



SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A MOMENT FOR TAKING PERSPECTIVE

Please remember that children who are dual language learners (DLLs) are learning a new language while developing their home language. If they are new to the learning environment, they are also forming new relationships with adults and other children while learning new routines and expectations.



TAKE A MOMENT TO REMEMBER

Learning mathematics is not just about naming numerals and shapes, it's about thinking and reasoning. And, like other domains of development, children learn math through listening, speaking, and conversationally taking turns in the context of a caring relationship. Children also learn through play and exploration.

IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A SPEAKER OF THE HOME LANGUAGE

One strategy to maximize comprehension is to familiarize yourself with the math language used to subitize in the child's home language so that the child can better understand instruction. Here is an example for subitizing in Spanish.

Esta semana vamos a practicar una forma especial de decir cuántos. Le voy a mostrar algunos objetos y le pediré que me diga cuántos ve, tan rápido como pueda.

This week we are going to practice a special way to tell how many. I am going to show you some objects, and I will ask you to tell me how many you see, as fast as you can.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO A SPEAKER OF THE HOME LANGUAGE

One strategy to maximize comprehension in the absence of a speaker of the child's home language is to have basic vocabulary on hand to link words in the home language to English words. In this case, the numerals one through five, "How many do you see?" (¿Cuántos ves? Or ¿Cuántos ven? if there is more than one child), and other words or phrases. Learn these words by asking family members, the school district, or volunteers.

CONSIDER AUTHENTIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

Pairing or grouping children who are DLLs with native English speakers during activities benefits all children. This allows children who are DLLs the opportunity to interact with English speakers who may serve as language models and provide authentic practice for speaking and listening in English. In addition, this allows English speakers to practice clearly communicating task directions, verbalizing their mathematical thinking and reasoning, and learning about other languages. However, remember that you will continue to promote development and learning in the child's home language.

TEACHER NOTE

There are many words in English that have multiple meanings. The counting words that in the "Fantastic Five" activity below are numerical sets. English learners may hear the words one/won, two/to/too, and four/for and be confused. Recommend to the children that when they hear a word that does not make sense, they should think about the context. In this case, they are naming numbers, so they should probably think of the number word. Remind them that if they get stuck and do not understand, they can always ask you or a friend what a word means.

FANTASTIC FIVE

Below is a description of how to play a game, with specific supports for children who are DLLs. This example shows supports for various home languages,

- Place counting items (e.g., cubes) under three (to five) different containers. Show children the items and announce how many there are before you hide each group underneath the container.
- Move the containers around to mix them up.
- Ask the children to find a specific number of items. For example, say, “Find the fantastic five!” (or wonderful one, tricky two, thrilling three, foxy four) and have the children guess which container holds that number.
- After the children guess, look under the container. Ask them to name the number they see.
- If they select the right container and name the number correctly, say “There’s the fantastic five!!” If their chosen container does not have the number you named, ask them to name the number that is in the container. Confirm, or simply tell them, “That’s not five, that is four! Try again.”
- Note: Early in the game, it may be helpful to name numbers in both languages. If they cannot name the numbers, point to the items and say the numbers clearly in English and in the child’s home language. Then show them the correct container, point to the items and again, and say number in English and in the child’s home language clearly. Once you have finished, play the game again to support the child’s learning. Repeat this game 4 to 5 times and move to higher numbers if the child gets it right each time.