



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ★ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

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10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

1. Build trusting relationships
2. Provide consistent care
3. Support children's health
4. Provide a safe environment
5. Provide positive guidance
6. **Provide a language-rich environment**
7. Foster curiosity and development through play
8. Individualize care and learning activities
9. Partner with parents
10. Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Provide a Language-Rich Environment

Celebrating Dual Language Learners

Hawaii is a multi-cultural state with many first and second generation residents who have arrived here from many parts of the world. It's common for family child care providers to be caring for children whose families speak another language other than their own. Questions may arise about the effect on young children's language development when a different language is spoken in child care than the one spoken at home. Some parents and providers worry that being exposed to two different languages during their early years will overwhelm and confuse children and will cause delayed language development. However, brain research shows that from birth, children have the ability to sort the sounds of each language into separate categories and interpret cues to know when it's appropriate to use which language. Most children throughout the world successfully learn more than one language from their earliest years. Babies' critical period for mastering the unique sounds of a specific language is from six to eight months of age and the ability to learn a second language falls off by the age of seven years.

Neuroscientists who studied images of the human brain have found that learning a second language actually increases brain density. In today's competitive global economy, dual language learners possess incredible intellectual and social skills, stronger connections to family and culture, and cognitive flexibility, which is the ability to apply what we have learned in many different situations.

In this newsletter we will share some recommendations on ways to support dual language learners and their families from Karen Nemeth's book: *Many Languages, Building Connections* and from the Zero to Three Web site.



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Language Development

In the short term, dual language learners have smaller vocabularies in each language that they speak (compared with children who speak only one language). Care providers sometimes assume that these children are language delayed. However, if you add together all the words they know in both languages, these children often have, in total, larger vocabularies. The cognitive demands of processing input in two languages may lead to slower word retrieval in each language initially but improved cognitive skills in processing information. You can support vocabulary growth in the following ways:

- Double up your messages by using words along with gestures, actions, or facial expressions.
- Repeat new words and concepts. Saying the same thing more than once gives children several opportunities to learn the meaning.
- Label toys and other items in your site in more than one language.
- Provide a picture/communication board as another way to help communicate; visually showing different activities and sequence events of the day (e.g., child points at the picture of glass of water if he's thirsty, provider points at picture of diaper when she wants to change the child).



Language Mixing

It's common for bilingual children to use both languages when trying to communicate a single idea or need. This is called language mixing or code mixing. This combined usage is a normal stage in bilingual language development. It doesn't indicate confusion; instead, it shows that the child may be drawing on all his vocabulary assets to retrieve the word he wants to use to communicate his message. Over time and with practice, this child will begin to sort the two languages out on his own. As he grows, he will begin to modify his language use depending on the person to whom he is speaking. If you are frustrated because you don't understand words from his home language that the child is mixing in, use the following strategies:

- Talk with the family members to learn how their child communicates important needs and wants (e.g., "milk," "hungry," "hurts," "diaper," "potty"). Learn these words so you will be able to respond when the child needs something.
- Get some bi-lingual children's music. Choose songs you recognize but are sung entirely in the new language, for additional practice.
- Find children's books that come with CDs in both languages so you can hear the correct pronunciations.
- Use words that are similar to words in the home language as a bridge into English.

Addressing Family Concerns about Dual Language Learning

Some families are conflicted about whether they should speak only their home language to their children, only English, or a combination. Research underscores the importance of supporting families' home language and culture.

Young children need to be exposed to a language about 40-60 percent of their day in order to grow up understanding and using that language. When children are surrounded by English speakers at childcare, in the neighborhood stores, at the doctor's office, etc., they may start to develop a preference for English. When parents are consistent in the use of their home language, children will continue to develop skills in that language, even when they have a lot of exposure to a second language. When care providers show that they value the child's home language and culture by learning to use some key words and phrases used by their families, the children develop confidence, self-esteem and positive cultural identity. You can help children and families feel good about their language and culture by doing the following:

- Encourage families to continue to talk, read, sing, and use their home language in everyday activities.
- Print survival words on a card and send home with a mini recorder so parents can write and record pronunciations in their home language that their child will recognize.



- Incorporate food, songs, books, photos, and toys that authentically reflect the child's home culture and language into your curriculum and environment.
- Add props, such as menus from local ethnic restaurants and empty food packages to your dramatic play area.
- Encourage family members to tell a story or read a book for your group in their home language.



Relationships

In order to become fluent in two or more languages, children need opportunities to converse in each language on a daily basis. When a child feels safe and loved, he won't be afraid to make mistakes and will keep trying to communicate in multiple languages. Relationships are the context in which all learning—especially language development takes place. When you build warm, nurturing, and responsive relationships, with both the children and their families, and show respect for their cultures, you have created the ideal setting for dual language learners.

Citations:

Espinosa, L. (2013) Pre-K – 3rd: *Challenging common myths about dual language learners*. Child Development Foundation Policy to Action, Brief No.Ten. [Retrieved online 1/9/15 <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Challenging%20Common%20Myths%20Update.pdf>]

Goldenberg, C., Hicks, J., and Lit, I. (2013). *Dual language learners: Effective Instruction in early childhood*. *American Educator*. Summer 2013 pp. 26-29.[Retrieved online 1/11/15 https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Goldenberg_Hicks_Lit.pdf]

Kuhl, P. (2010) The Linguistic Genius of Babies. A Ted Talk [retrieved January 20, 2015 from http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies?language=en]

Nemeth, K. (2012) *Many languages, building connections: supporting infants and toddlers who are dual language learners*. Gryphon House. Lewisville, NC.

Zero to Three (2008). Practical tips and tools: *Dual language learners in early care and education settings*. [Retrieved on-line on 1/9/15 at http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Dual_Language_Learners.pdf]

Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Center on the Family in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.



REMINDER: Registered QCC Participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of “increased knowledge.” Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.