



Presentation Summary for Supporting Children with Disabilities who are also Dual Language Learners

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Dr. Amy Santos and Dr. Lillian Durand joined us to discuss high-quality screening practices to determine if a child who is a dual language learner (DLL) needs further evaluation. They also shared teaching practices for promoting engagement once a child has been identified to have a disability.

What are some common myths about children who are DLLs?

MYTH	FACT
1. If a child is encouraged to speak more than one language, it will cause developmental delays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being bilingual does not cause language delay• Children with higher language and early literacy skills in their home language (HL) are more likely to also have higher reading achievement and academic outcomes in English.• First language development supports second language acquisition.
2. Using more than one language to teach a child causes developmental delays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping children develop their home language provides a solid foundation for English language acquisition.• See notes above.
3. If a child has a disability and has to learn another language, it will make the child struggle more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children with disabilities (such as speech and language impairment, intellectual disabilities, and autism) can learn more than one language.• These children need more than one language to communicate across their natural environments• Children with disabilities who are also DLLs will need intentional and targeted support in all of the languages they speak. This approach is likely to yield the best outcomes.
4. Children who are DLLs are over-identified as having a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head Start children who are DLLs were <i>less likely</i> to be identified by a professional as having a disability (8% vs. 14%) than those from homes where English is the primary or only language spoken.

**How do disabilities coordinators and/or teachers accurately identify if a child who is a DLL also has a disability?
In other words, what are high-quality screening practices?**

1. Gather information about the child's language experience.
 - Language background (one language, two, or more?)
 - Type of bilingual
 - » Simultaneous—acquire both languages from birth
 - » Sequential—start to acquire a new language between 2 to 4 years old
 - Language dominance
 - Home language experiences
 - English language experiences they have been exposed to
 - Individual characteristics of the child
2. Based on child's language background, decide the language(s) to use in the screening.
 - Screen children using tools or other resources that provide an accurate picture of the child's skill levels across all developmental domains.
 - Gather information about the child's performance in all languages.
 - When available, use a screening tool that is valid in the child's home language.
 - See the screening and assessment resources below.
3. Select an interpreter with care.
 - It is ideal to have trained, bilingual staff to administer screenings.
 - When bilingual staff is not available, use a skilled interpreter.
 - Train the interpreter or select one who has already been trained to administer the screening tool.
 - If formal training is not feasible, take time to explain the purpose of the screening and basic guidelines.
 - When the screening tool is translated or administered through an interpreter who is not formally trained, interpret scores cautiously. Standardized scores are invalid when a test is translated or administered through an interpreter.
 - In rare cases, it may be necessary to use a family member to interpret during the administration of the screening. This is not recommended unless it is the *only* option to deliver the screening in the home language.
4. Involve the family in the screening process.
 - They're the native language and culture experts.
 - They can help you understand their concerns.
 - They can offer insight into the family routines and practices.
 - They can provide information about the child's performance in their home and community settings.
 - See the handout, "Gathering Information from Families: Example Questions"
5. Gather information from multiple sources before deciding to refer a child for further evaluation.
 - Parent interviews
 - Observations in natural settings
 - Collecting the child's work samples
 - Recording language samples
 - Other authentic assessment sources

6. Determine whether to refer the child to the school district for further evaluation

- Base this decision on a comprehensive understanding of the child's level of ability.
- Share tips with the district for gaining accurate information about the child. (We used this tool because it was valid in Spanish; she speaks three languages; the home language assessment that we found helpful was____, etc.)
- Advocate to be a part of the IEP meeting.
- Prepare families by helping them understand the screening and evaluation process, and share what they should expect from the IEP meeting.
- Encourage families to advocate for high quality evaluation practices, and support strategies in the classroom that take child's home language and culture into consideration.

After a child who is a DLL is identified to also have a disability, what strategies can teachers use to promote the child's engagement in the classroom?

The teaching practices for children who are DLLs with disabilities are the same as those for all dual language learners, but the teacher also takes into account the unique developmental needs of the individual child.

Be intentional when teaching new words and concepts

- Develop and intentionally plan across a variety of materials and routines (versus just adding a book that represents the child's culture)
- Pre-select key vocabulary words that relate to classroom themes and curriculum
- Use gestures, body language, and props (visual supports) to support children's English and concept acquisition
- Plan language-focused activities in the child's home language

Break down tasks and skills

- Use visuals to show smaller steps for a task or skill
- Monitor the level of stimulation for children who are DLLs with a disability. Remember that they are learning a new language in addition to everything else that is going on in the classroom. Shorten longer tasks and allow quiet breaks from large group activities.

Use familiar and non-stereotypical materials

- Ensure that the materials, music, photographs, and other visuals represent the cultures and languages of the children and families in the classroom. What children see around them impacts their understanding of the value of their culture and gives them a sense of self.
- Choose objects and pictures that reflect contemporary cultures, rather than stereotypical examples that are used only on rare occasions.
- Get ideas from families or librarians about appropriate materials to bring into the classroom.

Choose visual supports

- The more concrete the images are, the better. (Photographs, magazine clippings, and real objects are ideal when the child is first introduced to the meaning of a new word.)
- Make sure the visuals represent the children and their cultures

Use visual supports in many ways

- Enhance children’s understanding of concepts, vocabulary, or text
- Break down tasks and skills
- Provide non-verbal instruction
- Show visuals as you teach the meaning of words
- Keep visuals conveniently close at hand

Provide systematic help

- Physical
- Model
- Verbal
- Non-verbal

How do these strategies differ from those a teacher provides to all children with disabilities?

Some thought is needed to determine how to introduce a new language while also addressing the child’s developmental needs. These tips can help:

- More repetition—Special attention is required to provide enough language modeling, in all languages, for a child with a disability who is also learning a new language.
- Skilled bilingual staff—High quality instruction and increased interaction are needed with people who speak the child’s native language. This also ensures that the child’s social and communication attempts are consistently received, reciprocated, and reinforced.
- A more holistic approach—The IEP should include supports for the child and the family. When the family is supported, they are able to be more involved in the child’s developmental progress and language development.

In a nutshell, what is unique about supporting children with disabilities who are *also* DLLs?

Head Start teachers are called to individualize for *all* children. For children who are dual language learners, this simply means that teachers implement best practices in a language and environment that they can relate to and understand. Although this requires a bit more thought and effort, it has a powerful impact on the child, the child’s family, and the child’s learning experience.

Resources:

Information about children who are dual language learners (DLLs)

- [The Importance of Home Language Series \(Available in English, Spanish and five other languages\)](#)
- [Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take? \(Available in English and Spanish\)](#)

Screening and Assessment

- [Screening Dual Language Learners in Early Head Start and Head Start: A Guide for Program Leaders](#)
- [Understanding and Choosing Assessments and Developmental Screeners for Young Children Ages 3-5: Profiles of Selected Measures](#)

Supporting children who are DLLs in the classroom

- [Dual Language Learners with Challenging Behaviors](#)

15-minute In-service Suites:

- [Curriculum Modifications: Environmental Support](#)
- [Curriculum Modifications: Activity Simplification](#)
- [Curriculum Modifications: Child Preferences](#)
- [Curriculum Modifications: Peer Support](#)

Head Start Disabilities Services Newsletter: <http://hsicc.createsend1.com/t/ViewEmail/j/141CB898373CF316>

For more information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or **877-731-0764**

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