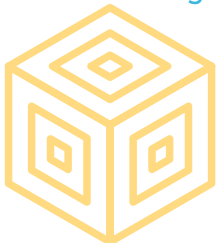




Supporting Dual Language Learners

What do we know about supporting dual language learners?

Research shows that dual language proficiency provides significant benefits, including improved academic achievement, enhanced decision-making and problem solving skills, empathy, and expanded career opportunities. Promoting young children's dual language proficiency by engaging them in rich conversations and learning experiences in both their home language and English gives them a running start to long-term success in school and in life.



Through responsive interactions with caring adults, children master the building blocks of languages, including sound systems and grammar basics, and amass vocabularies of thousands of words by the age of 5. Young dual language learners who learn concepts through their home language are able to transfer that knowledge, and more quickly learn English words for those concepts. This makes the early years a pivotal time to create

equitable learning opportunities and maximize the benefits of dual language learning.

EDC has fostered children's language development through science, math, and social studies inquiry. Building on this experience, we design and scale effective, evidence-based programs that improve outcomes for dual language learners. Our programs provide engaging contexts for



dual language learning, place a priority on extended oral discourse to build children's vocabulary and skills, and support the use of home languages and English. In all of our work, EDC engages families, communities, and educators as valued partners. We are

committed to building educators' capacity to sustain strong family-school-community collaborations that draw upon the significant funds of knowledge that dual language learner families possess.

How can we support dual language learners' school readiness and success?

We must enhance and connect learning at home, at school, and in the community.

Working with local families, teachers, district and state leaders, the Connecticut Science Center, and private foundations, EDC is carrying out **Literacy and Academic Success for English Learners through Science (LASERs)**, with a goal to scale the initiative statewide. LASERs is based on research that shows children's language, literacy, and cognitive development accelerate when they engage in science learning in and beyond school. Nearly 20% of Hartford students are dual language learners, and leaders have identified significant opportunity and achievement gaps for these students. LASERs builds the capacity of preK, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 teachers and coaches to enhance dual language learners' science and literacy learning and engage families in supporting children's science learning at home.

In a collaboration with LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), EDC developed an afterschool curriculum, **Read for Life**, which uses informal learning experiences to improve the long-term literacy and academic achievement of dual language learners. Offered in over 30 cities nationwide, LULAC's Young Readers Program draws upon our Read for Life curriculum to engage Latino children ages 6–8 in exciting learning activities that encourage them to make read-

ing a lifelong habit. The curriculum reflects current research-based and emerging promising practices for supporting dual language learners, and helps bridge children's after-school and in-school learning.

Through researcher-practitioner partnerships with district and state education leaders, EDC works to strengthen schools and home-school connections to better meet the needs of dual language learners. In our leadership of the **Regional Educational Laboratory-Northeast & Islands**, we designed a tool that helps leaders gather and draw upon consistent data to guide them in improving outcomes for dual language learners.

With **Providence Public School District**, EDC facilitated the development of a statewide consortium—including private foundations, institutions of higher education, and community organizations—that is planning to develop Providence's first Newcomer Academy for English learners. Currently, through our work on the **Partnership for Early Education Research** with Yale University, we are developing policy briefs that summarize research on promising practices for assessing and instructing dual language learners to guide the systems change efforts of a consortium of leaders.



What do educators need to support dual language learners?

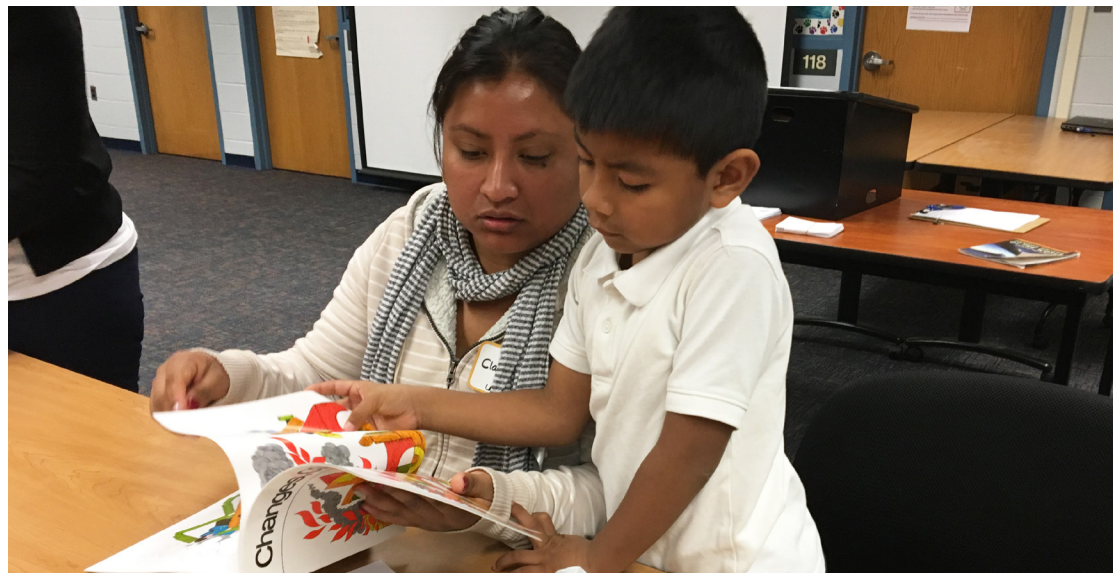
Educators are crucial to dual language learners' success, yet many do not have the preparation and support they need to promote dual language acquisition.

All children are capable of, and thrive from, learning multiple languages. Yet language learning is complex, and children progress at different rates. Teachers require training and knowledge to successfully scaffold learning and tailor support for young multilingual learners. Although research shows that children learn language best in a social way, through rich talk during daily activities and interactions, teachers may not understand why this approach is important or how to use it. As a result, they may miss opportunities to promote children's language proficiency.

EDC gives teachers the knowledge, strategies, and confidence they need to boost outcomes for both mono and dual language learners. As materials developers for the **National Center on Cultural & Linguistic Responsiveness**, we produced extensive resources that promote the use of research-based practices to ensure dual

language learners and their families receive optimal support, and we advanced knowledge of how culture and dual language development affect learning. Our resources, including *Planned Language Approach* and the *Electronic Dual Language Learner Toolkit* are available on the Office of Head Start's Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center website.

For 25 years, EDC's **Excellence in Teaching** professional development has built early childhood teachers' capacity to use evidence-based practices and data to improve outcomes for young children. Recently, we published findings on the positive impacts of two courses, "Supporting Children with Language Differences" and "Foundations of Science Literacy." In our leadership of the **Rhode Island Center for Early Learning Professionals**, we are using the Excellence in Teaching model to support the state's early childhood educators, includ-





ing many bilingual educators. Since 2014, the Center has provided 51,000 hours of professional development to 2,100 early childhood staff from 802 center-based and family child care homes. Our offerings include a face-to-face course series, “What You Say Matters,” designed to help bilingual educators promote children’s language development during the day. Center staff are also collaborating with the **National Council of LaRaza** to develop online modules in English and Spanish to build the capacity of bilingual family child care providers to implement high-quality language and early literacy experiences for the dual language learner children in their care. Both the face-to-



face series and online modules present current research findings in clear, accessible language and are being produced in Spanish and English versions.

Can technology make a difference in young children’s dual language learning?

Yes, but technology alone is not enough, and there is much more to understand.

Technology will never replace teachers. Yet when used wisely, technology can help educators and families enhance dual language learning. From urban U.S. preschools to classrooms in the poorest, most remote communities around the world, EDC incubates and studies innovations in promoting dual language and mother tongue proficiency. Recently, EDC led the development of **Vernacular**, a USAID-funded literacy intervention. This interactive, tablet-based program asks students to match letters, sounds, and pictures and gives them immediate feedback on their progress. Zambian stu-

dents who used Vernacular in a four-month pilot consistently outperformed students who used a workbook literacy intervention.

Since 1981, EDC’s **Center for Children and Technology** has led research to deepen understanding of how technology and media can improve the quality and equity of early learning. We are continuing to expand this work, including launching new initiatives focused on dual language learners, as we work closely with partners—including PBS and Sesame Workshop—who are as committed to multilingual children’s success as we are.



Education Development Center (EDC) is a global nonprofit that advances lasting solutions to improve education, promote health, and expand economic opportunity. Since 1958, we have been a leader in designing, implementing, and evaluating powerful and innovative programs in more than 80 countries around the world.

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