as going outside, circle time, bathroom time, eating, naptime, etc.). This level of speech would obviously not be appropriate for communicating with parents. Some examples include—

- ◆ Programs reported partnering with community colleges to provide basic instruction in the languages of their families.
- ◆ Programs hire parents as language aides.

II.B. Assessing Staff Language Proficiency

Many, if not most, monolingual Head Start managers have difficulty assessing the language skills of prospective bilingual staff. Language proficiency of bilingual teaching and home visiting staff is critical since modeling grammatically correct language usage is important for proper language development in children.

It is essential for program managers to clearly define the types of language skills required for various staff positions or tasks. For instance, are written and/or oral language skills needed for certain staff positions? Does a task require skilled interpretation/translation services or more general communication skills? Furthermore, in many cultures, oral communication is highly valued. Program managers need to understand the communication styles and preferences of their families as well as the kinds of communication needed for different circumstances. They then need strategies for knowing how to evaluate these skills.

Participants reported concerns about hiring self-proclaimed “bilingual” staff who may not be fully proficient in the non-English language. Programs mentioned using staff who are “fluent” in spoken language to assist with the development of written materials even though that staff member’s writing ability may not be strong and the materials may not be clearly or accurately written. One program, in particular, noted its concern with liability issues if a “bilingual” home visitor, for example, interprets medical information for parents and does so incorrectly. Yet in many, many communities, medical or trained interpreters or translators are not available to assist these families—thus the task falls to Head Start staff.

- ◆ Head Start managers, who do not speak a particular language, requested strategies for evaluating the oral and written proficiency of prospective bilingual staff. For example, several programs have developed informal assessments which are administered by bilingual staff, consultants, or language professors at local colleges.

When a majority of children speak the same language, at least one classroom staff member or home visitor interacting regularly with the children must speak their language (45 CFR 1304.52(g)(2)).

The Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) collects information annually on the number of direct child development staff (i.e., teachers, assistant teachers, home-based visitors, and family child care teachers) who are proficient in a language other than English. Proficiency is not defined, nor is it necessary for the language of proficiency to be that of the children and families in the program. Also, monolingual Spanish speakers, for instance, would be included in this count. Thus, it may be misleading to assume that the three out of ten Head Start direct child development staff who are reported as proficient in another language are, in fact, fully bilingual and proficient in the languages needed by the program population. It would also be incorrect to assume that all bilingual staff know the families' cultures or know how to support children in learning two languages. Modifications may also need to be made to in-service training practices to ensure that the monolingual and bilingual staff, if they are not fully fluent in English, understand the content of the trainings. To ensure the best learning outcomes, it is important that staff receive training, to the extent possible, in the language in which they are most comfortable learning.

- ◆ Some programs provide the training in the home language of their staff; others provide follow-up training to staff whose first language is other than English to ensure they are catching the key content.

II.C. Organizational Change

Programs that have been successful in serving children and families from various language and cultural backgrounds—and there are many showcase examples within the Head Start community—report that success cannot be accomplished through a few teaching strategies or solely by hiring bilingual staff. While no one or two right ways to achieve success exist, it is clear that a program-wide, comprehensive plan is necessary.

Focus group participants reported that Head Start programs need assistance in developing the program philosophy, policies and procedures that support a unified plan that is responsive to family and community needs and that builds upon organizational and community assets. Programs requested examples of this process, organizational self-assessment tools to aid in the process, current demographic trends, and models of successful practices in other Head Start programs. TA providers requested strategies for approaching programs “that don’t know what they don’t know” or that are hesitant because they are uncertain of their ability to properly serve families from other cultures or may fear the organization change that may be required.

Many TA providers and programs reported needing to address staff ethnic biases and raise general cultural awareness among their staff in order to be able to work effectively with and be responsive to families and other staff. Focus group participants reported that staff receptiveness to supporting home language development ranged from enthusiastic to skeptical to clearly negative. Cultural or ethnic biases can stem from lack of awareness and the implicit or explicit “English Only” traditions of some communities, or from fear of not having the teaching skills or information needed to support home language development. Several programs reported tensions created by socio-economic class biases within a culture, cultural differ-

ences among recent immigrants and immigrants from the same country but with a longer history in the United States, and biases among people from one Spanish-speaking country and another. (Another misconception that many communities share is that all Spanish-speaking people share a similar culture.) It was also noted that staff—at all levels—were often unaware of their biases and misconceptions about other cultures, pointing strongly for the need to provide cultural awareness and sensitivity training and resources for *all* staff.

II.D. Implementation of Head Start Program Performance Standards

Although the Head Start Program Performance Standards and Head Start Act are clear about the need to support children and families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, specific guidance for implementing these regulations is currently not available. Furthermore, little cross-program information exists—regionally or nationally—on how these children and families are being served.

Head Start programs and TA providers would benefit from guidance on how to strengthen programs' outreach, services, and systems that support children's development and family involvement. Furthermore, information on cross-cutting themes, challenges, and opportunities faced by programs would also assist Federal staff and TA providers in targeting their efforts and maximizing their impact.

III. ENHANCING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

While the focus of this assessment began with how best to support children in dual language acquisition—and thus how to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff and the capacity of programs to do so—it quickly became clear that that goal could not be reached in isolation from the families and the communities in which they live. Language learning for children affects all domains of learning and development. So, too, does the ability of program staff to communicate with and involve parents in the program and in their child's development.

Access to community resources to support family needs is also integral to optimal child development and family stability—whether reaching out to community groups that can aid in translation and interpretation or in understanding a family's culture; accessing culturally sensitive mental health, medical, or dental care services; or growing up in a community that respects and values one's culture and its contribution to the rich fabric of the community. The focus of the assessment expanded to look at the family and community issues that ultimately affect optimal child development, communication with families, and access to community services. This is what was heard:

III.A. Parent Involvement in Child's Language Development

Many Head Start parents state that they are unable to fully participate in their children's education or in the Head Start program's governance and parent involvement activities because they do not speak English well or at all. Furthermore, parents often are concerned about their children continuing to speak the home language at home because of the pervasive belief that doing so interferes with English language development.

Head Start recognizes parents as the first and most important teachers of their children and thus, parental involvement in the Head Start program



as well as in the child's education is a cornerstone of the Head Start model. Parents are also a rich pool of prospective employees, language/cultural mentors, interpreters, and classroom volunteers. To ensure participation and involvement of families, Head Start programs need strategies and resources to reach out to and recruit families from other cultures, to assist parents in making informed decisions related to language goals for their children, to provide activities and resources to assist parents in supporting language development at home, and to fully involve parents in their child's education and the Head Start program.

Focus group participants reported that they needed guidance and strategies for conducting community assessments that accurately captured the new populations in their communities, as well as strategies for recruiting those families. The rapid demographic changes occurring in some communities can have dramatic effects on staffing as well as the types of services needed. For instance, since Head Start staff should reflect, to the extent possible, the background of the families served, community assessment findings can signal the need for significant organizational shifts. For example, one program reported that a recent influx of Middle Eastern families required programmatic shifts to ensure that more home-based services were available, given this population's preference for that program option. Another program reported staffing changes (and conflicts) because of a rapid demographic shift in the community from largely African American to Hispanic.

Focus group participants expressed the need for outreach and recruitment strategies and resources to assist in recruiting the cultures/populations that are reflected in the community assessments. Programs need outreach and recruitment strategies for —

- ◆ Reaching parents who may not speak English well or at all; who may not trust programs they perceive to be connected to the government; who may have different family decision-making patterns; or who may not have a cultural tradition of having children cared for in group settings.
 - One program reported hiring and training parents as family service workers to help in recruiting other families of the same culture.
- ◆ Reaching out to and serving the most needy, and not just the families that come to their doors.
 - Programs requested guidance from OHS on serving (i.e., whether or not to serve) families if they cannot be fully served with the complete range of required comprehensive services because of lack of accessible or culturally responsive community resources or lack of staff or translators with language skills.
 - Some TA providers reported working with programs that were uncomfortable recruiting new immigrant populations, such as African or Middle Eastern, even though those programs had a history of working with other cultures, such as Mexican or Puerto Rican families.
- ◆ Reaching out to remote ethnic populations families who face transportation barriers, such as when no public transportation exists, or when families do not own a car, are not licensed to drive, or do not have a car seat.

Staff and program consultants must be familiar with the ethnic background and heritage of families in the program and must be able to serve and effectively communicate, to the extent feasible, with children and families with no or limited English proficiency (45 CFR 1304.52(b)(4)).

Once families are enrolled in the program, staff need information and strategies for supporting parents in setting informed language goals for their child. Often parents do not recognize the costs of losing the home language to their child, their family, and their long-term relationship with their child. Furthermore, staff are often unable to articulate the importance of this to parents.

Parents shared their hopes and concerns with respect to their children's developing language abilities, in their home languages as well as in English—

- ◆ Some parents thought it would confuse their children to learn two languages at once, or could slow the child's ability to learn English, thus compromising his progress toward school readiness and eventual success in an English speaking environment. Others did not share this concern, particularly those parents who grew up speaking two or more languages.
- ◆ A few parents reported a communication pattern emerging over time where their child spoke to them only in English, and they spoke to their child only in the home language.
- ◆ Some parents reported trying to speak to their child only in English even though the parents' English was limited. Over time, this stunted the richness of their conversations since these parents did not have the vocabulary and fluency to engage in subtle or enriching conversations with their child.

Focus group participants requested culturally sensitive strategies for presenting information to parents on the value of bilingualism and the cost of losing the home language. To do this, staff need to be aware not just of the research on the costs and benefits of learning two languages, but also, for example, of different cultural and group norms for decision-making, expectations for children with respect to communication with adults, and culturally responsive early literacy activities or storytelling to use with young children. Furthermore, staff need to create a safe, open environment where parents understand that staff respect and welcome their families' home language and culture. Staff need—

- ◆ Accessible research-based information for parents about the value of bilingualism, including the benefits to children of maintaining the home language as well as the costs of losing that language. Programs requested that this information be available in written form in a number of languages, perhaps as a tip sheet or handout.
 - Given the benefits of speaking two (or more) languages, it was even suggested that dual language learning should be a goal for all Head Start children—not just those coming from families of diverse language and cultural backgrounds.
- ◆ Strategies, activities, and resources for supporting active use of home language in the home environment, such as family literacy activities or theme-based “activity packs” for parents to take home.

- Many parents reported wanting their child to speak the home language in addition to learning English, but saw the responsibility for supporting the home language to be strictly the job of the parents and not of Head Start.
- A few parents reported setting aside intentional time on a daily basis to instruct their children in the home language because of their recognition of its importance to the child's connection with his family and heritage.
- ◆ Strategies for involving elders, parents, grandparents, and other family members in their child's education and the Head Start program when they do not speak English or have limited English skills.
 - Some participants suggested using parents and grandparents as cultural mentors, and ensuring that families have multiple opportunities to share their language, culture, oral and written traditions, and family stories within the classroom.
 - One strategy mentioned built upon the rich oral language tradition of some cultures and can be done regardless of the languages spoken. Elders, parents, or grandparents share their story, staff records it, the child illustrates it, and it can then be shared within the class by the child and/or family.
 - Staff stated that culturally acceptable and effective strategies to involve males—whether fathers, grandfathers, or other relatives—would be useful, since programs often have a difficult time involving male parents, particularly those from cultures which lack a tradition of male participation in a child's early education.

III.B. Staff/Parent Communication—Translation, Interpretation, and Relationship Building

Many Head Start programs report being unable to communicate fully and, at times, at all with parents, particularly when multiple languages and cultures are served by a program. This limits the ability of programs to provide the comprehensive services to children and families that are a hallmark of Head Start. Additionally, the costs of providing translation and interpretation services can be significant for programs.

Programs need funding for and access to interpretation services and translation materials to ensure full participation of families who speak a language other than English. Whether sharing information on a child's development, working with parents to resolve a family crisis, involving parents in program governance, coaching parents on enriching at-home activities to promote literacy, or helping parents understand the transition to the public school system, Head Start programs must be able to communicate effectively with parents on an ongoing basis. Programs also need guidance on the difference in language competency levels required of staff for general communication versus translation or interpretation services. Bilingual staff are not the same as trained translators/interpreters. Different circumstances require different skill levels.

Focus group participants stated that Head Start programs need—

- ◆ An understanding of the culture(s) of the families they serve.





- ◆ Translated and accessible core Head Start documents, such as the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, in multiple languages.
- ◆ Sample templates of typical program documentation, such as application forms, income documentation forms, permission forms for medical screenings, and children’s “ouchie” (accident) reports. (It was noted that many programs either do not try, or forget, to translate all written documents for parents.)
- ◆ Methods for assessing the family’s level of literacy in their home language in a non-threatening way so that programs are aware of whether or not translated materials are of value/use.
- ◆ Methods for assessing parents’ English language literacy to assist in developing family plans and strategies for accessing community services.
- ◆ Funding to hire professional interpreters and purchase interpretation equipment.
- ◆ Strategies for accessing interpretation and translation services in their communities. (Participants shared a number of strategies, such as: three-way conference calling with bilingual family members in other areas of the country; language coordinators or on-staff or on-call interpreters who carry cell phones; and “language bridge” cottage industries of local women who provided translation services.)
- ◆ Guidance for working with families when interpretation and translation services are not available.
- ◆ Guidance on liability issues related to interpreting for parents for community services, such as health care. (Program managers reported that they were hesitant to do this, but recognized that it may be necessary and perhaps better than not providing any interpretation services or allowing children to interpret medical information for their parents, which they stated is a frequent occurrence.)
 - To assist in the translation of common health services and issues, one program reported partnering with their community health department to teach family service workers basic health and medical terminology in the languages of their parents.

Supporting parents in taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes can also assist in improving communication with parents while simultaneously helping to acclimate them to life in the United States. Working with community partners to ensure that ESL classes are provided at accessible locations and times, including, for instance, at the homes of families, can assist families in being able to make full use of this resource. Head Start programs should also be aware of and sensitive to the stigma that ESL classes carry and work to help parents see this as a positive experience instead of a remedial step.

It is important to recognize that communication is more than direct translation or interpretation of words. Relationship building and cultural sensitivity are essential, particularly when working with families who are new to Head Start and possibly new to the United States. Participants stated that there is a need for—

- ◆ Cultural awareness tip sheets to understand different cultures’ non-verbal communication, as well as cultural customs, beliefs, traditions, and values.

Communication with parents must be carried out in the parents' primary or preferred language or through an interpreter, to the extent feasible. (45 CFR 1304.51(c)(2))

- ◆ Strategies for collaborating with families in assessing family needs and developing family plans. (For example, the survey/interview system often used by local programs may be intimidating and/or off-putting to some families, whereas a storytelling strategy, like the one developed by ACF Region XII's Head Start TA providers, may elicit richer and more accurate information in a manner that is more comfortable to some families.)
- ◆ Strategies for involving cultural leaders to assist programs in building trust within the community.
- ◆ Models for family peer mentoring programs.

IV. BUILDING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

IV.A. Accessing Family Support Services

Many Head Start programs have difficulty helping their families access the support services they need (medical, dental, mental health, speech therapists, social services, etc.) due to a lack of culturally responsive services and providers, which at times is aggravated by community biases.

Participants stated that Head Start programs need community planning and capacity building strategies to help local communities increase the availability of accessible, culturally responsive support services. Community collaboration and capacity building strategies may include—

- ◆ Providing cultural sensitivity and awareness training and resources for the local community, including information on—
 - The value of nurturing dual language development in children who may become future teachers, doctors, and professionals in a society and world that is becoming increasingly more multicultural.
 - The myths that surround immigrant families, including the perceptions that most immigrants are undocumented (referred to pejoratively as “illegal”), not well-educated, or uninterested in learning English.
- ◆ Involving community cultural and religious groups and leaders to assist in outreach to families that might not otherwise know of or be comfortable with accessing Head Start services.
- ◆ Collaborating with community organizations to provide accessible, culturally responsive services (and/or interpretation and translation services to families when culturally responsive services are not available).
 - Programs also noted the lack of health services for undocumented families and requested guidance on how they can assist these families. In general, finding culturally sensitive health services (and in particular, mental health and dental services) can be challenging.
- ◆ Providing additional funding to help families access services. Often, a large proportion of family income is sent back to family in the home country; thus, typical income documentation often “over-reports” the amount of income actually available to support family needs.
- ◆ Disseminating tips for working within “English Only” environments, whether explicitly noted in state law or implicit in the biases and cultures of the communities.

- ♦ Working to improve availability and accessibility of services in communities that are poor or that do not want to provide services for immigrant or migrant families who may be viewed as being transient (i.e., not community members) and thus not “worthy” of support from limited community funding sources.

IV.B. Supporting Home Language in an Environment of Native Language Revitalization and Cultural Maintenance

Another set of findings, worthy of a study of their own, are the complex and urgent challenges faced by many American Indian, Alaska Native, and other native communities with respect to the impending loss of native languages. Support for language revitalization, maintenance, and expansion are essential to supporting children in learning their native cultures and languages.

While circumstances vary tremendously, many if not most native languages are at risk of being lost. When the language is lost, much of the native culture is lost with it. Without significant investment and support, many of these languages and cultures will be lost with the passing of the elders who are often the last of their tribes to be fluent in the native languages. The loss of cultural wisdom and knowledge to children and communities will be enormous and, in many cases, irreversible. For Head Start, this requires a unique set of strategies, since very often the grandparents and great-grandparents hold this knowledge rather than the parents. Additionally, this requires a separate and intentional effort, since the tribes need to be supported in language revitalization efforts in addition to strengthening the Head Start programs’ ability to teach and support native language acquisition. One effort currently underway is the Administration for Native Americans’ grant program, Native Language Preservation and Maintenance, which assists tribes in assuring the survival and continuing the vitality of their native languages. A number of Head Start programs have been partners in these grants.

Focus group participants spoke of the need for strategies to teach languages in need of revitalization to the young children of the tribe. Given the differences in structure, symbols, and sounds of native languages, the strategies for teaching may also differ from those used to teach other languages.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Participants in the 17 focus groups, conference calls, and meetings offered numerous recommendations, as might be expected given the complexity of the issue and the pervasiveness of the need. In addition to discussing program challenges and opportunities, each participant was asked to offer one suggestion to the Office of Head Start that could enhance Head Start's ability to serve children and families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Although participants were asked for their recommendations—and some of these recommendations were voiced repeatedly—participants were not asked to develop a group consensus on the recommendations or to rank their relative priorities. Nonetheless, it was clear from the discussions that not all programs need the same kind or level of support. A follow-up study that helps to further define these issues could be of great benefit.

Recommendations from the field are presented below. They are organized in the same categories used for the general findings—

- I. Ensuring positive outcomes for children
- II. Enhancing family involvement
- III. Strengthening program planning and professional development
- IV. Building community resources

I. ENSURING POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

1. Head Start program staff, TA providers, and other Head Start partners requested that OHS develop training and materials to help them understand the principles, leading practices, and benefits of supporting dual language development for young children. This would include information on—
 - a. The linkages between language, social and emotional development, cognitive development as well as other domains of learning, and, ultimately, school readiness.
 - b. Basic theory in early language development as well as specific information related to simultaneous and sequential language acquisition in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
 - c. Teaching strategies for working with children learning a first and second language when they are of different age groups or temperaments, simultaneous or sequential language learners, in a class/program with two versus multiple languages, in a class/program with a few versus a majority of children speaking languages other than English, or in a home-based versus center-based program option.
 - d. Strategies and principles for implementing culturally respectful curricula and individualizing curricula based on the developmental progress, environmental history, family goals, and needs of each child.



- e. Strategies and principles for supporting children learning two languages in all content domains given that language development affects a child's ability to learn about and participate fully in his or her world.
- f. Strategies for implementing native language revitalization.

2. Head Start program staff, TA providers, and other Head Start partners recommended that OHS develop appropriate language and literacy assessments for young children learning two languages. Since language affects all aspects of a child's development, as well as their ability to comprehend and express what they know, child development assessments for all domains of learning and development need to be developed for use with children learning two languages. Resources needed include—

- a. Language and literacy assessments for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are learning two languages, in multiple languages sets (i.e., English/Spanish, English/Mandarin, etc.).
- b. Culturally and linguistically appropriate child development assessments of all domains of learning and development for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers offered in multiple languages.
- c. Environmental assessments of the factors affecting language acquisition, such as degree and length of exposure to English, home environment language use, parental language goals for child, status of the language in the community, family/cultural language patterns and traditions, trauma related to immigration or other experiences, and others.
- d. Staff training in conducting language and literacy assessments and child development assessments for children who are learning two languages.
- e. Staff training in and translated materials to assist with learning from and speaking with parents about their child's assessments.

II. ENHANCING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

3. Head Start programs requested training and materials to learn how best to support and work with parents from other cultural and language backgrounds. These resources should include strategies for—
- a. Conducting community assessments that accurately capture community demographics, including rapid demographic shifts.
 - b. Reaching out to and recruiting the populations that accurately reflect the demographic needs outlined in local community assessments.
 - c. Presenting information to parents, translated into multiple languages, on the benefits to their child of maintaining the home language, the costs of losing that language, and the future value for their children of speaking two (or more) languages.
 - d. Supporting parents in setting informed language goals for their child.
 - e. Helping families to support maintenance of the home language in their home environment.



- f. Involving elders, parents, grandparents, and other family members in their child/grandchild's education and the Head Start program.
 - g. Informing staff about the cultures of families, and in particular, providing them information directly related to working with families, including non-verbal communication patterns, customs, beliefs, and traditions of various cultures, and cultural views on issues such as childrearing, health care, mental health, and family decision-making, among others.
4. Head Start programs strongly urged OHS to assist them in meeting their translation and interpretation needs, including developing or providing—
- a. Translated core Head Start documents, such as the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, in multiple languages.
 - b. Sample templates of typical program documentation in multiple languages (application forms, income documentation forms, permission forms for medical screenings, children's "ouchie" (accident) reports).
 - c. Funding to hire professional translators and purchase interpretation equipment and other strategies that programs might use for accessing translation and interpretation services in their communities.
 - d. Strategies for working with families when interpretation and translation services are not available.

III. STRENGTHENING PROGRAM PLANNING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5. Head Start programs requested assistance from OHS in accessing an array of professional development resources and opportunities to enhance staff skills and strengthen programs' ability to hire, train, and retain qualified bilingual staff, including—
- a. Incentive strategies to attract and retain qualified bilingual staff in all positions.
 - b. Wage compensation scales, including appropriate pay differentials for the skill of being bilingual, as well as other incentives for qualified bilingual staff.
 - c. Staffing and language assistance strategies that can be employed when multiple languages are spoken in a classroom and/or a program.
 - d. Professional development opportunities (with a possible credentialing option) in language development theory and strategies for children learning two languages.
 - e. Early childhood education degrees and credentials (CDA, AA, BA) taught in other languages.
 - f. Basic language training in multiple languages targeted to early childhood professionals for simple communication with children.
 - g. Cultural awareness and sensitivity training and resources for staff.



6. Head Start programs asked OHS to develop strategies to assist monolingual English Head Start managers in determining the language skills needed and in evaluating the language proficiency level of prospective bilingual staff, including—
 - a. Strategies for evaluating both written and oral language skills.
 - b. Guidance on the kinds and levels of language skills that may be needed for various staff positions and tasks.

IV. BUILDING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

7. Head Start programs requested training and materials on community collaboration and capacity building strategies, such as—
 - a. Cultural awareness training and resources for the local community.
 - b. Strategies for involving community cultural and religious groups and leaders.
 - c. Strategies for collaborating with community organizations to promote the provision of accessible, culturally responsive services.
 - d. Tips for working within “English Only” environments.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed based upon Head Start’s legislative mandates and regulatory requirements, a review of the research, lessons learned from other Head Start efforts to serve English learner children and families, and findings and suggestions from the field (including, in some cases, evidence of a *lack* of knowledge on important issues affecting children’s language development). These broad recommendations outlined below group the more specific recommendations offered by the field into “vehicles” for the dissemination of knowledge and skills to the Head Start and early childhood community.

In light of the growing population of children and families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds as well as the importance to children’s development and family functioning, it recommended that the Office of Head Start undertake the following activities—

1. Establish a Head Start priority/initiative dedicated to improving staff knowledge and program performance with respect to promoting dual language learning and serving children and families who speak a primary language other than English. A Head Start initiative may include some or all of the recommendations that follow.
2. Commission, through the establishment of a National Head Start Center for Dual Language and Literacy Development and/or through partnerships, consortiums or contracts with other organizations, the following activities—
 - a. Research, design, and develop resources and strategies to—
 - i. Support language development for children who are English learners,
 - ii. Promote family involvement, and assist families in identifying, addressing, and advocating for their family needs, and
 - iii. Help build community capacity and strengthen program planning as they relate to working with children and families who speak a primary language other than English.
 - b. Disseminate information on demographic and programmatic trends in Head Start eligible populations and children and families already served by Head Start through analyses of Head Start PIR data, U.S. Census data, and other demographic data sources.
 - c. Provide translated core Head Start documents and templates of typical program documentation/information in multiple languages as well as funding and strategies for accessing additional translation and interpretation services.
 - d. Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate child development assessments for all domains of learning and development for young English learners in multiple languages.
 - e. Develop language and literacy assessments for children learning two (or more) languages in multiple languages.

Although these recommendations were developed prior to the passage of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, they remain relevant and even more appropriate now in light of the new emphasis on improving outreach and service to dual language learners.

- f. Develop or identify strategies for assessing staff language skills to assist Head Start managers in knowing how best to evaluate the language competency of prospective staff based on the needs of the staff position and task.
 - g. Provide research-based resources and facilitate an online forum, through the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, for programs to share information and resources related to dual language learning.
 - h. Liaison with Federal staff and TA providers to ensure that the expertise of the Center reaches the field and that TA providers have the knowledge and skills needed to assist programs in implementing appropriate program policies, procedures, strategies, and activities.
 - i. Collaborate with the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), and other Federal agencies to implement strategies for supporting native language acquisition among Alaska Native and American Indian children, as well as other native communities and actively support native language revitalization and expansion.
 - j. Conduct, as needed, additional analysis to further define the extent, type, and distribution of program needs, as well as resource development priorities.
3. Enhance professional development opportunities to strengthen Head Start staff's knowledge and skills related to serving young children learning two languages and their families, including support for online training and credentialing programs, such as—
- a. Teaching certifications in dual language acquisition for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
 - b. Early Childhood Education degree programs (AA, BA) and credentials (CDA) in multiple languages.
 - c. Additional coursework for two and four-year institutions on language and literacy development theory and strategies for working with young children who are learning English and their home language.
 - d. Online basic language courses designed for early childhood professionals to enhance their ability to communicate with children and families who speak languages other than English.
4. Pursue and carry out appropriate research with ACF partners in the area of home language and English learning for young children, birth to five.
5. Coordinate with other Federal and State agencies to ensure the efficient and effective dissemination of targeted resources and strategies to promote dual language acquisition for young children.



APPENDIX A

REFERENCES TO LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND DIVERSITY HEAD START ACT, 1998, & HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

HEAD START ACT, 1998, (P.L. 105-285)

Head Start Act Section 640(a)(3)(B)(ii) — Ensuring that such programs have adequate numbers of qualified staff, and that such staff are furnished adequate training, including developing skills in working with children with non-English language background and children with disabilities, when appropriate.

Head Start Act Section 640(a)(3)(C)(ii) — To train classroom teachers and other staff to meet the education performance standards as described in section 641A(a)(1)(B), through activities—

Head Start Act Section 640(a)(3)(C)(ii)(I) — to promote children’s language and literacy growth, through techniques identified through scientifically based reading research;

Head Start Act Section 640(a)(3)(C)(ii)(II) — to promote the acquisition of the English language for non-English background children and families;

Head Start Act Section 640(g)(2) — For the purpose of expanding Head Start programs, in allocating funds to an applicant within a State, from amounts allotted to a State pursuant to subsection (a)(4), the Secretary shall take into consideration—

Head Start Act Section 640(g)(2)(C) — the extent to which the applicant has undertaken community-wide strategic planning and needs assessments involving other community organizations and public agencies serving children and families (including organizations serving families in whose homes English is not the language customarily spoken), and organizations and public entities serving children with disabilities;

Head Start Act Section 641(d) — If no entity in a community is entitled to the priority specified in subsection (c), then the Secretary may designate a Head Start agency from among qualified applicants in such community. In selecting from among qualified applicants for designation as a Head Start agency, the Secretary shall give priority to any qualified agency that functioned as a Head Start delegate agency in the community and carried out a Head Start program that the Secretary determines met or exceeded such performance standards and such results-based performance measures. In selecting from among qualified applicants for designation as a Head Start agency, the Secretary shall consider the effectiveness of each such applicant to provide Head Start services, based on—

Head Start Act Section 641(d)(7) — the plan of such applicant to meet the needs of non-English language background children and their families, including needs related to the acquisition of the English language;

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1) — Establishment of Standards The Secretary shall establish by regulation standards, including minimum levels of overall accomplishment, applicable to Head Start agencies, programs, and projects under this subchapter, including—

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(A) — performance standards with respect to services required to be provided, including health, parental involvement, nutritional, social, transition activities described in section 642(d), and other services;

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B) —

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B)(i) — education performance standards to ensure the school readiness of children participating in a Head Start program, on completion of the Head Start program and prior to entering school; and

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B)(ii) — additional education performance standards to ensure that the children participating in the program, at a minimum—

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B)(ii)(I) — develop phonemic, print, and numeracy awareness;

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B)(ii)(II) — understand and use language to communicate for various purposes;

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B)(ii)(III) — understand and use increasingly complex and varied vocabulary;

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B)(ii)(IV) — develop and demonstrate an appreciation of books; and

Head Start Act Section 641A(a)(1)(B)(ii)(V) — in the case of non-English background children, progress toward acquisition of the English language.

HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

45 CFR 1304.20(b)(1) — In collaboration with each child’s parent, and within 45 calendar days of the child’s entry into the program, grantee and delegate agencies must perform or obtain linguistically and age appropriate screening procedures to identify concerns regarding a child’s developmental, sensory (visual and auditory), behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional skills (see 45 CFR 1308.6(b)(3) for additional information). To the greatest extent possible, these screening procedures must be sensitive to the child’s cultural background.

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1) — In order to help children gain the social competence, skills and confidence necessary to be prepared to succeed in their present environment and with later responsibilities in school and life, grantee and delegate agencies’ approach to child development and education must:

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(i) — Be developmentally and linguistically appropriate, recognizing that children have individual rates of development as well as individual interests, temperaments, languages, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles;

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(ii) Be inclusive of children with disabilities, consistent with their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) (see 45 CFR 1308.19);

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(iii) — Provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition;

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(2) — Parents must be:

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(2)(i) — Invited to become integrally involved in the development of the program’s curriculum and approach to child development and education;

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(2)(ii) — Provided opportunities to increase their child observation skills and to share assessments with staff that will help plan the learning experiences; and

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(2)(iii) — Encouraged to participate in staff-parent conferences and home visits to discuss their child’s development and education (see 45 CFR 1304.40(e)(4) and 45 CFR 1304.40(i)(2)).

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3) — Grantee and delegate agencies must support social and emotional development by:

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3)(i) — Encouraging development which enhances each child’s strengths by:

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(A) — Building trust;

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(B) — Fostering independence;

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(D) — Encouraging respect for the feelings and rights of others; and

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(E) — Supporting and respecting the home language, culture, and family composition of each child in ways that support the child’s health and well-being; and

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(4) — Grantee and delegate agencies must provide for the development of each child’s cognitive and language skills by:

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(4)(i) — Supporting each child’s learning, using various strategies including experimentation, inquiry, observation, play and exploration;

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(4)(ii) — Ensuring opportunities for creative self-expression through activities such as art, music, movement, and dialogue;

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(4)(iii) — Promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults; and

45 CFR 1304.21(a)(4)(iv) — Supporting emerging literacy and numeracy development through materials and activities according to the developmental level of each child.

45 CFR 1304.21(b)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies' program of services for infants and toddlers must encourage (see 45 CFR 1304.3(a)(5) for a definition of curriculum):

45 CFR 1304.21(b)(1)(i) — The development of secure relationships in out-of-home care settings for infants and toddlers by having a limited number of consistent teachers over an extended period of time. Teachers must demonstrate an understanding of the child's family culture and, whenever possible, speak the child's language (see 45 CFR 1304.52(g)(2));

45 CFR 1304.21(b)(1)(ii) — Trust and emotional security so that each child can explore the environment according to his or her developmental level; and

45 CFR 1304.21(b)(2) — Grantee and delegate agencies must support the social and emotional development of infants and toddlers by promoting an environment that:

45 CFR 1304.21(b)(2)(i) — Encourages the development of self-awareness, autonomy, and self-expression; and

45 CFR 1304.21(b)(2)(ii) — Supports the emerging communication skills of infants and toddlers by providing daily opportunities for each child to interact with others and to express himself or herself freely.

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies, in collaboration with the parents, must implement a curriculum (see 45 CFR 1304.3(a)(5)) that:

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(i) — Supports each child's individual pattern of development and learning;

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(ii) — Provides for the development of cognitive skills by encouraging each child to organize his or her experiences, to understand concepts, and to develop age appropriate literacy, numeracy, reasoning, problem solving and decision-making skills which form a foundation for school readiness and later school success;

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(iii) — Integrates all educational aspects of the health, nutrition, and mental health services into program activities;

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(iv) — Ensures that the program environment helps children develop emotional security and facility in social relationships;

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(v) — Enhances each child's understanding of self as an individual and as a member of a group;

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(vi) — Provides each child with opportunities for success to help develop feelings of competence, self-esteem, and positive attitudes toward learning; and

45 CFR 1304.21(c)(2) — Staff must use a variety of strategies to promote and support children's learning and developmental progress based on the observations and ongoing assessment of each child (see 45 CFR 1304.20(b), 1304.20(d), and 1304.20(e)).

45 CFR 1304.22(a)(5) Established methods for handling cases of suspected or known child abuse and neglect that are in compliance with applicable Federal, State, or Tribal laws.

45 CFR 1304.23(a)(2) Information about family eating patterns, including cultural preferences, special dietary requirements for each child with nutrition-related health problems, and the feeding requirements of infants and toddlers and each child with disabilities (see 45 CFR 1308.20);

45 CFR 1304.23(b)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must design and implement a nutrition program that meets the nutritional needs and feeding requirements of each child, including those with special dietary needs and children with disabilities. Also, the nutrition program must serve a variety of foods which consider cultural and ethnic preferences and which broaden the child's food experience.

45 CFR 1304.23(b)(4) — Parents and appropriate community agencies must be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating the agencies' nutritional services.

45 CFR 1304.23(c)(1) A variety of food is served which broadens each child's food experiences;

45 CFR 1304.23(c)(4) All toddlers and preschool children and assigned classroom staff, including volunteers, eat together family style and share the same menu to the extent possible;

45 CFR Sec. 1304.24(a)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must work collaboratively with parents (see 45 CFR 1304.40(f) for issues related to parent education) by:

45 CFR Sec. 1304.24(a)(1)(ii) Promote children’s mental wellness by providing group and individual staff and parent education on mental health issues;

45 CFR Sec. 1304.24(a)(1)(iii) Discussing and identifying with parents appropriate responses to their child’s behaviors;

45 CFR 1304.40(a)(4) — A variety of opportunities must be created by grantee and delegate agencies for interaction with parents throughout the year.

45 CFR 1304.40(a)(5) — Meetings and interactions with families must be respectful of each family’s **diversity** and cultural and ethnic background.

45 CFR 1304.40(b)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies must work collaboratively with all participating parents to identify and continually access, either directly or through referrals, services and resources that are responsive to each family’s interests and goals, including:

45 CFR 1304.40(b)(1)(i) — Emergency or crisis assistance in areas such as food, housing, clothing, and transportation;

45 CFR 1304.40(b)(1)(ii) — Education and other appropriate interventions, including opportunities for parents to participate in counseling programs or to receive information on mental health issues that place families at risk, such as substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, and domestic violence; and

45 CFR 1304.40(b)(1)(iii) — Opportunities for continuing education and employment training and other employment services through formal and informal networks in the community.

45 CFR 1304.40(c) Services to pregnant women who are enrolled in programs serving pregnant women, infants, and toddlers.

45 CFR 1304.40(c)(1) Early Head Start grantee and delegate agencies must assist pregnant women to access comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care, through referrals, immediately after enrollment in the program. This care must include:

45 CFR 1304.40(c)(1) (i) Early and continuing risk assessments, which include an assessment of nutritional status as well as nutrition counseling and food assistance, if necessary;

45 CFR 1304.40(c)(1) (ii) Health promotion and treatment, including medical and dental examinations on a schedule deemed appropriate by the attending health care providers as early in the pregnancy as possible; and

45 CFR 1304.40(c)(1) (iii) Mental health interventions and follow-up, including substance abuse prevention and treatment services, as needed.

45 CFR 1304.40(d)(1) — In addition to involving parents in program policy-making and operations (see 45 CFR 1304.50), grantee and delegate agencies must provide parent involvement and education activities that are responsive to the ongoing and expressed needs of the parents, both as individuals and as members of a group. Other community agencies should be encouraged to assist in the planning and implementation of such programs.

45 CFR 1304.40(e)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies must provide opportunities to include parents in the development of the program’s curriculum and approach to child development and education (see 45 CFR 1304.3(a)(5) for a definition of curriculum).

45 CFR 1304.40(e)(3) — Grantee and delegate agencies must provide opportunities for parents to enhance their parenting skills, knowledge, and understanding of the educational and developmental needs and activities of their children and to share concerns about their children with program staff (see 45 CFR 1304.21 for additional requirements related to parent involvement).

45 CFR 1304.40(e)(4)(i) — Increasing family access to materials, services, and activities essential to family literacy development; and

45 CFR 1304.40(e)(4)(ii) Assisting parents as adult learners to recognize and address their own literacy goals.

45 CFR 1304.40(f)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health education programs for program staff, parents, and families.

45 CFR 1304.40(g)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies must:

45 CFR 1304.40(g)(1)(i) — Support and encourage parents to influence the character and goals of community services in order to make them more responsive to their interests and needs; and

45 CFR 1304.40(g)(1)(ii) — Establish procedures to provide families with comprehensive information about community resources (see 45 CFR 1304.41(a)(2) for additional requirements).

45 CFR 1304.40(i) — Parent involvement in home visits

45 CFR 1304.40(i)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must not require that parents permit home visits as a condition of the child's participation in Early Head Start or Head Start center-based program options. Every effort must be made to explain the advantages of home visits to the parents.

45 CFR 1304.40(i)(2) The child's teacher in center-based programs must make no less than two home visits per program year to the home of each enrolled child, unless the parents expressly forbid such visits, in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR 1306.32(b)(8). Other staff working with the family must make or join home visits, as appropriate.

45 CFR 1304.40(i)(3) Grantee and delegate agencies must schedule home visits at times that are mutually convenient for the parents or primary caregivers and staff.

45 CFR 1304.41(a)(2) — Grantee and delegate agencies must take affirmative steps to establish ongoing collaborative relationships with community organizations to promote the access of children and families to community services that are responsive to their needs, and to ensure that Early Head Start and Head Start programs respond to community needs, including:

45 CFR 1304.41(a)(2)(i) — Health care providers, such as clinics, physicians, dentists, and other health professionals;

45 CFR 1304.41(a)(2)(ii) — Mental health providers;

45 CFR 1304.41(a)(2)(iii) — Nutritional service providers;

45 CFR 1304.41(c)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and maintain procedures to support successful transitions for enrolled children and families from previous child care programs into Early Head Start or Head Start and from Head Start into elementary school, a Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act preschool program, or other child care settings. These procedures must include:

45 CFR 1304.41(c)(1)(iii) — Initiating meetings involving Head Start teachers and parents and kindergarten or elementary school teachers to discuss the developmental progress and abilities of individual children; and

45 CFR 1304.51(c)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that effective two-way comprehensive communications between staff and parents are carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year.

45 CFR 1304.51(c)(2) Communication with parents must be carried out in the parents' primary or preferred language or through an interpreter, to the extent feasible.

45 CFR 1304.52(b)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that staff and consultants have the knowledge, skills, and experience they need to perform their assigned functions responsibly.

45 CFR 1304.52(b)(2) In addition, grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that only candidates with the qualifications specified in this part and in 45 CFR 1306.21 are hired.

45 CFR 1304.52(b)(4) — Staff and program consultants must be familiar with the ethnic background and heritage of families in the program and must be able to serve and effectively communicate, to the extent feasible, with children and families with no or limited English proficiency.

45 CFR 1304.52(d)(6) — Parent involvement services must be supported by staff or consultants with training, experience, and skills in assisting the parents of young children in advocating and decision-making for their families.

45 CFR 1304.52(g)(2) — When a majority of children speak the same language, at least one classroom staff member or home visitor interacting regularly with the children must speak their language.

45 CFR 1304.52(h)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that all staff, consultants, and volunteers abide by the program's standards of conduct. These standards must specify that:

45 CFR 1304.52(h)(1)(i) — They will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability;

45 CFR 1304.53(b)(1) — Grantee and delegate agencies must provide and arrange sufficient equipment, toys, materials, and furniture to meet the needs and facilitate the participation of children and adults. Equipment, toys, materials, and furniture owned or operated by the grantee or delegate agency must be:

45 CFR 1304.53(b)(1)(ii) — Supportive of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children;

45 CFR 1308.6(d) — Developmental assessment, the second step, is the collection of information on each child's functioning in these areas: gross and fine motor skills, perceptual discrimination, cognition, attention skills, self-help, social and receptive skills and expressive language. The disabilities coordinator must coordinate with the education coordinator in the on-going assessment of each Head Start child's functioning in all developmental areas by including this developmental information in later diagnostic and program planning activities for children with disabilities.

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