

Socrates Programme – Comenius 2.1 project  
**“Effective teaching and learning for  
minority-language children in preschool”**

Speaking for Diversity:  
Promoting Multilingualism in Early Childhood Education

# **A Teachers’ Guide**

**for the Effective Teaching and Learning  
for Minority Language Children Program**



**Socrates**

*This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.*

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Education and Culture

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# Overview

With the financial support of the European Commission, this Teachers' Guide was created within the framework of the Effective Teaching and Learning for Minority-Language Children in Preschool project. The guide was developed by an international team led by the International Step by Step Association/ISSA (The Netherlands). ISSA's partners in this project included Hea Algus (Estonia), Nadacia Skola Dokorán (Slovakia), Sardes Education Services (The Netherlands), and Cooperazione per lo sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti/COSPE (Italy).

The materials produced include: the Teachers' Guide, a 12-Day Training Module, and a Compendium of Learning Materials. They are the result of a two-year writing process that targeted the needs of early learners from minority-language communities. The materials focus on effective learning of the "state language" as a second language, while emphasizing the need for greater inclusion of the children's first language and home culture in the classroom.

Materials were piloted in five preschools in Estonia and Slovakia; the results of the piloting phase were incorporated into the final version. The project aimed to develop new materials, to nurture children's self-confidence and group identities in the classroom, and to strengthen the relationship between schools, families, and communities.

This Teachers' Guide is recommended for teachers working with non-native-language speaking preschool students from age 5 to 7; however, many of its recommendations also apply to older children.

## SECTION 1:

# Language Development in Early Childhood

## A. What Is Language?

This is the first question that needs clarification when working with a program about Effective Teaching and Learning for Minority-Language Children. Language is extremely complex and involves much more than learning and using properly vocabulary and grammar. Ashworth and Wakefield (2004, pp. 30–31) state that there are several important facts to keep in mind when considering the definition of language:

**Language is a human universal.** All cultural groups have a language system that their members master in order to communicate with each other.

**Language is systematic.** Every language has its own characteristic way of combining sounds, words, and sentences.

**No language is wholly regular.** Exceptions to the rules are found in all languages.

**All languages enable speakers to create new utterances.** However, these utterances must conform to the rules established over the centuries by its speakers.

**Language is both creative and functional.** A speaker of any language can both create and comprehend an infinite number of utterances based on a finite number of rules. These utterances can cover a multitude of functions, such as requesting, refusing, promising, warning, denying, agreeing, disagreeing, and expressing emotions.

**Languages change.** For example, new words can be created to meet the scientific and technological demands of the modern world.

**Human beings have an innate capacity to learn language.** All children, unless they are severely neurologically impaired, are capable of learning a language.

**Language can be nonverbal as well as verbal.** Facial expressions, gestures, and other body movements may convey messages, the meanings of which are culturally specific.

**Language and culture are closely related.** Customs, traditions, values, stories, religion, history, and other manifestations of culture are transmitted to a large extent through language.

**Language and thought are closely related.** Children and adults use language to share their thoughts and to expand and clarify concepts.

Human language is much more than a means of communication: it is characterized by semantics (representation of ideas, objects, and events with symbols), production (speakers can understand and produce sentences and words they never heard before and create new ones by recombining elements they know), and displacement (linguistic messages are not tied to immediate environments). Human language allows us to speak of objects and people situated in the past, in the present, in the future, or even fanciful constructs, such as unicorns, gnomes, fairies, etc.! Human language is partly culturally determined so that its speakers share certain perceptions and concepts. Language influences how people speak about (and categorize) what they see (words for colors, for example, in different cultures).

## B. How Does Language Develop?

### ACQUISITION OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE

Several ways are available to categorize theories that describe the process of acquiring languages. In describing how children learn their first language, the following three schools of thought are prevalent:

**Behaviorists** believe that children learn by imitating what they have heard and that parental modeling and reinforcement are the major promoters of language acquisition. This theory, however, does not explain how children create new sentences that they have never heard before.

**Nativists** believe that innate, biological mechanisms are responsible for language acquisition and that children just naturally acquire language with minor feedback from the social environment.

**Interactionists** acknowledge both the child's role and that of the caretaker in the social environment and consider the communication in social interactions to be essential to language acquisition—children learn language as it occurs around them. The process of language acquisition is both a personal and social invention. Parents, teachers, and others shape its development by the way they respond to the language learner. However, the language learner still owns the process of language development. Each individual makes the decision about when to use language, what to use it for, how he or she will use it, and what the results will be.

Acquiring a language is a monumental task when we look at all of the elements involved. It is even more amazing when we realize how young children are when they begin to form words and sentences. Tabors (1997) identifies five pieces of a complex puzzle that the child must internalize: **phonology**, or the sounds of the language; **vocabulary**, or the words of the language; **grammar**, or how the words are put together to make sentences in the language; **discourse** or how sentences are put together to tell stories, make an argument, or explain how something works; and **pragmatics**, or the rules about how to use the language. For children to be considered native speakers of a language, they must have control over all of the aspects of the language system. How does this happen?

In this program we subscribe to the interactionists' theory that children learn their first language in the context of social interaction within their own families. As early as one month after birth, babies can distinguish among and respond to the many kinds of sounds around them. Babies are internalizing these sounds, the intonation and the patterns of the words that they will need to function in their environments. Around one year of age, caregivers are able to distinguish a few meaningful words amid the many sounds babies make. Children then usually add one word at a time to their vocabularies until they have a repertoire of around 50 words. After acquiring a number of words, children begin demonstrating an understanding of the grammatical requirements of language by developing the ability to express more complex relationships with their words. For example, all animals may be categorized under the word *dog*. They are also learning the proper ways to use words and turn taking rules of conversation with such phrases as "bye" and "no".

At approximately two years of age, children's ability to use language suddenly increases rapidly. The size of the vocabulary grows and children begin to string words together in short sentences. Ashworth and Wakefield (2004, p. 27) point out that as children acquire more words and learn to combine them meaningfully to express their needs and comment on their surroundings, they are using strategies for organizing their thoughts. The ability to represent objects, people, and events

through language, develops at about the same time as representation in children's imitation, play, and other actions. While representation is not required for uttering simple individual words, it is necessary for organizing words into simple statements.

Interactionists believe that children become able to express their intentions or meanings in language through a process of negotiation with their mothers or caregivers who treat their children's speech as meaningful and intentional even if it is just babbling. As mothers and caregivers persist in trying to make sense of children's speech, they also start to negotiate meaning and intent with their children. Piper (1998) emphasizes that one of the central tasks in learning language is to match language with meaning—a task that parents facilitate by focusing their speech on whatever is holding the child's attention. If the child is chasing the family cat, the cat is what they all talk about. The child thus comes to understand what the word cat means. Children make changes in their utterances to approximate the adult form more closely. Accordingly, it may be the case that imitation does play a role in language acquisition, but social interactionists would see this role as qualitatively different and less central to overall language development than would behaviorists.

From the point of view of a child, language is first of all communication and specifically communication of meanings. What children have learned while learning their first language is:

- the sound system
- the rules for combining sounds into syllables, morphemes, and words
- the communicative functions languages serves
- how each one of the above is to be realized in different contexts; rules for participating in conversation with all its conventions (turn-taking, topic shifting, maintaining topic, meaning confirmation, etc.)

Children speaking the same language seem to acquire rules in a similar order. Rules that are simple and used often are acquired first followed by an understanding of and an ability to combine more complex rules. Because the complexity of a given grammatical form differs from one language to another, the age at which children master the rule for a particular form depends partly on the complexity of the language. Some grammatical forms that are not particularly difficult to understand may enter a child's speech late because they are difficult to hear.

By the time children enter preschool, they have become experienced talkers and are engaged in an extended *oral* language development. This is so because their caregivers have been encouraging them to extend their statements through talking with them. Children also augment their own language experiences by listening to others' conversations in which they are not active participants (Ashworth and Wakefield 2004, pp. 27–28).

Tabors (1997) points out that children are acquiring 6 to 10 words a day about the time they are entering preschool. They are also broadening their understanding of the meanings of the words they already know. Based on earlier development of sounds, children begin working on rhyming and identifying initial sounds of words. Children also begin to acquire the more complicated grammar forms during this period. Their understanding of grammatical rules, however, can result in creative mistakes. These mistakes demonstrate that they notice consistent patterns in language and apply them to the language system, as they understand them. (This is known as "transmission" For example, children try to conjugate an irregular verb with a regular ending).

Another distinctive accomplishment of this period is the development of an ability to construct speech. Preschool-aged children begin to participate in the construction of explanations, development of arguments, and describing episodes. Moreover, children learn to modify what they say depending on the audience, which is very important because children must learn to match language use to social context and conversational skills take longer to learn. Piper (1998) suggests that we think of a child's social circle as an ever-widening one starting with the mother (or other principal caregiver) and moving outward to encompass first the immediate and extended family, then other relatives and playmates, neighbors, shopkeepers, friends of siblings, and eventually teachers and all the other folk who populate schools. As the circle widens, so do the opportunities for and the demands on language (p. 191) including the elements of conversational competence that must be acquired such as: becoming sensitive to the listener's perspective; becoming adept at turn-taking; learning to make conversational repairs; becoming sensitive to relevance; learning to make and to understand indirect questions; and acquiring gender-based distinctions.

In summary, language develops very efficiently for the great majority of children. The optimal interaction that best promotes language development is one in which the adult lets the child decide what to talk about, expands on that topic, works hard to figure out what the child means, suggests new activities, and pays more attention to what the child wants to say than whether it is being said correctly. The best language teacher is one who assumes the role of a cooperative conversational partner rather than taking an explicitly didactic or directive role. Language teaching is most useful to young children when it is presented in the context of their own activities and attempts at expression.

Older preschool children, unlike very young children, can use language to learn language and no longer need to learn each new language skill within a meaningful context. Furthermore, they become increasingly capable of learning intentionally, of attending to and benefitting from explicit instruction, and of using models as sources of learning. At this stage simply responding to the child's interests might not be sufficient to stimulate optimal language development. Talking about a wide variety of topics, modeling an enriched vocabulary, engaging in talk about talk itself, discussing word meanings, challenging children to explain themselves and to justify their own thinking, setting higher standards for comprehensibility, and explicitly correcting errors—all these are important in the language development of four-, five-, and six-year-old children. Children in this age range can also be expected to control certain language-related literacy skills that probably emerge from being read to, from experience in looking at books with adults, and from experience with letters, with pencils and paper, and with observation of adult literacy activities. Parents and other caregivers foster such skills when they can organize the environment to provide and encourage the use of pre-literacy learning materials.

## ACQUISITION OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE

### **Similarities to First Language**

The theories that apply to children learning their first language can also describe the processes used to acquire new languages. For example:

- Behaviorists believe that second language is learned through a “drill and practice” approach of imitation, repetition, and reinforcement of grammatical structures.

- Nativists believe that if you hear new languages, you will learn them without direct instruction. The listener receives comprehensible input (starting with easy structures and progressing to more complex) until proficiency is acquired.
- Interactionists also believe that comprehensible input is important, but maintain that the communicative give-and-take of natural conversations between native and non-native speakers is the crucial element in the process. Native speakers modify their speech to help make themselves understood and non-native speakers use their growing knowledge to try to make themselves understood. The non-native speaker actually exerts control over the process and causes the native-speaking partner to provide input that is more comprehensible. Non-native speakers do this by asking for repetitions, indicating that they do not understand, or responding in a way that shows that they did not understand. Errors that non-native speakers make that impede communication will be corrected naturally or may require explicit correction and explanation by the native speaker.

## Simultaneous versus Sequential Acquisition

Children may learn multiple languages in different ways. They may learn languages either simultaneously as babies (or very young children) which Piper (1998) calls “home bilingualism” or they can learn them sequentially which Piper calls “school bilingualism” because the many children who later become bilingual learn their second language at school. Tabors (1997) further clarifies these as simultaneous and sequential acquisition of two languages:

Simultaneous acquisition occurs when children are exposed to both languages from a very early age—sometimes as a result of each parent speaking a separate language with the child or both parents speaking one language and a caregiver speaking another language with the child. If a child learns two languages *simultaneously*, and if the two languages are developed equally during childhood, then the language-development process should be the same in both languages. (p. 9)

“Children who are acquiring two languages from birth are not really acquiring either as second language, they are acquiring two first languages” (Piper 1998, p. 93). This usually happens when parents have different first languages and raise their child according to the principle “one person—one language” (Baker 1993, p. 69), whereby each parent addresses the child in his or her first language. By so doing, the child’s attachment to both parents grows via the languages. If the relationship is good with both parents, children easily become proficient in both languages.

*Sequential acquisition* occurs when a child begins to learn a second language after the first language is at least partly established, for example, when a young child enters a preschool setting in which her home language is not the language used in the classroom. In any sequential second-language acquisition situation, however, a number of factors make the two processes different. For example:

- Children already have some knowledge of how language works so they are not learning how language works in general but how the new language works and how it differs from the first language.
- The acquisition of the second language can take place at any age. (While it may seem that younger children learn new languages more easily than adults or older children, it is because they use language in a less complicated way. Young children also make use of their capability

to produce more sounds than are needed in their first language and thus have advantages in developing the sound system of the second language, whereas for older children and adults articulation is already restricted to the sound system of the first language.)

- The acquisition of the second language may be more dependent on individual characteristics such as aptitude, personality (whether social or not), and psychological factors such as wanting to be like others.

## Individual Differences in Acquisition of New Languages

Krashen (1981,1982) presents the theory that learning a new language is different from learning other subjects because it requires public speaking— and public speaking can result in many negative emotions such as anxiety, embarrassment, anger, etc. Krashen’s “affective filter” hypothesis takes into account the emotions that can directly interfere or assist with the learning of new language. Emotions can create a kind of filter that blocks the learner’s ability to learn and use new words or grammatical structures. Krashen identified three main areas that lower the affective filter, allowing more input in the new language to reach the learner: the learner has high motivation to learn the language, has low anxiety levels, and high self-esteem. Others have added to this list to include a high level of empathy for others, a willingness to take risks, and low levels of inhibitions. For example, motivation is a main factor when living in another country. Learning is easier when one is “playing” because it lowers learner anxiety.

Wong Fillmore (1979) affirmed Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis by identifying four factors that strongly influenced the progress a child makes in acquiring a second language. The factors are motivation, exposure, age, and personality. Tabors (1997, pp. 79–85) summarizes these as:

- **Motivation:** A young child must want to learn a second language. This decision, to actually take on the process of learning a new language, is one that individual children come to at different times and in different ways.
- **Exposure:** Prior exposure to the second language and the quantity of that exposure may affect how quickly a child might start to use the second language in a new situation.
- **Age:** Age may play a distinctive role in how a child approaches the second-language situation. Young children are at an advantage here because the *cognitive demand* of what they must learn is quite low; they do not have to use language in as sophisticated a way as older children. However, younger children are also at a disadvantage because their *cognitive capacity* is not as great as that of older children. Thus, younger children may take longer to move along the developmental pathway than older children.
- **Personality:** Researchers studying young children’s second-language learning have observed that there seems to be a personality continuum stretching from shy and reserved at one end to outgoing and socially tuned-in at the other end. Where an individual child’s personality is located along this continuum may have an impact on how quickly a child learns a second language. Children who tend to be shy and reserved are more likely to approach the second-language situation with more caution. These are the children who take a long time to go *public* with their newly acquired language skills, spending their time practicing quietly to themselves before anyone can hear them.

Differences in acquisition are also dependent upon receiving input at the optimal level of input of the new language. Krashen (1981,1982) also developed the “comprehensible input” hypothesis, which suggests that learners acquire language by “intaking” and understanding language that is a “little beyond” their current level of competence or “ $i + 1$ ”. For instance, a preschool child already understands the phrase, “Get your crayon”. By slightly altering the phrase to “Get my crayons”, the teacher can provide an appropriate linguistic and cognitive challenge—offering new information that builds on prior knowledge and is therefore comprehensible.

## Developmental Sequence for the Acquisition of the Second Language

In addition to personality factors, where a person is in the developmental sequence of acquisition will also affect how he or she behaves when using the new language. According to Tabors (1997, p. 39), a developmental sequence can be observed in a young person who does not speak the school language when entering a classroom that uses that language:

- **Home-language-use phase**

Children may use their first language for a time because they do not yet understand that the two languages differ.

- **Nonverbal period**

When children discover that their home language does not work in the new setting, they enter a nonverbal period as they collect information about the new language and perhaps spend some time in sound experimentation. In an official-language classroom, this means that the children will not talk at all. In a bilingual classroom, it means that children will only attempt to talk with those who speak their home language and will no longer try to talk with those who do not. Age also seems to influence the length of time children spend in this phase—with younger children remaining silent for longer periods than older children.

Tabors (1997, p. 43) points out that “For all of these children, the realization that they could not communicate with those around them in their home language meant that they stopped *talking*. But this did not necessarily mean that they stopped *communicating*.” In this phase children will engage in nonverbal communication *to get attention, to request, to protest, and to play*. (For example, a common way to get attention is for the child to hold something up to show what he or she needs.)

Tabors also points out possible social consequences of nonverbal communication for the preschool child. The longer a child remains nonverbal, the more she or he is treated like an infant by the other children or is ignored.

During this time, however, children are gathering information or data about how the new language is used through watching and rehearsing. For example, when children who are learning the new language work or play side by side with proficient speakers of the official language, they may rehearse vocalizations that are not communicative—they are just words out of context that the child may have heard another child use. Many of these words or phrases may be said quietly and be difficult to hear. Children may also be experimenting with the sounds of the new language.

- **Going public with the new language**  
 Children begin to use individual words and phrases that they have learned. Tabors (1997) points out that researchers have noted two consistent features that may also be typical of children learning their first language:

*Telegraphic speech* refers to the use of a few content words as an entire utterance such as “What is that?” or reciting the names of colors, the alphabet, numbers, etc.

*Formulaic speech* is used by children in situations where they have observed others to use them such as “yes, no, hello, good-bye, O.K., look, be careful,” etc.
- **Productive language use in the new language**  
 Children begin to build their own sentences, not just continue to repeat formulaic phrases or names for people and things. During this process, children must analyze the language being used around them and begin to make guesses about how the language is constructed. Typically, they use everything they already know about their new language and, not surprisingly, make many mistakes as they work their way through the process of acquiring the more complicated aspects of second language.

For older children and adults the process is similar and looks like (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003):
- **Silent/receptive or preproduction stage**  
 This stage can last from 10 hours to six months. Students often have up to 500 “receptive” words (words they understand but may not be comfortable using) and can understand new words that are made comprehensible to them. This stage often involves a “silent period” during which students may not speak but can respond using a variety of strategies, including pointing to an object, picture, or person; performing an act, such as standing up or closing a door; gesturing or nodding; or responding with a simple “yes” or “no”.
- **Early production stage**  
 The early production stage can last an additional six months after the initial stage. Students have usually developed close to 1,000 receptive/active words (words they are able to understand and use). During this stage, students can usually speak in one- or two-word phrases and can demonstrate comprehension of new material by giving short answers to simple yes/no, either/or, or who/what/where questions.
- **Speech emergence stage**  
 This stage can last up to another year. Students have usually developed approximately 3,000 words and can use short phrases and simple sentences to communicate. Students begin to use dialogue and can ask simple questions, such as “May I go to the restroom?” and are also able to answer simple questions. Students may produce longer sentences but often with grammatical errors that can interfere with their communication.
- **Intermediate language proficiency stage**  
 Individuals may need up to another year to reach intermediate proficiency after speech emergence. Students will have typically developed close to 6,000 words and will have begun to make complex statements, state opinions, ask for clarification, share thoughts, and speak at greater length.

- **Advanced language proficiency stage**

Gaining advanced proficiency in a second language can typically take from five to seven years. By this stage students have developed some specialized content-area vocabulary and can participate fully in grade-level classroom activities if given occasional extra support. Students can speak English using grammar and vocabulary comparable to that of same-age native speakers.

## PROBLEMS WITH LEARNING NEW LANGUAGES IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Although many similarities exist between the way first and second languages are acquired, important differences are also evident. When children learn their first language, they are surrounded by love and attention; they are encouraged and complimented for all their vocal efforts. When young children attempt to use language at home, their adult caregivers try very hard to understand the meaning of their utterances and pay little attention to its form. Young children learn their home language slowly over a number of years, with no pressure and with every advance applauded.

For children who are learning the second language at school, such is seldom the case. Piper (1998, p. 288) reminds us that in acquiring their first language, children do not need an extended rehearsal period before they are permitted to speak in public. Piper (1998, p. 281) delineates other problems with how the second language is used in school versus how it is used in the home :

- Teachers speak too much and do not allow children to speak enough. The proportion of questions directed by an adult to a child is 7 times greater at home than at school and teachers get much more than 50% of the classroom time for speaking.
- The language used in school is often disembodied from the context, manipulative, and/or intimidating.
- School talk is homogenous, with a sameness in what is discussed or the kinds of language used.

Ashworth and Wakefield (2004, pp. 33–34) also remind us that these are young children. Our focus should not be first on acquiring the new language but on developing in children a sense of self-esteem and promoting a warm and caring environment where these children can make friends. They go on to state, “Children learn a second language in order to use it with their new friends. They are not interested in language as anything but a means of communication (p. 34).”

## MISCONCEPTIONS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Conceptions in the understanding of bilingual development are led by “naive” theories of language and cognitive functioning (Baker 1993, p. 132). These theories are accompanied by different common images and influence our opinions about bilingualism and learning multiple languages. According to a naive theory, monolingualism is preferable because the human brain has only a limited amount of room for language skills. Tabors (1997) describes an image that illustrates this early belief of researchers and how it can be countered. This belief is rooted in the single-container model of language learning. This conceptualization maintains that humans have limited cognitive capacity available for learning languages.

This cognitive space can be thought of as analogous to an empty glass. As a child begins to learn a home language, the glass begins to fill up with the first-language liquid. Fortunately, in this view, the glass is just the right size to hold all of the first-language liquid; once the glass is full, the child has successfully achieved first-language acquisition.

In this model difficulties arise, however, if part way through this process a second-language liquid is poured into the same glass with the same capacity, at the same time. In this case, the single-container theory predicts a mixture of the two languages, as the two liquids flow together, resulting in semilingualism (incomplete learning of either language) or that there will not be enough room for the second liquid, resulting in an overflow and, therefore, lack of complete second-language acquisition. In either of these cases, the recommended remedy is to empty the glass of the first-language liquid, so that there will be no competing language to confuse the child or keep the child from learning the second language (Tabors, 1997, pp. 179–181).

A similar image is that of two language balloons inside the head. While the monolingual has one well-filled balloon, the bilingual has two half-filled balloons. This implies that bilingual individuals are proficient neither in their first language nor in their second language. As the space is limited in the brain, extension of one balloon (for example, first language) diminishes the space for the other balloon (second language) and vice versa. These images are convincing because they are congruent with common sense assumptions and experiences in physics.

Recent research, however, gives evidence that the idea of limited space in the brain is wrong and that the opposite is true. Children keep their brains busy all the time when they are given rich stimuli embedded in secure relationships. Connections are made and transfers take place, especially with languages. An interdependence exists between the cognitive concepts that children acquire in either language; in addition, a learner's competence in a second language also depends on the level of competence already achieved in the first language.

Cummins (Cummins and Swain, 1986; Cummins, 1996) illustrates this interdependence using the analogy of an iceberg with two peaks. The peaks one sees above the surface are the conversational features that have become relatively automatized and are less cognitively demanding. The part under the surface that is not seen is the cross-lingual proficiency which is used for cognitively more demanding tasks such as those used for reading and writing. The submerged part of the iceberg is called "the "Common Underlying Proficiency," in the two languages. The knowledge and skills that a person learns in their first language are easily transferred to the second language through the underlying proficiency.

Cummins (Cummins and Swain, 1986; Cummins, 1996) supports the need to strengthen a child's first language in order to develop their cognitive academic language proficiency. Basic language interpersonal skills can be developed in a second language demonstrating conversational fluency within two to five years. Research, (Cummins, 1996; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Thomas and Collier, 1997, 2002) however, shows that students require five to seven years to develop fluency in more technical, academic language (depending on many variables including the language proficiency level, age and time of arrival at school, level of academic proficiency in the first language, and the amount of support a person receives for achieving academic proficiency).

Accordingly, children's cognitive–academic language skills must be nourished so they can meet the expectations of the classroom. The underlying ability can be developed in the first language, in the second language, or in both languages simultaneously. It is linked to a cognitively demanding

communication with the child and to communication that is context reduced in the sense that the verbal or written interaction refers to phenomena that are not currently present but to past experiences, stories, fantasies, jokes, lies, plans, recipes, wishes, etc.

Tabors (1997, p. 138) concurs with Cummins's hypothesis and summarizes the necessity of school support for the home language in the early childhood years. Children are developing concepts about how the world works and are learning the vocabulary they need to use to express these understandings. In addition, they are developing discourse skills. Concepts, vocabulary, and skills are all easily transferred to a new language, but learning them takes time, both in school and in a child's home. Children develop these skills naturally in their home environments. We do not want to alter this process just because they are now learning the skills in the more confined, less fluid environments of school.

## SECTION 2:

# Supporting Multilingual Development in a Multicultural Classroom

## A. Developing Democratic Principles and Fostering Cultural Pluralism

The focus of intercultural education in Europe (and multicultural education in North America) is the development of democratic values and beliefs as well as fostering cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies. To those ends, this program supports:

1. the movement toward equity including the commitment to work against racism and discrimination
2. the multicultural curriculum approach
3. the process of becoming multicultural

1. This program is committed to the **movement toward equity** in providing high-quality education to all children and is especially focused on equalizing the opportunities for disadvantaged children. Its shapers believe in transforming total school environments including: teacher attitudes toward and expectations of students, families, and communities; instructional strategies; and classroom climates. They acknowledge that a “hidden curriculum”<sup>\*</sup> that keeps many children from reaching their fullest potential is in place. Such hidden curriculum is also in place for children whose first language is not the official language of the country if the curriculum does not provide them the same opportunities to be successful in school. These children often do not receive the same quality of education because: they are not equivalently supported in their home language as children who speak the official language; teachers often have lower expectations for their success in school; and the focus of teaching is on naming and grammar instead of critical thinking.

2. This program uses a **multicultural curriculum approach** that supports cultural pluralism rather than cultural assimilation or cultural segregation. Assimilation is the process by which one cultural group is absorbed by another. Cultural pluralism, unlike assimilation, does not expect children who may not speak the official language of a country to replace their language in the school; it also does not encourage the separation of children into schools depending on the home language.

For a school to be considered culturally plural, it must meet three conditions: positive teacher expectations for all, a learning environment that encourages positive intergroup contact and communication, and a curriculum that values the contributions, customs, and languages of all instead of those of the country’s dominant group. When students and teachers come from different

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\* According to Nieto (1996, p. 42), the “hidden curriculum” refers to the messages that, although are not part of the intended curriculum, nonetheless have an effect on students (or are intended to have an effect, but this intent is not acknowledged or made known to the learners). These messages, which often contradict schools’ stated policies and objectives, may be much more powerful than the official policies. For example, even though teachers and schools may state that they are committed to equal education, in reality schools reflect and duplicate the stratification of social class in society. Racism, classism, and other forms of discrimination (including having lower expectations for some students and higher expectations for others) maintain inappropriate learning environments for many students.

ethnic groups or nationalities, differences in modes of communication, participation, and world views will arise. Accordingly, equalizing learning opportunities for diverse students may be more difficult. To best reach any child or group of children, their cultures and languages must not just be recognized but also be valued. This means incorporating their funds of knowledge into our national curriculums instead of focusing solely on the funds of knowledge of the dominant culture.

3. This program is committed to **the process** whereby a person becomes multicultural, developing competencies in multiple ways of doing, believing, and perceiving. This process clarifies the reality that all individuals are multicultural and that it is the ideal state of being.

## B. Defining Multicultural Education

### WHAT IS CULTURE?

Anthropologists have defined *culture* in a variety of ways. Prior to the late 1950s, it was typically defined in terms of patterns of behavior and customs. Tylor (1958) points out that as early as 1871, culture was defined as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” This definition contrasts with more recent definitions of culture that focus on **shared knowledge and belief systems**, rather than on habits and behavior. Spradley and McCurdy (1975) define culture as “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate social behavior”.

These definitions are useful in understanding culture. However, the more recent concept of culture as a system of shared knowledge and beliefs that shapes human perceptions and generates social behavior is more attuned to the definition of multicultural education because it includes the development of multiple standards for perceiving, believing, doing, and evaluating.

Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1992, pp. 15–16) describes culture as a “collective, socially organized meaning” that is unevenly distributed in society (some people have more cultural competencies than others). The beginning of the use of the term *multiculturalism* in educational practice helped to change the homogeneous concept of culture to the plural. We now speak of “cultures” rather than of “a culture presumably shared by everyone belonging to a group or a nation”. One driver of this change was the minorities’ political movements, which made demands to be recognized as culturally different from more advantaged groups of citizens in a country. The purpose of the demands was to achieve equity on the basis of acknowledgment of diversity. Shortly afterward, many social researchers began to acknowledge not only the existence of cultural differences within a nation-state and their positive role and contributions, but also of internal differences attributable to social stratification.

In contrast with this traditional concept of culture as singular, anthropologist Goodenough (1976, p. 5) argued that multiculturalism is the normal human experience. All human beings live in what for them is a multicultural world in which they are aware of different sets of others to whom different cultural attributions must be made. In the learning process, people find that they cannot generalize the same expectations onto everyone. Children learn that the expectations of their parents and other adults are not the same as the expectations of their playmates. Different role expectations are attached to different social relationships and social situations. Each of these different expectations constitutes a different culture to be learned.

Multiculturalism teaches us that we are all socially, culturally, and linguistically *situated*, i.e., shaped by the culture(s) we were born into—albeit not forever and not without possibility of change. In addition, the range of cultural diversity increases in complex societies, where multicultural competence plays an important role in the access to privilege and power. People as actors and as networks of actors are constantly inventing culture, maintaining it, reflecting on it, experimenting with it, remembering or forgetting it, arguing about it, and passing it on. The flexibility to move within these situations is what creates options for us in life and gives us more access to power and privilege.

**Reflection:** *What different cultures do you belong to? How does being a member of multiple cultures or having the flexibility to move among different cultures afford you more access to power or privileges? Who does not have flexibility to move among cultures and why?*

## HOW WE ACQUIRE CULTURE—ENCULTURATION

The Step by Step Program states that “parents are the child’s first teachers”. In cultural anthropology, parents’ teaching (and children’s learning in family and community environments) is defined as *enculturation*. It is an educational process that takes place before schooling, alongside of schooling, and against schooling (a conclusion many researchers reached in their studies of minorities’ and immigrants’ problematic school performance). Furthermore, the process never ends as all of us—young and old alike—are lifelong learners by necessity. We move to new or relatively new contexts during our lifetime, each of which requires that we learn—or let others teach us—what we need to know to enable us to be effective participants in the new situations.

Enculturation is a crucial educational process that starts even before a baby is born because the future parents speculate about the sex of the unborn baby (or make plans if the sex is known), take into account its position within the family, and decide on its name. The parents are employing their cultural knowledge, expectations, and practices. The family and community play a key role, often unwittingly, in transmitting cultural patterns to children and to the children’s ability to learn them.

**Reflection:** *Think of examples of experiences you have had with cultural transmission. For example, what names do your friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances give to their children? How are these indications of cultural continuity or of change? (Is tradition followed in name giving, or have pop and media cultures become more important, so that a child’s name is connected to the present rather than to the past?) How are a newborn’s needs and wants attended to? Who takes care of her/him? Do people talk, play with her/him? What ceremonies are held? How does all of this affect the child?*

Language and culture are completely intertwined. Children learn very early that the language they speak identifies them as a member of a particular group. According to Piper (1998, p. 7), “children acquire their first language within their society of language users. They learn language in order to become a part of that society, and their learning entails a variety of social functions of language.” Ada (1998, p. 183) reinforces this, stating that “language is a marker of identification, of belonging”.

Enculturation is an out-of-school educational process because language learning/teaching is inextricably tied to it at the level of family and community. A discontinuity between the culture of the family/community and the culture of the school (often modeled on the majority or mainstream culture) has been identified as the reason for the low educational performance, failure, exclusion, or self-exclusion of minority groups. Language discontinuity between the home or community and school can also be a problem for many students. Examples of this are when there is difference

between the dialect\* used in the community and the national language used in the school or between a nonstandard version of a language used in the community and the standard one used in school (such as in the case of Black English in the United States).

**Reflection:** *What are the ways that your language reflects your culture? What are examples of language discontinuities within your own country?*

Enculturation indicates that children go through a deeply meaningful educational process before they arrive at kindergarten. What they have learned and have been taught is seen in their families and communities as desirable and thus has been expected and rewarded by the family and community. It is seen as a valuable legacy that should be striven for in the present and in the future. Patterns, behaviors, beliefs, etc., that are taught and learned according to individuals' positions in society might be different, but at least initially they are presented positively to children.

**Reflection:** *What did you learn as a child about how to do things that might have been different from what was taught in school?*

## SCHOOLING, CULTURE, AND POWER

Sometimes the dominant culture discounts, ignores, belittles, or excludes "other" behaviors, beliefs, and values during school learning processes. Schools often are "alien places" in the eyes of culturally different groups. Much of schooling may have been experienced as adaptation to, assimilation into a different culture (majority or mainstream one), and confinement of one's own cultural patterns to the private realm.

Schools are, as are all institutions, dominated by ideas and norms of the economically and socially powerful groups who control the division of resources and power. The material in this guide is based on the premise that all education is political. Fredrickson (1995 p. 16) states that this is because "its theories, structures, practices, and content are historically and culturally situated and therefore never neutral. In each historic epoch it is assumed that education works to advance the favoured and privileged political, economic, and cultural assumptions, social relations, and life conditions."

**Reflection:** *Think of ways schools relay political messages. What might be some of the hidden curricula in your school?*

Cummins (1996) calls the exclusion of minority groups' languages and cultures "coercive" relations of power by the dominant culture that operate to maintain the division of resources, power, and status in a society—the exercise of power by a dominant group to the detriment of a subordinated group. Freire (1970, 1973) called the devaluation of the identities of less powerful groups where the groups internalize their inferiority as "cultural invasion". The language and culture of the "other groups" are seen as deviant and the only solution is to "fix" the child, having him or her behave as a member of the dominant group, including speaking the dominant culture's language with native proficiency. The results of these actions are most often a feeling of shame in relation to their own culture and a lowering of self-esteem/self-efficacy and/or anger against themselves or other groups.

Cummins (1996) also states that the rejection of students' language and culture reflects the broader society's subordination of cultures and languages other than those of the dominant group. Ogbu (1978, 1992) points out that in many societies, students who experience the most severe academic problems are those that come from communities that have been discriminated against and viewed as inherently inferior by the dominant societal group.

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\* Within linguistics, a dialect is considered a language in its own right.

**Reflection:** Can you think of examples where children are made to feel inferior either because of who they are, how they speak, or what they do?

A key goal of this program is to nurture a positive self-concept, individual identity, and group identity in children. To accomplish this goal, teachers need to rethink what they are expecting, culturally and linguistically, of children. NAEYC recommends that teachers assist children by adding to their cultural and linguistic repertoire in the new school setting without making them feel that they must give up their own heritage. Even though these children may be at a linguistic disadvantage, they need to be able demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities in a variety of ways. They also should never be made to feel that they must choose between the ways of their family and friends and the ways of their school.

Educators must realize that children from different cultural backgrounds may have different ways of expressing themselves. Although a child's behaviors may be different from other children's, these behaviors may be an expression of what that child's understandings are at that time. Instead of judging these as wrong or needing to be fixed, the teacher must use the information gotten through observation as the relevant starting point for that child.

## MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Historically, the term *multicultural education* has been used in different ways to define various kinds of educational strategies and approaches (Banks, 1998). These strategies range from the widely used incorporation of activities that introduce ethnic and religious holidays, food, music, cultural traditions, etc., to the classroom to a much more comprehensive approach that involves total school and curricular reform. The first approach has been labelled as "couscous pedagogy" in Italy, "sari, samosas, and steel bands" in the United Kingdom, and "heroes and holidays" in North America. Multicultural content is presented in the form of additional activities that may involve parents and/or cultural visitors; however, the mainstream curriculum remains unchanged in terms of its basic structure and goals. Although the stated goal of these activities is to recognize and honor diversity, in reality they can reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions about ethnic groups (such as all Roma travel in wagons and live in the woods). They also tend to trivialize the concepts and issues related to the struggles that particular groups have waged against discrimination and lack of access to power. In the end, such a strategy maintains the society's mainstream perspectives, which are often oppressive to immigrant and other minority groups living in a country.

At the other end of the spectrum is the awareness that to make schools reflect cultural diversity, deep school reform is needed. The goal of this strategy is not only to recognize diversity, but also to reduce prejudices toward and discrimination against oppressed, immigrant, and other minority groups (whether they are represented in the school or not). Furthermore, it actively advocates for equal opportunities for all, by requiring students, teachers, and ordinary citizens to make decisions and take action to ensure equity in education. The major goals of this approach are to teach students critical thinking and decision-making skills to empower them and help them acquire a sense of political efficacy. In this sense, multicultural education is about affirming diversity, as well as addressing fundamental issues of social justice.

Even young children are aware of injustices in their lives (Why does Peter get to do this and I don't?). They learn very early who has the power in any situation and how to behave based upon that difference in power. If we do not actively talk about why there are differences in treatment of

different people, then we are supporting the status quo. Is it right that more people of color are not represented in our children's books? Is it right that some children do not have food in their homes (children who may be in our own classrooms)? Is it right that my neighbor who is in a wheelchair, or blind, or deaf cannot come to my school? Is it right that Eva gets to speak her language at school, but I am not allowed to do so? Or is it right that Eva gets to choose which center she wants to work in the classroom, while I have to do a grammar drill activity with the teacher? Children need to know their rights, as well as the rights of others, and be supported in having a voice to speak out for those rights. They also need to be taught conflict resolution skills as conflict is an inevitable part of being in human groups.

## DIFFERENCES IN GOALS OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Multicultural educational programs can have different kinds of goals that need to be defined based on what they can (or should) fulfill in society (Mistik et al 1999, p. 117)

Tolerance, as a political and social construct, has been in existence for awhile (see John Locke and John Stuart Mill among others). However, we have become aware that tolerance alone will not protect certain groups from becoming the victims of persecution and genocide (for example, recent history concerning Jews, Roma, homosexuals, Armenians, etc.). Today, we are instead concerned with recognizing diversity as both a natural resource (biodiversity) and a human resource, and how such diversity is essential to survival. In the case of human diversity, cultural anthropology has also taught us that when we talk about different cultures, we cannot order them in a hierarchy. Each has its own value and should be understood from its own perspective. The diversity that exists among them is positive and desired.

Mere toleration of others is insufficient. Many researchers and educators stress that empathy for others needs to be developed (when these "others" are members of different cultures). By empathy they mean taking action to understand different cultures address different human needs and understanding that these cultures exist in different historical, social, and geographical environments. Empathy includes the ability to understand the feelings of a people and the ability (or the attempt) to understand the world from their point of view based on these different historical, social, and geographical contexts.

*Empathy also implies solidarity and the capacity to recognize the rights of others and to support their demand for social justice. Here begins active, civic participation and cooperation in the creation of a common world that has a place for my worldview and therefore for my culture as well as for those of others. Active involvement in taking care of another culture (or worldview) and protecting it as well as my own is an ideal and a more comprehensive goal of multicultural education.*

**Reflection:** *How are you currently implementing multicultural education? What are your current goals for your students? Can you change or add in order to be more socially reconstructive in your approach?*

## WORD OF CAUTION

We also need to acknowledge both the risk of cultural conformity and ethnocentrism, as they are always present in the results of any enculturation process as well as the majority's cultural hegemony in the schooling process. Recognizing, affirming, or celebrating diversity and its crucial importance for everyone's education (not just of minorities) takes place in a context of history, politics, and social and cultural stratification that often breeds conflicts. Language and cultural differences should

be recognized and affirmed. However, at the same time, we must recognize and reflect on the historical processes, political decisions, and distributive policies that might have prevented, limited, or segregated cultures and languages other than the hegemonic ones. We must always ask: Why are groups included? Why they are not? What conflicts create as well as maintain the status quo?

Enculturation also maintains that a group's patterns and behaviors are at the heart of ethnocentrism and cultural conformism. To avoid a "romanticization" of our own culture, it is necessary not to forget that enculturation makes us human, but it also makes us provincial, at best, and racist at worst. This is one of the important reasons (or perhaps *the* reason) why multicultural education, with its emphasis on understanding the other's point of view, meanings, and reasons, should be not only welcomed in schools but actively sought. As has been stated previously, culture is not fixed or unchangeable. It can and should be subject to critique so that it does not become a stereotype.

Even our own educational project is culturally situated. To acknowledge such cultural embedding in no way diminishes the educational importance of this and similar projects, with their invitation to change. Our goal is a different way to educate. However, we should never stop reflecting upon the cultural, linguistic, and social contexts of our educational systems and programs and we should guard against complacency and thinking that we have found the complete answers to combating injustices.

Within this program, we must also take into consideration that most of the literature, practical indications, and activities we make reference to were elaborated in countries (i.e., North America and Western Europe) and for audiences (in large part immigrants to these countries) that are different from the ones in which you will be working. Although a number of aspects in every process of education are universal, such processes are also culturally situated. Therefore, any new educational project should "interrogate" the school's tradition, teachers' previous educational training, prevailing pedagogical practice, knowledge, and taken-for-granted assumptions.

## C. Bilingual Education and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

Multicultural kindergartens or schools are environments where all children of every ethnic and socioeconomic background feel welcome and are encouraged to reach their highest potential. In linguistically diverse societies, bilingual education is necessary in multicultural schools. Children are taught in two languages: official and their native language.

However, just as the term *multicultural education* can have various meanings and levels of implementation, so does the term *bilingual education*. Existing programs reflect attempts within the educational system to address the multilingualism of some groups. Investment in these programs varies significantly because of the social status of the groups and according to the underlying philosophies of different kinds of language programs. These philosophies, which are often hidden and not explicitly stated in language programs, fall along a continuum of cultural assimilation at one end to cultural pluralism on the other.

**Example:** In Quebec, Canada where the state language is French, the "immersion" of English-speaking children in French (the majority language) as a second language was successful, while a similar approach with immigrant children in Germany failed. The "immersion" of immigrant children with Turkish backgrounds in German as a second language resulted in "submersion": "Rather than a quick

*dip into a second language in mainstream education, submersion contains the idea of a pupil thrown into the deep and expected to learn to swim as quickly as possible without the help of floats or special swimming lessons. The language of the pool will be the majority language... Pupils may either sink, struggle or swim.” (Baker 1993, 154) Many children of Turkish immigrants failed because they neither developed sufficient proficiency in German to be successful in the school system nor did they increase their linguistic skills in their first language. The “submersion” system made them sink, not swim.*

*A closer comparison of the two approaches reveals not only differences in context and societal status of the learners and their languages but also in underlying philosophies, which led to different results. In Canada, children whose first language was English were promised to have better chances in the future being bilingual in French. However, it should be noted that even though French is the language of the majority of speakers in Quebec, English is still the majority language in the country. English speakers in Quebec have many opportunities to have their language reinforced and valued in the environment.*

*In Germany, the submersion of immigrant children in German was aimed at replacing their first language with the majority language for the purpose of assimilation. In Canada, pupils had bilingual teachers who not only served as bilingual role models, but also guaranteed that pupils were understood even if they were not yet proficient in French. In Germany, the classroom teachers were German who did not know the first language of the children and could not help them with mastering the demands of their second language.*

## PROGRAMS PROMOTING SUBTRACTIVE BILINGUALISM

Not all of the so-called bilingual education programs aim at proficiency in two languages. Some aim at proficiency only in the new language. By teaching in the first language of the children only during the first steps of the learning process, the use of the children’s first language is meant to be only a “transition” from their first language to the new language (transitional programs). These programs promote “subtractive bilingualism” (Cummins and Swain, 1986; Cummins, 1996). Students’ bilingual competencies are regularly challenged by the underlying purpose of bilingual teachers instructing in the first language only as a tool for learning the new language. As soon as children are proficient in the new language, there is no further need for the first language in the instruction process.

In “sheltered language programs” (Baker 1993, p. 156), the first language is not used and teachers are not proficient in the first language of the pupils. Pupils who do not yet speak the school language at a level to be successful in the school system are usually placed into “pull out or remedial classes” for compensatory lessons in the majority language. The curriculum, materials, and methods are modified, usually by simplifying and repeating elements of the mainstream curriculum and only in the majority language.

**Example:** *Roma children in Slovakia attend Slovak kindergartens and learn Slovak in the school setting. The system supports the Roma parents’ desire for their children become proficient in Slovak, which is the dominant language and the language of the official educational institutions. Families are supposed to promote Romanes, the children’s first language. While children become more or less proficient in Romanes, their success in acquiring Slovak can be questioned based on their lack of success in the school system. Many Roma drop out of school and repeat a grade based on their lack of knowledge of Slovak as well as other content. Interestingly, in the south of Slovakia, Roma parents like to send their children to kindergartens of the Hungarian minority. Here the Roma children learn Hungarian*

*with better results. Hungarian even replaces Romanes. One explanation is that Roma families might affiliate more with the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, which expresses national awareness and pride in a very strong and demanding way, stronger even than do the Slovaks. Hungarians are struggling effectively for their rights as a minority, something that the Roma, who have very low social status and are discriminated against, have been unable to achieve.*

## PROGRAMS PROMOTING ADDITIVE BILINGUALISM

“Additive bilingualism,” in contrast, is the idea of adding a second language to the developing first language and aims at proficiency in both languages (Cummins and Swain, 1986; Cummins 1996). For children of linguistic minorities, these programs work to maintain the first language while teaching the dominant language as a second language. Such “maintenance” programs ideally provide dual language instruction from kindergarten through primary and secondary grades.

First-language classrooms are an option for minority families concerned about maintaining their language and trying to counter the dominance of the official language in society. These are kindergartens for children of linguistic minorities where the language of instruction is the language of the family. Often the language of instruction is also the teacher’s first language. Those who support this type of classroom emphasize the importance of developing the first language as an indispensable base for developing literacy and as a guarantee of further success in school.

The danger in first-language classrooms is their inherent separatism, which might lead to a very limited bilingualism because of a lack of exposure and opportunity to learn the new language. (Baker 1993, p. 157).

**Example:** *In Estonia many Russian-speaking families still choose to have their children attend Russian-speaking schools. Though Estonian language classes are included in the curriculum of these schools, the students often do not reach a level of proficiency in Estonian that would allow them to extend their education to high school or college. In addition, the unemployment rate is significantly higher among the part of the population that is not fluent in the state language.*

For children of a majority-speaking language who attend school in the minority languages, first language classrooms are seen as “enrichment programs” (see example from Canada of the “immersion” of English-speaking children in French). If children of the majority have the opportunity to learn a second language from an early age, it enriches their linguistic and cultural knowledge. However, learning a second language is not necessary for meeting everyday challenges; in contrast, minority children must cope with daily frustrations while learning the dominant language.

Bilingual programs that address minority and majority children together in both of their first languages are called “two-way bilingual education programs”. They require the presence of pupils of both language groups in a suitable proportion, bilingual teachers, and bilingual materials. Usually both languages are used in instruction.

**Example:** *In Berlin bilingual classes are common for primary school children in the “European schools” in languages such as French, English and Russian. Literacy development is conducted in the children’s strongest language. After grade two, they continue having instruction in both languages until senior grade (“Abitur”).*

However, only if both languages are considered important in society can both languages easily be developed in a balanced way. Usually one of the languages is less acknowledged, which influences the motivation of the learners and the effectiveness of the program.

**Example:** Parents in Berlin, who struggled for a Turkish–German “European school” and succeeded, encountered various problems. For the first time, this opportunity exists for children of the Turkish-speaking migrant families, thus the school is attractive to parents who want to raise their children bilingually. However, every year finding enough German-speaking children for the classes becomes more difficult. The program’s basic goal of a 50–50 proportion of children of each first language cannot be achieved. Every year German children quit the school because they feel that the Turkish lessons are too difficult. Parents of both language groups become worried when their children approach secondary school. They wonder if their children have really learned enough German to be successful in higher level education and if Turkish makes sense at all for the future of the children in Germany. This clearly reflects the reality of inequality and marginalization of Turkish immigrants in Germany and, at the same time, obstructs a very positive and effective program of bilingual schooling.

**Example:** During the years of Soviet occupation, all children in Estonia had to learn Russian, the language of the Russian minority. Every Estonian child learned Russian as a second language at least from the age eight. While Russians had no need to learn Estonian, a great number of Estonians refused to learn Russian, which also impacted the children. Today, when the choice of second language is not prescribed by the government, still only few children and schools choose Russian as their primary second language, although several schools offer good programs for Russian, English, and German and are much more popular. One explanation is that during the years of the Soviet domination, Russian represented power because the Russians in Estonia were either intellectuals who had left Russia for political reasons or they were “occupiers” sent by the Soviet government to settle. For Estonians, the Russian language not something that a person wanted to be identified with so there was no motivation to learn it. Today, as the importance of Russia as an economic partner is becoming more evident, the number of children learning Russian seems to be increasing.

**Reflection:** Think of your own program. What are its characteristics? Could it be classified as assimilationist or culturally pluralistic? Why?

## RESEARCH ON BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

Current research has documented the advantages of additive bilingual programs (Berman et al. 1995; Lucas and Katz, 1994; Pease-Alvarez et al. 1991; Thomas and Collier 1997, 2002). Thomas and Collier in their studies of school effectiveness for language minority students documented that support of the first language explains the most variance in student achievement and is the most powerful influence on those students’ long-term academic success. Their five-year study in five urban and rural research sites across the United States with English-language learners found that minority-language students who had been placed in English immersion classrooms (subtractive bilingual classes), by grade 11 only reached the 12th percentile on the standardized reading test. In contrast, students who had been in bilingual maintenance classes (where the first language was also used as a language of instruction) had reached between the 50th and 61st percentiles in math and reading tests by the 11th grade, demonstrating that they met or exceeded many monolingual English-speaking students.

The 2002 Thomas and Collier study demonstrated that dual language immersion classes (where students receive between 50% and 90% of their instruction in the native language) assist students to reach the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in all subjects and to maintain or even reach higher levels of academic achievement. According to Lucas and Katz (1994), incorporating students’ native language is what gives them access to academic content, to classroom activities, and to their own knowledge and experience. Marzano, Gaddy, and Dean (2000) state that accessing this background knowledge is one of the key factors in successful instruction.

## SECTION 3:

# Environment

## A. A Culturally Responsive Environment

The environment plays an essential role in the acquisition of the second language in school, just as it does in the acquisition of a child's first language at home. Children's interactions in a safe, predictable environment with people who are language models most easily replicate the situations that children experience in the home. Such interactions will aid the child in acquiring the new language, *not* the teaching of the new language. A culturally responsive environment is also an important part of this process.

As stated in Section 2, culture is central to learning as cultural factors play an important role in determining how and what children learn (Rogoff, Gauvain, and Ellis, 1984, p. 21). Preschool teachers need to be responsive to cultural and linguistic differences; however, they should also be careful not to use these differences to support incorrect assessments of children's developmental competence and thus plan incorrectly for their educational achievement. Tabors (1997, p. 92) cautions to never make any assumptions about a child's cultural or linguistic background. Teachers *must* educate themselves about the cultures of the children in their classrooms by asking questions of both parents, visiting the children's communities to find out how they interact and learn in that environment, and asking educators from the same cultural background as the children about effective ways to teach them. Teachers should set up the classroom to make it familiar and welcoming to the children, allow children opportunities to share their cultural knowledge, as well as create opportunities for children to question and challenge their own beliefs and actions.

This concern about the importance of culture in development has sparked considerable discussion about just how useful the developmentally appropriate practice standards are. When standards express a single cultural representation, they are not appropriate for all children. Accordingly, effective early-childhood practice is now defined as being culturally as well as developmentally appropriate (Bredenkamp and Rosegrant 1992, 1995).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1996) has issued a position statement "Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity—Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education". The following points are from their "Recommendations for Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children":

- **Recognize that all children are cognitively, linguistically, and emotionally connected to the language and culture of their home.**

Tabors (1997, p. 174) reminds us that "this recommendation reinforces and extends the important premise that parents are the first educators of their children. Children's earliest learning experiences occur in the context of the home language and culture". An important job we have as educators is to develop an understanding of a child's language and culture by making home visits and interviewing parents. Our preschool programs should be places where children can add to their linguistic and cultural repertoire without feeling that they must choose between the ways of their families and the ways of the school.

Tabors (p. 183) also recommends that educators examine their own cultural and linguistic heritage to “gain an understanding of the cultural lens that they bring to the classroom and to examine their attitudes about other linguistic and cultural groups... and to reflect on the ways that these understandings can and will affect their practice”.

- **Acknowledge that children can demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities in many ways.**

According to Tabors (1997), children learning their second language may not be able to demonstrate their knowledge by verbal communication for quite some time. As educators, our responsibility is to develop other ways of helping children show what they know—with nonverbal tasks—or to look for alternative and nontraditional ways to enable children to express their understandings. Children may have different ways of expressing themselves because of the culture that they come from and development may be expressed differently among cultural groups.

However, it is also important that teachers not send unintended messages of low expectations for students who are learning a new language. Such students are still capable of thinking and doing high-level tasks even if they cannot yet communicate about them in the new language. Effective and consistent communication of high expectations helps children develop a healthy self-concept (Rist, 1970).

- **Understand that without comprehensible input second-language learning can be difficult.**

Comprehensible input refers to the modifications of language that educators can use when communicating with second-language learners. Tabors (1997) points out techniques we can use to provide comprehensible input: repetition, running commentary, and context-embedded talk. Tabors also reminds us that in order for these techniques to work, however, educators will need to ensure that second-language learners feel safe and included in the classroom. There is a double bind for children who are in a social situation in which they cannot speak the language: In order to begin to understand and speak the language, they need to be in social contact with those who already speak the language; but in order to get into social contact, they need to be able to speak the language. (pp. 175–76)

Second-language learners need spaces where they can play both independently and engage in small-group activities that include both second-language learners and children who are fluent in the official language (who can help those who are less fluent). Large-group activities are not as helpful for them and leaving children alone to figure things out by themselves is never appropriate.

## **B. A Children-Centered Environment**

Children-centered instruction, wherein learning is cooperative, collaborative, and community-oriented, differs from the traditional teacher-centered instruction. Children-centered instruction encourages learners to direct their own learning and to work with other children on activities that are both culturally and socially relevant to them. Teachers foster children’s growth and development by building on the interests, needs, and strengths of the children. They act as guides, mediators, consultants, instructors, and advocates for the students, helping to effectively connect their culturally and community-based knowledge to the classroom learning experiences. Teachers should

use students' home cultural experiences as a foundation upon which to develop knowledge and skills. Content learned in this way is more significant to the students and facilitates the transfer of what is learned in school to real-life situations (Padron, Waxman, and Rivera, 2002).

A children-centered environment is also one that is developmentally appropriate (Bredekamp, 1987). It:

- recognizes and accepts individual differences in children's growth patterns and rates by setting realistic curriculum goals that are appropriate to their developmental levels.
- educates the whole child—with attention to his or her physical, social/ emotional, and intellectual developmental needs and interests.
- responds to the needs of children as developing, thinking individuals by focusing on the process of learning rather than on disparate skills, content, and products.
- provides multiple opportunities for learning with concrete, manipulative materials that: 1) are relevant to children's experiential background; and 2) keep them actively engaged in learning and discovering through use of all the senses, leading to more input upon which thought is constructed.
- provides a variety of activities and materials by incorporating: 1) learning activities that encourage active participation through hands-on activity, communication, and dialogue; 2) large blocks of time to pursue interests; 3) time to ask questions and receive answers that develop concepts and ideas for use at varying levels of difficulty and complexity; and 4) time to reflect upon and abstract information when encountering viewpoints that differ from one's peers.
- views play as fundamental to children's learning, growth, and development, enabling them to develop and clarify concepts, roles, and ideas by testing and evaluating them through the use of open-ended materials and role enactment. Play further enables children to develop fine and gross motor skills, to learn to share with others, to learn to see others' points of view, and to be in control of the expression of their thoughts and feelings.
- provides many opportunities for the use of multicultural and nonsexist experiences, materials, and equipment that enhance children's acceptance of self and others. These experiences enable children to accept differences and similarities among people, including those who are challenged in some way.
- embraces the teaching of all content as integrated experiences that develop and extend concepts, strengthen skills, and provide a solid foundation for learning in language, literacy, math, science, social studies, health, art, and music and movement. Children's learning does not occur in narrowly defined subject areas.
- allows children to make choices and decisions within the limits of the materials provided, resulting in increased independence, attention, joy in learning, and the feelings of success necessary for growth and development.
- utilizes appropriate assessment procedures, such as observation techniques and portfolios, to make adaptations in the learning environment to meet the needs of the children.

Additional information on developmentally appropriate and child-centered teaching can be found in Section 4:E under the ISSA Pedagogical Standards.

## C. Including Families and Community in the Environment

As stated earlier, parents are the child's first teacher and are critically important partners to teachers. Research shows that involving parents and families in their child's educational process results in better scholastic achievement (Epstein 1995). To help parents become aware of how they can be effective partners in the education process, teachers should talk with them as early as possible about the parents' hopes and aspirations for their child, their sense of what the child needs, and suggestions about ways teachers can help. When families share their "funds of knowledge" with the school community, teachers get a better idea of their students' background knowledge and abilities and how they learn best (Moll et al. 1992).

Family involvement takes distinct forms in different communities because of varied understandings of the roles that families play in school and the expectation for "involvement" as understood by school staff. Since other family members and individuals in communities often engage with schools on behalf of children, we recognize the need to expand the discussion beyond parent involvement. Families and communities have different perspectives on involvement in their children's schools.

Different understandings of school exist across cultures because of prior knowledge and expectations about school and various levels of educational background and experience. It is important: to discover families' assumptions about school as well as their hopes, concerns, and suggestions; to keep families informed of services offered by the school; and to have teachers gain the cross-cultural skills necessary for successful exchange and collaboration with the families of the children in their classrooms. Ways to gain the cross-cultural skills can include attending community meetings and events; establishing or joining community-based organizations to facilitate communication and new understandings among schools and families; and inviting community members for input on issues about the school.

### IDEAS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF FAMILIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Ways to find out about your families and keep them informed include (Petrosová et al. 2003):

- **Creating opportunities for personal contact**  
Use a number of activities that will allow parents and teachers to get to know each other and to exchange information. Be sure to reserve enough time for discussions with parents so that they have an opportunity to ask questions and to get answers. Learn to listen effectively.
- **First visit to the school**  
Before the child starts attending school, parents should have an opportunity to visit and observe the teacher and the teacher's assistant at work with children and to learn about the program and the methodology used. It can happen as an open school visit or as an invitation to come to school for a celebration of children who already attend the school, etc.
- **Orientation meetings**  
Once the child is enrolled, orientation meetings help parents meet teachers, educators, and other parents, learn how their child's day will be organized, and get other necessary information.
- **Visits to the family**  
The teacher and the teacher's assistant may visit the family and may possibly meet the child and see the child in his/her own environment.

- **Time of arrival to and departure from school**  
The teacher and the teacher's assistant can effectively use the time of the child's arrival at and departure from school for an informal discussion with the parents.
- **Parent-Teacher conferences**  
Such meetings are formal and allow parents to learn about the progress of their children. Parents comment, express their ideas, and work with the teacher to prepare an individual plan for their child.
- **Written communication**  
If personal contact with the parents is impossible, for whatever reason, use various forms of written communication, especially if you want to make sure that the child's family gets the information.
- **Handbooks and bulletins**  
Handbooks and bulletins contain detailed information about the program. Parents can use them as guides throughout the year.
- **Newsletters**  
Once or twice a month publish a newsletter if you can; it can be used to inform all parents about various events, changes in the school's program, the need for volunteers for specific projects or days, etc.
- **Weekly updates**  
Every week send an individual announcement to parents informing them of their child's favorite school activities.
- **Informal announcements**  
Send home short announcements about children's successes, the skills they are working on and have mastered, and what they are studying. You can use these announcements to thank families for the assistance at school or informing them about a certain requirement. Families can also send such announcements back to school.
- **Information boards**  
Inform families about the dates of meetings and other events, the daily schedule, etc.
- **Proposal box**  
Set up a marked carton into which parents can put their own proposals and comments they want to share.
- **Reports**  
A formal and effective way of getting information to parents. Don't, however, let reports replace home visits, parent-teacher conferences and other kinds of face-to-face communication.

Invite parents to join the life in the classroom in various ways:

Parents can join formally and informally.

- **Observing**  
Encourage parents to come to the classroom to see their children learning in class.

- **Volunteer teachers' assistants**  
Parents can help in the classroom with various activities, enrich them with their skills or interests, help with organizing events, bring materials for projects, help with cleaning, decorating the classroom, etc.
- **Paid teachers' assistants**  
If your school has the funds, hire some parents as paid teachers' assistants.
- **Member of the Advisory Parent Committee**  
The Advisory Parent Committee is a group of parents who meet regularly to help plan and implement the program.
- **Information and educational activities for parents**  
The school provides parents with information about the topics they have shown interest in—for example, child development: how your child develops math or literacy skills, games to play, etc. These activities can be organized by teachers or parents.
- **Social events for parents, teachers, and teachers' assistants**  
Plan some activities for the adults so they can get to know one another in a less structured setting.
- **Connecting parents with social welfare institutions**  
In some cases, the school is unable to meet the family's needs—economic, employment, health care, etc.—alone; the school can help them contact the necessary institutions.
- **Library**  
The school can create a library for parents.

A few other hints for work with family members:

- **Respect the parents' role**  
Nurture mutual respect between parents and teachers.
- **Support parents' participation**  
Advise parents on how they can join the program.
- **Use various activities and strategies—be creative and flexible**  
Families, like individuals, differ in their interests and activities. Do not insist on one-size-fits-all for your students' families, try to offer a variety of activities.
- **Let families decide themselves how and if they will participate**  
Make sure that parents understand that you appreciate their participation in the classroom and that they can decide how much they want to be involved.
- **Speak with families about mutual expectations**  
From the very beginning speak with parents about how to stay in regular mutual contact.
- **Be patient**  
Family involvement may be something new, for teachers as well as for parents, and developing relationships may take some time.

- **Focus on the strengths of the children and their families and provide positive feedback**
- **Stay in close contact**  
Make sure that at least one of the teachers speaks with the parents of each child at least once a week.
- **Show your appreciation**  
Show the parents that you appreciate their involvement in the class.
- **Try to involve all members of the family**  
Fathers are often left out of the work in the kindergarten. Be creative and think about how to involve fathers, siblings, and other family members.
- **Encourage parents to participate in meetings**  
Plan meetings for the time that best suits the parents. Arrange for child care during the meetings.
- **Be discreet**  
Trust is an essential component of mutual relations. Make sure you treat all information as confidential.
- **Strengthen cooperation**  
Organize meetings of parents and teachers to help them learn to cooperate effectively, thus strengthening their bonds.
- **Cooperate with the community**  
Families depend on a number of service providers and support. Make sure your school cooperates with legitimate institutions.
- **Create a Parent Advisory Committee**  
When families have the opportunity to participate in the school's program, their involvement can both improve the quality of the program and expand its scope significantly.

## SPECIAL ISSUES WITH LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES

Sometimes issues arise when trying to involve linguistically diverse families in a school program. If no one in the program can speak the child's language, then teachers should use other resources, including recruiting bilingual parents to help them in communicating with the families.

Inform, encourage, and assist parents in becoming knowledgeable about the cognitive value for children of knowing more than one language. In addition, provide parents with strategies to support, maintain, and preserve home-language learning (NAEYC, 1996). Tabors (1997, p. 183) advises preschool educators "to be well versed in the research related to second language acquisition so they can help parents develop strategies for home language preservation". This includes being aware of the messages that parents receive from the media, the traditional educational establishment, and even their children who may devalue their language.

Cultural activities of linguistically and culturally diverse families should never be presented as strange and exotic because this may increase children's feelings of difference rather than commonality. However, all children (and not just second-language learners) can be exposed to the experience of what it feels like to not speak the language others are using; such experience may help them develop empathy and devise personal strategies for second-language acquisition.

Teachers can highlight the value of parents who speak languages other than the official language by engaging in classroom activities in that language. For example, parents can read aloud in another language, thus giving the children who speak only the official language the experience of being involved in an activity without understanding the language. (If parents do not want to engage in these kinds of activities, you can just invite them to visit the school and engage with the children in activities that do not require language interaction.)

When a parent of a second-language learner spends time in the classroom, other children will be able to observe the parent and the child talking together—perhaps realizing for the first time that a classmate speaks a different language. If the parent is encouraged to conduct an activity in the home language, the other children will benefit from the experience of being second-language learners. Furthermore, the presence of the parent of a second-language-learning child may increase the child’s social confidence and comfort in the classroom. An opportunity to speak their first language in class sometimes encourages children who have heretofore been silent, possibly giving them a feeling of being welcomed to the class.

## **SECTION 4:**

# Effective Teaching and Learning Strategies

## **A. Assessing Where Children Are**

### HOW TO ASSESS

Assessment is very important when working with second-language learners as the strategies used depend on where a child is in the process of learning a second language. For example, are they in the silent period? Are they using telegraphic or formulaic speech? Are they building their own sentences? etc. (see Section 1:B) Teachers must also know about the child's personality and interests to motivate her or him to speak.

Much controversy surrounds the topic of assessment in the preschool community. Tests that are administered only once, are administered by people the child does not know, that place children in new situations, and that look for what a child does not know rather than what the child does know are NOT appropriate for this age level. In general, tests are unreliable and invalid indicators of children's capabilities and especially of the capabilities of second-language speakers.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp and Rosengrant, 1992) has published guidelines related to developmentally appropriate assessment. These are summarized below:

1. Curriculum and assessment are integrated throughout the program.
2. Assessment results in benefits to the child such as needed adjustments to the curriculum, improvements in the program, or more individualized instruction.
3. Children's development and learning in all domains (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive as well as their dispositions and feelings) are informally and routinely assessed through observation of children's activities and interactions. Errors are used to understand their learning.
4. Assessment provides teachers with useful information to fulfil their responsibilities in supporting children's learning and development, planning for instruction, and communication with parents.
5. Assessment involves regular and periodic observation of the child in a wide variety of circumstances that represent a child's behavior over time.
6. Assessment reflects the ongoing life of the classroom and typical activities of the child. It does not place a child in artificial situations.
7. Assessment utilizes an array of tools and a variety of procedures including representative work by children, records of conversations and interviews with children, records of systematic observation by teachers, and summaries of children's progress both as individuals and as groups.
8. Assessment relies as much on demonstrated performance during real, not contrived, activities as on skills testing.

9. Assessment recognizes individual diversity and allows for differences in styles and rates of learning. Assessment takes into consideration the children's ability in the official language, their stage of language acquisition, and whether they have been given time and opportunity to develop proficiency in their mother tongue.
10. Assessment supports parents' relationships with their children and does not undermine parents' confidence in their children's or their own ability, nor does it devalue the language or culture of the family.
11. Assessment demonstrates children's overall strengths and progress. It does not focus on what they cannot do. It addresses what children can do independently and what they can demonstrate with assistance, because the latter shows the direction of their growth.
12. Assessment is a collaborative process involving children and teachers, teachers and parents, school and community. Information from parents about each child's experiences at home is used in planning instruction and evaluating children's learning. Information obtained from assessment is shared with parents in language that they can understand.
13. Assessment encourages children to participate in self-evaluation.
14. Information about each child's growth, development, and learning is systematically collected and recorded at regular intervals.
15. A regular process exists for periodic information sharing between parents and teachers about children's growth, development, and performance. The method of reporting provides meaningful, descriptive information in a narrative form.

Tabors (1997, p. 153) advises teachers, when assessing second-language learners, to first decide on what should be assessed. These may include: the child's capabilities in terms of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development (which are done for all children in the classroom); the child's capabilities in his or her first language; and the child's capabilities in the second language.

Assessing the child's development in her or his first language can be challenging for the teacher if she/he does not speak that language. Tabors advises, in such case, to gather this information in the home. During a home visit, teachers can take notes on who the child speaks with, the level of appropriateness of these interactions, and how fluid the communication is. Teachers can also interview parents about their home language use and if they believe their child is using the first language appropriately for his or her age.

When assessing second-language learners, Tabors (1997, p. 155) cautions teachers to be especially careful about their overall cognitive and social/emotional development as conclusions reached based on early observations "can be very misleading" and "perhaps even detrimental to the child's later development". The teacher must give the child sufficient time to adjust to the classroom and to the linguistic and social constraints that not speaking a language impose. Teachers, however, can observe and document abilities that the child can demonstrate without the use of language—for example, classifying colors in groups even though they do not yet know the new names for them.

Teachers also need to be very careful about labeling children's spontaneous utterances as "wrong" or "incorrect". Just as with the initial learning of the first language, second-language learning is not merely a process of adaptation and imitation but very much a creative process of constructing meaning by sorting out and checking the inner rules of language. In this process of generalizing

rules, children come to conclusions that are “productive errors”: utterances that are “incorrect”, but at the same time clever and correct applications of rules in grammar and the construction of sentences. Children need encouragement for their own creative efforts and continuous stimulus and correct use of the language in their environment. The observation of children’s learning should be positively described as capabilities; such observations should not state what children do not know. The observations should also include feedbacks on the quality of the linguistic environment.

Teachers of young children also need to be aware of where children are in the process of developing early literacy concepts. Ashworth and Wakefield (2004, p. 42) point out that children’s increasing awareness of writing and reading are an integral part of their early language development. Children pay attention to both reading and writing and “all four models of language— listening, speaking, reading and writing—seem to develop in a parallel fashion”. As early literacy indicates a growing and developing use of written language interrelated with oral language, it needs to be included in each child’s assessment.

## TOOLS FOR ASSESSMENT

Monolingual tests are never an appropriate tool for assessing second-language learners. Monolingual tests were developed for monolingual children and do not cover the learning progress of a multilingual child. Many tests are diagnostic tools for disturbances in language learning and often tend to pathologize multilingual children’s learning process. Tests that are only administered once and that put children in a new situation and with new people cannot give insight into their linguistic biographies. Such tests are unreliable indicators of young children’s capabilities because they do not draw on their motivation for and interest in communication. Usually the results of tests do not give an idea how to best support linguistic development.

- **Step by Step Child Assessment Instrument (attached in Appendix)**

The Step by Step Program developed a standard instrument that is supported by anecdotal records, inventories, checklists, and children’s work. It takes into account second-language learners’ progress in both the first and second languages.

- **SISMIK**

In Germany, an adequate tool was developed for children from ages 3 to 6. Based on the “Leuven Involvement Scale” constructed by Ferre Laevers (Centre for Research in Early Childhood and Primary Education, Leuven University, Belgium) the tool SISMIK (**S**prachverhalten und **I**nteresse an **S**prache bei **M**igrantenkindern **i**m **K**indergarten, 2003) focuses on observing multilingual children, looking at their involvement in certain everyday situations in the child care center. It is a tool for measuring achievements in language learning in ways other than looking at outcomes.

What does “involvement” mean? Laevers is convinced that the most productive learning occurs when people are so involved with something that they are absorbed and lose themselves in it. The methodology of the Leuven Involvement Scale relies on the observation of a child when he or she is in the setting, with the observer looking for a set of signals that are recorded on a five-point scale. These signals range from Level One, “where a child may seem absent and display no energy, activity is simple, repetitive and passive”, to Level Five “where a child is concentrated, creative, energetic and persistent with intense activity revealing the greatest involvement”.

SISMIK applies this scale to the linguistic involvement of multilingual children. The authors Michaela Ulich and Tony Mayr (Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik, München) believe that to

*learn language children must be actively involved in language use that is of real interest for them.* Their research indicated that children often cannot find this kind of language use in child care settings: When using the Leuven Involvement Scale in kindergartens in Germany, Ulich and Mayr discovered that multilingual immigrant children were less actively involved in situations where language use was important. Teachers regarded these situations as stimulating for language learning and thought of them as most important for immigrant children who had to learn German as their second language. They were quite surprised that immigrant children especially did not benefit much from these situations. As a consequence SISMIK was developed.

SISMIK is a tool for monitoring and documenting the “normal” learning process of a multilingual child. The tool has four parts: Part one is the tool for documenting observations in daily situations that are seen as linguistically stimulating: breakfast, circle time, individual conversation with the teacher, role play, early literacy activities like storytelling, reading books, games with language, rhymes, etc. The observations make note of the children’s involvement (motivation and linguistic activity) and at the same time the stimulating quality of these daily situations. Teachers gain hints on how to support the children and also how to change daily situations if necessary. The most important question is: How can I change this arrangement/situation in order to increase active participation and involvement of children? Part two is for a closer look at a child’s utterances, which gives insight into capabilities in the second language. Part three gives monolingual teachers a tool to see how children are involved in activities where their first languages are used. Part four is a questionnaire for a conversation with parents on the child’s linguistic development in both the first and second languages.

Because this tool is not focused on outcomes but rather on monitoring the learning process, teachers do not have to wait for results that may be hard to interpret. The tool does not evaluate the child but helps to describe what the child is doing around language. SISMIK gives immediate feedback about whether children are involved in language learning. If they are not, teachers can immediately change the setting so that it becomes interesting and encourages children to become active. It helps teachers to shape the possibilities of language learning for the benefit of all children.

## B. Working with Specialists

### LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES VERSUS LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Do not mislabel a child! What must be understood is that there is a difference between communicative differences and communicative disorders. According to Piper (1998, pp. 168–169), communicative differences are variations from the **language norm of the community** that arise out of dialect or language differences. We must not label as disorder the differences that may either be developmental or may not need to be changed. Dialect should also never be labeled as a disorder. Any speech behavior or language use that others in the peer group or ethnic community also demonstrate is a legitimate means of expression and is not in need of remediation.

Piper (1998, pp. 169–174)) classifies language disorders into four categories:

1. Voice production—unusual vocal quality (breathiness, nasalness, hoarseness, pitch or volume) that *persists* and is not apparent in others of the child’s peer group
2. Fluency—abnormal rate, rhythm, or both (stuttering)

3. Articulation—mispronunciation of particular sounds, lisping, deviance in pronunciation of sounds
4. Language processing—aphasia (loss of ability to use and understand language), brain damage, mental and physical disabilities such as deafness or hearing impairment

Of the above, problems with articulation are the most common in bilingual children because the phonology of child's first language may temporarily influence the pronunciation in the second. Bilingual children should be assessed in their native language and referred for therapy only if the articulation disorder is present in that language. Articulation problems in the second language are developmental and will be overcome as the child becomes more proficient in the language. Second-language learners could be adversely affected by remediation as it may increase anxiety levels and decrease motivation to communicate.

Piper (1998, pp. 187–188) offers guidelines for teachers and specialists to use when identifying language disorders in children:

- Gather all possible information about the child's language background. Enlist the help of a bilingual adult or older child to help you gather the information.
- Be careful how you use that information and do not draw hasty conclusions. For example, should you find that a child speaks very little, do not immediately decide that he or she has inadequate knowledge of the language.
- Whatever language behavior you observe should be compared with that of other bilingual children of similar cultural and language backgrounds.
- Expect second-language learners to make grammatical errors.
- Some children use both languages to communicate—linguistic borrowing and code sharing are normal phenomena in bilinguals.
- Look for the different patterns of human development within different cultures and investigate their assumptions about education.
- Each child is an individual. Do not assume that what is true for one child from a linguistic or cultural group will be true of another child.

## A VISION OF COLLABORATION

Whether second-language learners are seen as having a communicative difference or, in rare cases, a communicative disorder, very often specialists (speech therapists, psychologists, special educators, etc.) are brought in to work with these children because the teacher does not have training in how to individualize instruction for them. Just as with any cooperative relationship in school, including working with administrators, teacher assistants, or parents in the classroom, all individuals should acknowledge their opinions about and principles regarding basic child development as well as their thoughts on teaching a second language in kindergarten. Clear communication will elucidate purposes, help in the sharing of experiences, work toward the development and analysis of activities so far undertaken, and reduce the level of uncertainty in the group.

The teacher's role in the preschool classroom that includes second-language-learning children will need to be broadened to include strategies for communicating with these children; in addition, adjustments must be made to the curriculum to make instruction as responsive to their needs as

possible. Teachers must get to know the children as deeply as possible. One of the first questions a preschool educator should ask at the beginning of the school year is “Who are these children in my class?” What information is important and how should teachers go about getting such information?

Tabors (1997) identifies three categories of information to have about children in the first classroom: 1) basic demographic information: place of birth, when the family arrived in the area, the family’s religion, if any; 2) linguistic practices in and outside of the home: languages(s) spoken at home, which family members speak those languages, and language(s) to which the child has been exposed, including when and where; 3) relevant cultural practices: child-rearing beliefs about discipline, toileting, behavior, and separation problems; food preferences and feeding practices, and how children are expected to behave toward adults and in group situations.

The teacher’s role is to share the gathered information with other adults who interact with the children and motivate them to find the best ways for using any information to help the children.

The teacher, the child’s parents, and appropriate specialists make the decision about whether the child should have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The decision is made after observation of the child. The process involves six steps:

1. observe the child in a variety of activities, identify strengths and needs, and record your observations
2. set objectives based on what you consider reasonable for the child to achieve
3. select classroom activities and teaching techniques that can best help each child reach the objectives
4. develop the plans with the child’s parents and specialists
5. on a continuing basis, observe and evaluate the child’s progress, then develop new objectives
6. when the child is ready to leave kindergarten, make plans to ensure that continuity of needed services is maintained

For facilitating a child’s language development, use the language-learning strategies below:

1. provide opportunities for language use and interaction
2. provide focused stimulation for particular language features
3. develop routines to help children connect events and language
4. encourage social interaction between children

In this model, the teacher must effectively communicate with all of the adults involved, delegating responsibilities and ensuring that parents, specialists, and other team members realize that their job in the classroom is to:

- support the overall quality of the teaching process
- maximize opportunities for success of the individual child

- set goals and priorities for growth and success using accepted developmental norms
- effectively express expectations and visions
- work as a member of a team

When the teacher shares her plan, the script for action, she also creates opportunities for other team members to enter the classroom and make contributions on behalf of the individual child. The teacher must also act as coordinator—teachers and specialists working in isolation can lose sight of the whole child. The teacher working in isolation in the classroom, without the support of parents and specialists, might miss key information about a child’s overall development that would help her plan individualized instruction. Conversely, a parent or specialist working individually with a child may become too focused on one aspect of the child’s development. For example, a parent may focus on the area he or she perceives to be the child’s weakness, e.g., language development, and totally lose sight of other areas.

Collaboration maximizes opportunities for success by providing a full picture of a child’s strengths and weaknesses. In addition, as families, teachers, and specialists begin to share ideas and observations, they begin to share responsibility for goals and visions of success for the child. Within this group, many different viewpoints can be explored and suggestions for different strategies can be discussed.

A child-centered collaborative model recognizes the importance of teachers, families, specialists, and other children in the class.

The teacher’s responsibilities include:

1. Establishing the classroom environment
2. Providing necessary props and materials that support curriculum
3. Setting the tone and controlling the atmosphere
4. Providing a curriculum plan that can be shared with others
5. Being flexible and allowing for adaptations
6. Setting a schedule so children can master routine and know what to expect
7. Conveying an attitude of acceptance and tolerance

Teachers must:

- balance the needs and interests of each child and his or her developmental levels
- observe and support each child while she or he plays and interacts within the classroom
- provide feedback to each child as he or she works in the classroom
- provide opportunities for second-language learners to take on starring roles and taking the lead during play
- provide opportunities for each child to take cues from others

The specialists' role includes performing screenings and assessments; in addition, specialists provide traditional individual consultation away from the classroom and perhaps the home, and they intervene when a child is diagnosed with a delay or determined to be at risk.

In a collaborative model, the specialist has an opportunity to work on the child's stage—the classroom—and takes on the role of lighting person. In the classroom, the specialist has an opportunity to spotlight the child's strengths and weaknesses (or growing edges). The spotlight draws the teacher's or parents' attention to the performance of the child. When the specialist works in the classroom, she is able to make suggestions to modify areas of the classroom to better suit the emerging skills of the individual child. She also has opportunities to support classroom interactions with teachers and peers using play.

With the support of the teacher, the specialist can maximize opportunities for the parents and the child to be included in the learning process. The specialist can use the curriculum to individualize the child's learning by using ideas from the IEP to suggest activities to the parents. For example, if classroom teachers are planning a unit on the market, the specialist may make suggestions or contribute ideas to individualize the activity for a particular child. A speech and language specialist, for example, might suggest vocabulary cards to be used for practice at home.

The child with special needs often requires repetition and expansion; the learning specialist accordingly utilizes a variety of service models that allow for repetition and elaboration of concepts. The specialist also uses the relevant context of play to support the child as they continue to work on goals. In a collaborative model, the specialist provides opportunities for extensions of IEP both at home and at school. Suggested ways of expanding activities are communicated via notes, telephone calls, or perhaps directly through the parent and/or teacher.

Working with specialists has two distinct models: consultation and collaboration. In a traditional consultation model, the specialist is viewed as an expert, an advice giver. Services are typically "pullout" (provided away from the home and classroom), and the teacher is viewed as a resource. The specialist may hold meetings with teachers; the specialist may create opportunities for regular meetings between the teacher and the specialist, however, distance and/or inequity is maintained between them. In this model, the specialist determines goals and activities for the child without considering the child's activities at home or school. The assumption is that an irregularity or disorder needs to be corrected. Although pullout programs are common with second-language learners, such programs do not allow these children to make the relationships with peers they need for language development in the second language.

By contrast, in a collaborative model, everyone—parents, teachers, and specialists—shares responsibility for the success of the child. Goals, outcomes, and ideas are shared. In a collaborative model, all participants make decisions and solve problems together. Services may or may not be separate from the classroom, but communication is ongoing, thus maintaining a high level of awareness about treatment and progress, strategies, and objectives. Regular teacher–specialist meetings are scheduled and an attitude of trust and respect is conveyed to all involved.

Within the collaboration are many dynamic roles for the specialist to explore. The child's developmental level, personality, and learning style all play a part in the specialist's choice of role. Some typical models include:

- The specialist as **Co-Peer** in play-based services  
During classroom playtime, the specialist supports the child as he/she engages in play. The specialist also recognizes that all language as well as nonverbal overtures are social-interactive opportunities. Learning is real, taking place within the meaningful context of play with peers within the classroom. The specialist supports and stretches the child's skills. Within this child-centered model, the specialist also provides a model for teachers that can be implemented at any time.
- **A Peer Model** during group activities  
In classroom group time (circle time), the specialist takes the perspective of the child—acting as a peer in need—and expresses the child's developmental level. The specialist models and teaches the child how to ask for help in the context of a group setting by pretending to be “in need” so the child is “in the know”.
- **Services in the classroom** without other classmates present  
In this model, the specialist allows the child to take him or her around the classroom. The child takes the lead in demonstrating how the props and materials are used and has the opportunity to explain what is taking place in the classroom. The child acts like the teacher, showing the specialist all he/she has learned that day/week. This allows the child to be “in the know”, while providing opportunities for repetition and elaboration on themes and ideas at a more relaxed pace. This model is also effective in highlighting what the child has missed, allowing the specialist to assess breakdowns in expressive and receptive communication, and to assess processing as the child revisits concepts. While the child is pointing out important details, the specialist is assessing expressive language skills, key vocabulary, and concept development.
- **Co-Planner** and Co-Teacher  
In this model, the specialist works with teachers ahead of time to plan activities. The specialist may work in the classroom during group time and team teach a group, or break away from the larger group to form a smaller unit that includes the second-language learner. This approach is very effective in building trust among team members. It is unique because all of the children in the classroom can benefit from the support and more personalized teaching that is available with the presence of the specialist. In addition, the specialist will be available to provide intervention for a specific child and offer additional support as other concerns are raised.
- **Pre-Teaching** and **Post-Teaching** outside the classroom  
The specialist and teacher realize the importance of getting to know children one-on-one. In this model, the specialist arranges to take the child out of the classroom to individualize learning. By providing the specialist with a copy of the classroom curriculum ahead of time, the teacher helps to create opportunities to pre- and post-teach themes, allowing for repetition and elaboration. After working with the child one-on-one on classroom-related themes, the specialist can make suggestions for activities to be completed at home and also in the classroom. By utilizing the IEP outside the classroom, the specialist strives to broaden the child's comprehension and expand existing curricular themes or scripts.

## C. Working in Centers

### LEARNING CENTERS

Language is learned in socially interactive settings where children construct their linguistic systems from the language they hear from adults and peers. Tabors (1997, pp. 127–129) advises the use of the following intervention strategies to facilitate language development:

1. Provide a language-rich environment with many opportunities for language use and interaction. Such a setup helps second-language learners understand and then begin to use their new language.
2. Base the curriculum on an integrated approach that uses specific themes to structure many activities for the week and month. Teachers institute quiet times when they are not talking in order to provide an opportunity for children to initiate conversation about what they find interesting. Teachers arrange the environment so that not all materials are readily accessible, which encourages children's efforts at interactions.
3. Institute a variety of organizational and curricular modifications (cooperative games, small-group inclusion, circle time, etc.) that will help second-language-learning children feel more comfortable, included, and competent.
4. Provide focused stimulation on particular language features. Develop plans that include targeted sounds, words, or forms to be used with particular children. These forms are then modeled in comments or statements made during conversations with the children, and the children are encouraged to repeat the models.
5. Develop routines to help children connect events and language. These include establishing familiar daily routines like arrival time, circle time, and snack time so that children can anticipate what will be coming next and prepare themselves to participate.
6. Stimulate social interaction between children. Teachers help children interact with each other by redirecting requests for help by suggesting that they seek help from another child. Bilingual children in the classroom can also be trained to help provide socially appropriate language partners for less proficient children who are learning the second language. If interaction among different language groups is not occurring in the classroom, then the teacher needs to ask "why" and "what can be or needs to be changed."

Most important, however, is to remember that play is the best way for young children to learn.

In most preschool programs, learning/activity centers or play areas are used as an organizational structure for the classroom. These centers provide a variety of learning experiences and materials, encouraging children to explore, experiment, discover, and socialize. They are an essential component of a classroom for second-language learners as these children require concrete, multisensory experiences to acquire the new language just as they had in their first language.

The number of learning centers in a classroom varies with the needs of the children and the amount of space available. They offer children opportunities for extending language and thinking and for encouraging social interaction with different groups. (Ashworth and Wakefield, 2004, p. 47) If second-language children who speak the same language choose to work-play together in a center, they should not be discouraged as it models respect for the different languages in class. Ashworth

and Wakefield also point out that learning centers provide teachers excellent opportunities for children to extend their language capabilities by encouraging friendships between children who speak different languages. Learning centers also give teachers a chance to observe children closely as they interact with others and to make note of their linguistic, cultural, and social needs.

Ashworth and Wakefield (2004) also advise that:

At first, some children may be overwhelmed by the variety of new materials, the freedom to choose, which may be strange to them, and their inability to play as they would like to with other children because of a language barrier. Their responses may be quite different: some may withdraw silently, others may wander aimlessly from center to center, and still others may choose one area, such as the water table, and refuse to move. Sensitive teachers will be sympathetic to their need for time to adjust to the new environment. (p. 46)

Ashworth and Wakefield (2004, pp. 47–51) identify specific centers that provide opportunities for learning through play, give teachers a chance to observe what concepts children already know in their first language, and provide opportunities to express these concepts in the second language. Such centers include:

**Block center**

In this center the concepts of number, order, shape, size, space, and measurement are reinforced in both the first and second languages. Teachers need to make sure that they guide children gradually toward expressing concepts appropriate to their stage of development.

**Art center**

This area offers children the opportunity to create, experiment, and respond personally to ideas and events. The artworks children produce at this center provide insights into what they are thinking but cannot yet express in language.

**Dramatic play center**

This center provides excellent opportunities for learning. As children reenact stories or role play in the house corner, they are engaging in many different cognitive activities: solving problems, hypothesizing, predicting, and sequencing. Their dialogue with other children or a teacher helps them use language to clarify these thinking skills.

**Sand or water table**

As in the block center, this is an area where children can express mathematical, scientific, and dramatization skills both in the first and second language.

**Library**

Children need to be encouraged to look at books, choose stories for reading, listen to tapes while following along in the books, and borrow books to take home. They should also be encouraged to share books from home with other children.

**Writing center**

Reading and writing are integral to language development and must be included in the activities of every classroom every day. Very young children learn to write their names on their artwork, read labels on classroom objects, manipulate the day, month, and date on the calendar, choose the appropriate words to describe the weather, and recognize the month in which their birthdays occur.

Second-language children should not be excluded from these activities. Written representation should be part of their daily routine because all four languages modes—listening, speaking, writing, and reading—are interrelated and develop concurrently.

### **Science center**

The purpose of the science center is to stimulate children's curiosity and encourage language development by requiring them to observe, question, and draw conclusions.

### **Table toys**

Work in this center encourages the development of hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills, as well as providing a respite for children who may want to play quietly on their own for a while.

### **Music center**

The music center has an array of instruments that can be used to create different sounds and rhythms. The uses of the music center can vary from being employed for a large group musical production to having one or two children use it to listen quietly to a record or story on tape. Other times a child may want to play with one or more of the instruments, experimenting with ways of making different sounds.

Music is not usually confined to a specific area. Songs are used at transition times, at clean-up times, for group activities, and for saying good-bye. Children respond well to songs because singing in another language is often easier than speaking in another language.

### **In conclusion:**

What are quality practices for greatest learning and what should those environments or opportunities for children look like? Research suggests that children learn in places where:

- Learning is a cooperative journey shared by many, not a competitive race between individuals.
- Knowledge is defined as mental constructs that are drawn out rather than information that is handed out.
- Diversity is celebrated and the talents and strengths of each child are recognized and nourished.
- Concrete materials, quality literature, technology, and a variety of resource materials are used.
- An array of learning opportunities is provided from which a child and family can choose.
- Instruction is integrated—which requires problem solving and decision making on the part of school administrators, teachers, and staff.

## **STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS**

The following guidelines (Tabors, 1997, pp. 98–105) are offered as teachers attempt to meet the diverse needs of children acquiring a second language.

- Start with what children know  
When you make contact with the child's home, ask to be given a few important words in the mother language that you can use with the child in the classroom. Not only does this provide

a scaffolding opportunity, it reduces the initial cognitive demand on the child. Words like “eat,” “listen,” “bathroom,” “more,” and “help” are useful.

- **Start slowly**  
Allow the children to feel comfortable with the classroom environment before raising language expectations. A welcome smile and greeting are all that are necessary initially.  
  
Including a child by referring to him or her with a short comment in context (e.g., “It’s Bonnie’s turn to play with the ball.”) helps the other children see that child as belonging. Do this before you make direct comments or requests in a second language.  
  
As language expectations increase, pair the statement, question, or comment with a picture, gesture, or action so children have opportunities to use more than one method to access the language.
- **Repetition**  
Another technique that is used successfully when communicating with a child learning a second language involves repetition. Saying the same words or phrases more than once gives a child more than one opportunity to catch on to what is being said. If the repetition involves a single item, it may also provide an opportunity for the child to learn the word. Teachers can also emphasize the words as they say them and put the new word near or at the end of the sentence for better comprehension.
- **Here and now**  
One major feature of successful communication with second- language learners is its grounding in the here and now. Talking about what is right here gives a child learning a second language a chance to discover what the conversation is about and also focus on a more restricted number of options for a response. As a child learning a second language begins to expand her or his language skills, such grounding also provides a context to help the teacher understand what the child is talking about.
- **Expanding and extending**  
Once children begin to demonstrate developing capabilities with their new language, teachers can use communicative opportunities as ways to expand and extend their language skills. With this technique it is important to start with what the child knows and build from there.
- **Pushing gently**  
One of the most difficult judgment calls that teachers must make when communicating with a child learning a second language—or a child with limited vocabulary—is knowing when to be more insistent that the child get beyond the nonverbal techniques that her or she has developed and actually use language to get what is wanted. Insist on verbal communication, however limited at first, before complying with a request.
- **Rephrasing**  
When communicating with a child learning a second language, a teacher must always be aware of the level of language proficiency a child has achieved so that the language can be fine-tuned to that level.
- **Combining techniques**  
Although these techniques have been presented individually, they will rarely appear separately from each other in actual conversations with children. In any attempt to talk to children learning a second language, a teacher should make a number of attempts to gather information, restate,

check for understanding, and use other strategies depending on the success or lack of success in a given conversation.

## KINDS OF ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE USED FOR SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

### **Phonetic exercises**

- Listening to sounds, differentiation
- Sound imitation
- Rhyming words
- Distinguishing between sounds at the start of words, etc.

### **Development of vocabulary**

- Putting together pictures cut into pieces
- What is in the package?
- Locate and name an object by feeling
- Guessing a word according to the first syllable
- What is missing on the table?
- Marking the opposites
- Distinguishing objects according to a specified mark
- Description of the position of an object (practicing prepositions)
- "Flies, flies, everything flies . . ." etc.

### **Development of fluent expression**

- Description of a picture
- Unfinished sentences
- Analogies
- What is it?
- Where is it?
- What is it like?
- What does it do?
- Making sentences according to pictures
- Collective discussion when viewing pictures
- Brain-teasers
- Lining up pictures according to the sequence of events
- Completion of a story

- Painted reading
- What would happen, if . . .
- Sorting concepts—what does not belong here?
- What am I thinking about?

## D. Emergent Literacy Skills in the Multilingual Process

In looking at how second-language children will develop emergent literacy skills, we must acknowledge the role that oral language development plays in the process because reading and writing are extensions of speaking and listening. However, the following section on developing emergent literacy skills in young children is applicable to all young children, not just those who are second-language learners.

Young children come to school (even to kindergarten) already knowing a great deal about reading and writing. In addition, just as culture has a great influence on language development, it also has a great influence on literacy development.

Literacy development is not defined, however, as just reading and writing. Traditionally we have viewed reading and writing as processes that were difficult for children to learn. Children were considered knowledgeable about literacy only when their reading and writing approximated the reading and writing level of adults. Children who could identify written words without picture clues were considered readers. Similarly, children who could spell words so that adults could read them were considered writers. This definition of reading and writing was based on what adults could do.

The term *emergent literacy* does not mean reading readiness. Reading readiness suggests that there is a point when a child is ready to begin to learn to read and write. Emergent literacy suggests that the development of literacy is taking place within the child. It also suggests that the process is gradual and will take place over time. To emerge, something needs to be there at the beginning (the child's own natural learning ability); in addition, things usually emerge only under the right conditions. Literacy refers to the interrelatedness of language—speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing (Ashworth and Wakefield, 2004, p. 43).

According to [www.emergentliteracy.com](http://www.emergentliteracy.com), the following elements are part of the emergent literacy process:

1. *Learning to read and write begins very early in life.* Babies have very early contact with written language. By age 2 or 3 many children can identify signs, labels, and logos in homes and communities. Young children also experiment with writing. Early scribbling displays characteristics of the writing system of their culture. Writings of four-year-olds from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and America will look different long before the children can write conventionally.
2. *Reading and writing develop concurrently and interrelatedly in young children.* Children do not first learn to read and then learn to write—we need to speak of literacy development not of reading readiness or of prereading. We also need to realize that writing is actually an easier first-learning activity for young children than is reading.

3. *Literacy develops from real-life situations in which reading and writing are used to get things done. Function precedes form.* The vast majority of literacy experienced by young children is embedded in some activity that goes beyond the goal of literacy itself. Literacy is functional, meaningful, and authentic; that's what they see adults doing. Literacy is not a set of abstract, isolated skills to be learned. Literacy is used to get things done.
4. *Children learn literacy through active engagement.* Children learn literacy through their reading and rereading of favorite storybooks. When a child "rereads" a book, it is not a parroting of memorized text, rather it is the child reconstructing the meaning of the book. When you see children's invented spelling, you see their attempts at reconstructing their knowledge of written language. Invented spelling is a way to see the phonetic elements a child is acquainted with.
5. *Being read to plays a special role in the literacy development of the young child.* Being read to daily is one of the greatest gifts that we can give to our children. It is never too early to start. By hearing the printed word, children can develop a feel for the patterns, the flow, and the nature of written language. Children receive a global sense of what reading is all about and what it feels like. They develop a positive attitude toward reading, which is a powerful motivation when the child reaches school. It is also an important means for children to begin forming concepts of books, print, and reading.
6. *Learning to read and write is a developmental process. Children pass through the stages in a variety of ways and at different ages.* The theories of Piaget and Vygotsky were instrumental in understanding the developmental processes of children in learning. There are developmental stages in a child's reading acquisition and developmental stages in a child's writing growth ([www.emergentliteracy.com](http://www.emergentliteracy.com)).

Listening and reading are receptive uses of language. When we assist students with listening comprehension, we are assisting them with reading comprehension. Speaking and writing are productive uses of language. When we assist students with their spoken expression, we are assisting them with writing composition. Moreover, reading can be one of the most important ways we develop vocabulary, and writing helps us learn how to compose in oral language.

Oral language development in young children (in their first or second language) requires little explicit instruction, whereas for most children, written language is only mastered with a lot of explicit instruction. However, it should be noted that many of the same factors that make acquiring a second language easier or more difficult for a learner also apply to learning to read and write. For example, reading and writing are easier to learn when children understand their purposes, when the material and/or activities are interesting, when reading and writing are meaningful, and when instruction builds on what children already know about language (Goodman, 1986). Traditional teaching of reading and writing often does not take into account these factors, but lets children struggle with learning the skills by phonetic decoding which can be uninteresting and focuses on symbols instead of meaning.

In addition, like oral language development, reading and writing happen naturally in a literate environment where children are surrounded by words (Goodman, 1986). Children learn to pick out the words they know among the myriad words they see. They can recognize their names and many words, such as those for favorite foods, even when they do not yet know the alphabet. They

also understand the form of reading and writing before they know specifics. For example, they understand that black marks mean something one can say. Finally, children are active constructors of the process of reading and writing.

## A GLOBAL OR BALANCED APPROACH TO READING AND WRITING

Traditionally, teaching children to read when they arrive at primary school is a process of learning isolated letter/sound relationships that are put into syllables and then into words the children can read (Tankersley 2003). Reading begins with a small part of process reading (the phoneme/grapheme) and progresses to teaching whole words and then sentences. This is contradictory to how children naturally construct their knowledge about reading and writing in the early years.

As stated earlier, children learn to read just as they learn to speak—by being surrounded by print. A child growing up in this kind of environment starts the process as a baby, when he or she learns that listening to stories and looking at books is pleasurable. An adult holds a young child and interacts with her or him, looking at and talking about a story or book. Young children learn how books work by watching others use them while reading. They learn how to hold a book, turn pages, and look at pictures to help with a story. Then children begin to notice the difference between pictures and the black marks that are letters. They learn that these marks have meaning because they represent spoken words. Everyone knows of a two-year-old who picks up a book and has the whole story memorized. If an adult is reading the story and misses a part, the child will correct the adult. They practice reading by going through the memorized text with themselves as well. They will tell you that they are reading the story. Children then learn to recognize specific words in their environment and will tell you what they say. Finally, when a child is in kindergarten or beginning first grade, he or she learns the letters and sounds of the alphabet. Children will begin sounding out words that they do not recognize by sight and become independent readers (Tankersley 2003).

Learning to read usually proceeds in the following steps:

1. Learning to love books
2. Learning how books work
3. Discovering that print has meaning
4. Memorizing and rehearsing books
5. Recognizing the words
6. Sounding out words
7. Independent reading

Learning to write is a similarly constructive process that begins at a very early age. First, a child gets something to write with and will make pictures of scribbles. Children will tell you they have written a story or about something. They may fill up pages in a notebook with scribbles and tell you complex stories from these. Then children begin to make letter-looking formations. When they begin school and/or are introduced to the alphabet, they will copy the alphabet over and over and tell you a story from those marks. After children recognize that the letters have a corresponding sound, they may begin to write down the sounds they hear as words. Most often they hear consonants and write them first if a teacher is not focusing on correct spelling. Then children learn that words have to be spelled correctly to be easily read by others (Tankersley 2003).

The process usually unfolds in the following stages:

1. Scribbling
2. Making formations that approximate letters
3. Writing letters
4. Invented spelling
5. Conventional spelling

Many children go through the first stages of the reading and writing processes at home and in kindergarten. However, other children come from homes where books and exposure to writing can be very limited and/or where they do not have the opportunity to attend kindergarten. These children start the first grade being introduced to reading and writing at the last stages of the literacy development process (for example—learning letter sound relationships) without having had the opportunity to go through the previous stages of learning how books work or how writing is constructed. For children who are second-language learners, this whole process also needs to be recreated with the new words (and maybe even new alphabets) that they are learning in school. We should concentrate on giving them experiences that help them learn to love reading, have success with reading, and provide motivation to read as we are teaching them to read (Tankersley 2003) as well as giving them time to develop the fine motor skills that they will need for writing.

Children who grow up speaking a language other than the official language are also greatly handicapped when beginning first grade because the words they are being taught to read have no meaning for them. We have to begin with words that children already know well—their own names, names of family members, or other words they recognize from the environment. Otherwise, the words the teachers put on the blackboards are just marks with no meaning to them (Tankersley 2003).

When teaching children to read and write make sure to keep in mind that (Goodman 1986):

1. Reading and writing use three language systems. Their interaction with each other allows us to make meaning of text. These are the:
  - graphophonic system (sound and letter patterns)
  - syntactic system (sentence patterns)
  - semantic system (meanings)These are best introduced in the context of whole text. Later they can be studied separately. However, if they are taught in isolation at the beginning, they are only abstractions of language. The ability to work with abstractions comes in the later stages of a child's development; young children who need concrete material in order to learn.
2. Readers construct meaning during reading. The purpose of reading and writing is communication, just as with speaking and listening.
3. Readers use prior knowledge and experience to make sense of text.
4. Readers predict, select, confirm, and self-correct as they seek to make sense of print.
5. Reading and writing instruction require that the learner be intrinsically motivated. You cannot make a child learn to read. The skill develops in response to personal needs and interests.

6. Literacy develops from whole to part, vague to precise, concrete to abstract, familiar to unfamiliar.
7. Sub-skills have no hierarchy, no universal sequence in teaching reading and writing. For example, a child can read text in his or her environment without yet knowing the alphabet.
8. No one-to-one correspondence exists between teaching and learning. Ultimately the learner constructs the knowledge, knowledge structures, and strategies.
9. Risk taking is essential.

Kindergarten teachers and families take many actions to help children develop the skills needed in each of the steps of learning to read and write, including:

- Reading extensively to children to expand their interest in learning the process. Use the children's own interest in certain topics to stimulate their interest in reading. For example, if a child is interested in cars, find books about cars to read to him or her.
- Awaken children's curiosity about print. Use the pictures in the books. Talk about them. Ask open-ended questions.
- Read books that have patterns and are predictable to help children memorize the text.
- Read a book many times and encourage children to join in. (Especially important for second-language learners to be successful in reading.)
- Use different readers (students or guests) to read the story. Have people read and tell stories in other languages with props to demonstrate that reading and writing are universal processes even if we use different words or even different alphabets.
- Use different reading strategies—reading chorally, teacher begins a page and students finish, different students read the parts of different characters.
- Do lots of activities that develop oral language—it is the basis for reading and writing. Have students do drama, songs, show and tell, guessing games, taping and dubbing television shows, riddles and jokes, etc., in multiple languages.
- Build an awareness of print: environmental, informational, note writing, recreational information. (Walk in the school and the community and ask students why is this print here? What does it say?)
- Create literate environments with functional print everywhere (read the room). Have children's writing on the walls. Have poetry, child-made books, journals, teacher-made books, photo albums that are labeled, alphabet books, counting books, etc., in multiple languages.
- Expand children's sense of books and how to handle them.
- Expand children's sense of narrative (storytelling).
- Encourage children to play at reading and writing. Have centers that promote literacy such as post office, grocery store, director's office, restaurant, etc.
- Validate what children already know about print and reading. Build new skills on what they already know, for example, using alphabet books that incorporate their names, etc. Do an alphabet graph with the participants' names.

- Do choral reading with morning message, predictable books, rhymes, songs.
- Write about everything children do in class. Teachers can take dictation if the children cannot write yet. Make class books of children's experiences with photographs. (Tankersley 2003)

## LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

The language experience approach is one of the most frequently recommended approaches for beginning second-language learners and is a strategy that can be used in both the first and second language. In this approach the student provides the text through dictation that serves as the basis for reading instruction. The text, accordingly, reflects the learner's own interests, background knowledge, and language proficiency, thus building on the linguistic, social, and cultural strengths as well as interests that the child brings to school. The language experience approach begins with stories dictated to teachers by individual students, small groups, or the whole class. The text is written or transcribed as it is spoken; students then read back the text to the teacher. Children are usually able to read their own stories with minimal decoding skills because they already know the meaning and the words. Reading and writing become purposeful because they reflect the students' own interests, concerns, and level of language use. They are able to observe how their own words are put into text, which prepares them to eventually write their own text. In addition, because children are reading their own words, they are able to experience the success of independent reading (Tankersley 2003).

Examples of language experience approach include:

- Scribing stories for children individually, usually around a picture they have drawn and having them reread it to you
- Writing about group events such as field trips, holidays, etc., to make class books
- Scribing as children retell stories; have them draw pictures to go with the words
- Writing stories from pictures that students bring to class
- Reading predictable books that have strong patterns and/or rhymes (big picture, little text) and having them write their own versions
- Making proverb books (Stasz 2003)  
Proverbs and sayings are particularly useful tools to teach language arts to second-language learners because they represent common wisdom with minimum text; they are linguistically organized to promote memory and therefore are a community-based source of predictable text, and they are multicultural in nature and content.

They are perfect for creating little books to read to and with young children. Take a standard sheet of paper and fold it in half as if it were a book. Copy the proverb so that part of it appears on each page except the back. Print clearly and make the words fit the space. The words should be big enough to read, but not so big that they take up the whole page. Illustrate each page and you have an instant "little book" that is fun for young children to read and that will help them in early literacy acquisition. Parents are usually very excited about helping make these books and often bring a great deal of talent in illustrations, production, or supervision.

## E. ISSA Pedagogical Standards

The future holds new challenges for educators as we become a more global society. As immigration increases worldwide, we are faced with the issue of more and more children coming into our schools who do not speak the official language, but who must learn it to become productive citizens. The pressure on teachers to educate these children is immense, yet teacher preparation in early childhood education has not given them the tools to do so.

Early childhood teachers revert to their own experiences of learning foreign languages to teach their own students. The strategies that we were taught with are developmentally inappropriate for young children and are, for the most part, unsuccessful. (Who remembers very much a language they learned as a young child if it was not reinforced later in their studies or lives?)

Piper (1998, p. 310) reminds us that “respecting children’s language is remembering that the particular variety individual children bring to school is as much a part of their identity as the teacher’s language is to her. Language will always remain special in the life of the school and the life of the child. How we as educators deal with the language issue can either greatly benefit the child in his life, or it can create problems that he may never overcome. Our task is great and should not be done without knowledge and skill.”

Myths and ill-conceived ideas abound about how language learning in schools should occur. Teachers must rethink not only many of their beliefs about what it means to teach language, but what it means to teach in general. They not only have to do things differently in their own classrooms from the way that they were taught, they have to relearn new teaching methodology that moves from the teacher being the center of the classroom to making the child the center of the classroom. To help children learn, teachers must break with many traditions and transform their teaching practice.

A tool that helps teachers develop the necessary skills to help young children acquire new languages in school settings is the ISSA Pedagogical Standards developed by early childhood experts from countries transitioning to democracy. The standards offer a unique perspective on the connections between early childhood education and open society.

### ISSA PEDAGOGICAL STANDARDS AND HOW THEY MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

#### **Standard 1: Individualization**

**Teachers use their knowledge of child development and their relationships with children and their families to appreciate the diversity of each class and to respond to each child’s unique needs and potential.**

*All children are different. Young children in particular vary considerably in the patterns and pace of their growth, thinking, language, and social capacities due to individual differences, linguistic differences, cultural persuasions, and special learning and developmental needs. To help all children succeed, teachers need to:*

- Understand how young children develop and learn
- Know about the special attributes of children in their care
- Know the history, culture, and values of families

- Develop nurturing relationships with every child
- Accommodate for differences in the classroom setting

*When working with linguistic differences in your classroom, this means:*

- Children are allowed to speak their mother tongue in the classroom.
- Teachers understand the language developmental process. Children are not drilled in use of the new language or forced to produce in the new language, rather their use of the language is allowed to emerge when they are developmentally ready.
- Teachers also learn some words in the child's language and use them when speaking to the child.
- Teachers treat children who do not yet speak the official language of the country respectfully as people who have knowledge even though they cannot yet express it in the classroom. They do not treat them as babies or simplify the activities that these children engage in in the classroom. Teachers provide these children with equal opportunities to participate in all activities.
- Teachers create and modify learning experiences for individual needs where children can express themselves in ways other than verbally.
- Teachers recognize and support contributions of various linguistic/ethnic groups represented in the classrooms. They use materials that reflect the diversity of the group. They regularly recognize the culture and traditions of children and their families. They provide opportunities for children and parents to develop educational materials reflecting their own languages, traditions, and customs.

## **Standard 2: Learning Environment**

**Teachers promote caring, stimulating, and inclusive classrooms by organizing the environment in ways that best facilitate children taking learning risks, practicing democracy, and working both cooperatively and independently.**

*The structure of the learning environment deeply influences each child's educational experience. To create the best learning environment for children:*

- Teachers understand the developmental influence of the physical setting on children.
- Teachers promote democratic values by making children active participants in the process of setting expectations.
- Teachers foster children's ability to make choices and work independently.
- Teachers create opportunities for children to work together.

*When working with linguistic differences in the classroom, this means:*

- Teachers provide a language and literacy rich and stimulating environment that promotes language development in the first language and acquisition of the new language. Children should have many opportunities to use other people as language role models, not just the teacher. Books and written materials are available in multiple languages and they are used by the teachers and students.

- Teachers use educational resources in the community, including libraries, shops, factories, clubs, community members, etc.
- Teachers develop learning materials with children that are individualized for the students' linguistic differences.
- Teachers do not exclude children from classroom decision-making processes because they may not yet speak the language of the majority.
- Teachers provide consistent routines and children are well enough acquainted with the environment that they can take care of their own needs without having to produce language.

### **Standard 3: Family Involvement**

**Teachers build partnerships with families to ensure optimum support of children's learning and development.**

*The engagement of parents and families in their children's education is a valuable asset to a program. To make families a meaningful part of each child's education, teachers:*

- view parents and families as partners
- communicate regularly
- invite families to contribute to the program
- extend assistance to families to support learning at home
- assist families in obtaining resources and services

*When working with linguistic differences in the classroom, this means:*

- Teachers make parents feel welcomed and informed even when they do not speak the same language as the teacher. They can make signs in multiple languages that welcome families to the school. They can use people from the community who also speak the language of the parents to help share information about each child's school experience with parents, seek information from parents, and maintain communication between home and school.
- Teachers encourage parents to participate in their children's school activities by preparing material in their own language and by encouraging parents to share their language and experiences with the other children in the classroom. For example, parents can read books or tell stories in their own language with props.
- Teachers provide parents with information about parenting and child development in their own language.
- Teachers provide materials and resources for parents to use at home to support learning in multiple languages or help parents create their own in parent meetings.

## **Standard 4: Teaching Strategies for Meaningful Learning**

**Teachers design and implement varied strategies to promote conceptual understanding and to encourage innovation, creativity, independent inquiry, social cooperation, and exploration within and across disciplines.**

*Children succeed when teachers recognize the need for a variety of teaching approaches to accommodate the different learning styles, temperaments, and personalities of each individual. Teachers use good strategies when they:*

- adapt materials for new uses
- encourage children to make their own learning choices
- respond to children's needs, interests, and diversities
- use a variety of grouping arrangements
- design cooperative learning experiences
- use a range approaches and materials to allow children to construct their own knowledge

*When working with linguistic differences in the classroom, this means:*

- Teachers allow all children to make choices within the classroom and to plan what they will accomplish each day.
- Teachers use different techniques and visuals (e.g., posters, time-charts, videotapes, tapes, hands-on materials, manipulatives, etc.)
- Teachers adapt teaching and materials to meet the needs and interests of individuals.
- Teachers give children the responsibility of working together and problem solving to achieve a common goal even when they may speak different languages. Children who do not speak the official language are allowed to work in small-group activities to ensure their inclusion in the classroom and they are supported when possible by other children or adults who speak their language.
- Teachers provide materials that reflect differences in the classroom in terms of gender, culture, languages spoken, learning differences, and uses in different activities (e.g., family books, etc.).
- Teachers provide materials that are culturally sensitive to promote social inclusion and linguistic diversity.
- Teachers use thematic teaching to integrate curricular areas so that there is consistency and predictability in the usage of the new language.

## **Teacher Standard 5: Planning and Assessment**

**Teachers create plans based on national standards, program goals, and individual needs of children and a systematic approach for observing and assessing each child's progress.**

*Learning requires instructional plans that are based on what is known about each child and that are thoughtfully developed to reflect both curricular goals and interests and abilities of individuals and groups. Teachers who are effective planners:*

- plan a variety of activities to accommodate diversity
- are prepared to modify routines as necessary
- regularly observe, record, and document children's progress
- base educational plans on information gathered
- use a variety of methods for measuring and monitoring individual and group progress
- collect information from a number of people to develop plans for individual children
- inform parents of children's progress and involve them in planning

*When working with linguistic differences in the classroom, this means:*

- Teachers include activities that allow children to be successful where language production in the new language is not required.
- Teachers activate prior student knowledge by incorporating children's interests.
- Teachers solicit information (using interviews or other communication methods) from parents about their expertise and their expectations for their child. They incorporate this information into lesson plans, using outside help if necessary for translation.
- Teachers document children's growth with anecdotal records, narratives, check-lists, and conversations as well as documenting how children spend their time, interact socially, work with materials, use language, and solve problems.

## **Teacher Standard 6: Professional Development**

**Teachers regularly evaluate and strengthen the quality and effectiveness of their work and collaborate with colleagues to improve programs and practices for young children and their families.**

*Children benefit when teachers are lifelong learners. Accomplished teachers continuously reflect, self-assess, and evaluate the effectiveness of their practice. Teachers who make professional development a priority:*

- examine strengths and weaknesses of teaching practices, and formulate a plan for improvement where needed
- actively pursue opportunities for acquiring new knowledge
- work cooperatively with peers

*When working with linguistic differences in the classroom, this means:*

- Teachers are also always exploring the role of own cultural background, biases, and values.
- Teachers are reviewing current research on language acquisition and working with minority-background children and, when appropriate, applying to practice in both content area and instruction.

## **Teacher Standard 7: Social Inclusion**

**Teachers model and promote values and behaviors that support human rights, social inclusion, and the foundation of open democratic civil societies, including protection of the rights of all minorities.**

*Children in Step by Step programs are developing knowledge, skills, and beliefs they will need to live in an open, democratic civil society. Children must learn to consider different perspectives, use critical thinking, work collaboratively, and express differences with respect. To help all children learn to respect themselves and the rights of others, teachers:*

- model and teach respect for the rights of all students
- design activities that encourage students to think about ethical issues
- help students recognize discrimination and stereotyping
- actively address the impact of social exclusion in the school and community
- equip classrooms with materials and visuals that reflect diversity
- provide opportunities for students to interact with and learn about people from diverse backgrounds
- design activities to consider multiple perspectives

*When working with linguistic differences in the classroom, this means:*

- Teachers understand and can explain the advantages of having linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, advocate for them in their school and with parents.
- Teachers communicate with people who speak other languages about their experiences of learning a language and use these experiences to influence their own teaching practices.
- Teachers bring up issues of language diversity in the classroom and have children problem solve about ways that everyone can be understood and heard.
- Teachers help children be advocates for each other in the classroom and communities.

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**APPENDIX**

# Step by Step Child Assessment Instrument

## 3 to 6 Years

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Fall Date \_\_\_\_\_ Spring Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Social And Emotional Development

#### SELF-IDENTITY AND SELF-ESTEEM

*not observed   beginning   developing   consistent*

**1. Describes self, family, and cultural group**

- Describes self
- Tells about family
- Incorporates self and family members into activities (drawings, play, storytelling, etc.)
- Discusses family culture and traditions (food, celebrations, activities, etc.)

**2. Demonstrates a positive attitude toward self and others**

- Interacts with others in the classroom
- Asks for help when it is really needed

**3. Shows confidence in self**

- Willing to try new things
- Practices new skills
- Shows persistence in perfecting a skill

**4. Demonstrates independence**

- Does things for self
- Makes choices in the classroom
- Uses classroom materials to implement original play
- Functions independently as well as receiving support from staff

## **5. Respects rights of self and others**

- Shows respect for self and others
- Demonstrates understanding of fairness
- Uses language to protect his/her ideas, feelings, property, or work

## **SELF-CONTROL**

### **1. Follows rules and routines**

- Knows and follows daily routines
- Explains classroom rules
- Manages transitions without dispute
- Follows rules

### **2. Understands differences between home and school environments**

- Makes the transition between home and school easily
- Can explain why things may be done differently in the two environments

### **3. Expresses feelings**

- Moves from one emotional state to another (angry to calm)
- Expresses anger (or other feelings) in words
- Redirects behavior (with support)
- Recognizes and names various emotions
- Explains the reasons for his/her emotions

## **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS**

### **1. Plays age appropriately**

- Plays alone
- Plays alongside another child (parallel play)
- Uses teacher's suggestions to play more elaborately with peers
- Participates in cooperative play activities

## **2. Cooperates in play and interactions with peers**

- Initiates conversations
- Nonverbally asks to play
- Joins play when asked others or asks "Can I play?"
- Takes turns
- Encourages another child to play
- Contributes and accepts ideas in play
- Has special friend(s)

## **3. Shows empathy**

- Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings (distress, fun)
- Helps others in need

## **4. Understands and respects differences**

- Plays with children of a different gender or from a different cultural background, or with children with special needs
- Shows interest in differences of others
- Uses appropriate language when discussing diversities

## **5. Shares**

- Accepts alternatives
- Gives toys to others
- Allows others to finish
- Asks if wants something rather than just taking it

## **6. Takes responsibility**

- Uses materials in appropriate ways
- Helps clean up
- Completes tasks

## **7. Uses discussion or compromise to resolve conflict**

- Uses language for conflict resolution
- Can resolve conflict without adult support

# Language

## RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

*not observed   beginning   developing   consistent*

### **1. Responds to information**

- Nonverbal language
- Directions that involve one step
- Directions that involve two steps
- Directions that involve three or more steps
- Directions in a song

### **2. Understands and responds to conversations and discussions**

- Understands elementary meaning units (e.g., dog, book, mother)
- Able to integrate and summarize those units
- Relates what is being said to what is already known
- Monitors comprehension (what is?)

### **3. Understands and responds to verbal text**

- Shows appropriate nonverbal reactions or signals
- (using hand motions to follow a song, etc.)
- Joins in reciting familiar text
- Responds to what heard verbally or through action
- (pantomime, drawing, etc.)

## EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

### **1. Speaks in a manner that is clear to listeners**

- Names common objects
- Produces sounds correctly
- Demonstrates appropriate verb usage
- Uses sentences of 3, 5, or 7 words (or more)

### **2. Communicates ideas and feelings with language in a variety of situations**

- Speaks about experiences
- Speaks about feelings
- Communicates with peers and adults
- Articulates personal plans
- Contributes ideas in a group
- Makes predictions

### **3. Experiments with words and sounds**

- Repeats silly words and uses nonsense words that
- sound funny
- Uses rhyming words
- Imitates and repeats letter sounds
- Joins in repetition of part of a story, song, etc.

### **4. Engages in conversation**

- Initiates a conversation
- Waits to share
- Remembers an idea while waiting
- Asks for clarification
- Elaborates
- Stays on topic

### **5. Can construct narrative**

- Tells his/her own story or personal experience
- Retells a well-known story
- Expands sentences or stories
- Sequences events
- Can tell a original story with setting, characters, and plot

### **6. Understands perceptual concepts**

- Uses descriptive words
- Compares and contrasts
- Distinguishes important from unimportant

## **PRE-READING AND LITERACY SKILLS**

### **1. Concentrates on spoken text**

- Shows interest in listening to stories (either read or told)
- Asks to be read to
- Focuses attention for the duration of a story
- Comments on a story when it is finished

### **2. Tells stories using books**

- Describes what is happening in the pictures
- Retells stories using the pictures as a prompt
- Makes up own text and adds ideas

### **3. Shows independence in activities related to literature**

- Visits the reading center
- Pretends to read
- Holds books correctly
- Recreates familiar literature in play activities

### **4. Recognizes the association between spoken and written works**

- Identifies own name
- Identifies classroom labels, others' names and environmental print
- Understands difference between conversation and story text
- Dictates stories to adults
- Identifies different genres

### **5. Understands relationship between letters and sounds**

- Identifies letters and sounds
- Identifies first and last sounds of words
- Identifies rhyming words
- Can segment words into syllables
- Sounds out some words
- Identifies words in text

### **6. Makes associations with and thinks critically about text**

- Connects text with his/her own life
- Connects text with lives of others
- Reflects critically on text, illustrations, and environmental messages

## **PREWRITING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS**

### **1. Demonstrates interest in using writing for a purpose**

- Writes using scribbles
- Uses letter-like formations
- Prints using real letters
- Writes own name

### **2. Demonstrates understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds**

- Uses letters to create words
- Understands the importance of conventional spelling

# Cognitive Development

## MOTIVATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING

*not observed   beginning   developing   consistent*

### 1. Observes and explores

- Explores new materials, toys, etc.
- Manipulates objects to understand their functioning
- Uses more than one sense to gain information about projects

### 2. Demonstrates curiosity and desire to solve problems

- Shows interest in what happens in the classroom
- Tries to discover causes and effects
- Asks questions about the world, events, and materials
- Returns to an activity in which he/she was previously involved
- Persists in solving problems until completed (logic, puzzles, games, etc.)

### 3. Demonstrates constructive thinking

- Uses knowledge and experiences in various activity
- centers (e.g., acting out something in dramatic play)
- Applies information or experience to a new context (e.g., uses information about own family when discussing animal families)
- Searches for objects in a systematic manner
- Finds more than one solution to a problem

### 4. Makes predictions and plans

- Indicates what he/she plans to build or make
- Collects appropriate materials before beginning a task
- Attempts hypotheses and predictions
- Predicts sequences of events

# LOGICAL AND MATHEMATICAL THINKING

*not observed   beginning   developing   consistent*

## **1. Classifies according to attributes**

- Classifies objects according to color, shape, size, etc.
- Collects sets of objects according to function and labels sets (e.g., transportation in one set, animals in another)
- Classifies objects into two or more subgroups by shape, color, size, etc., and labels groups
- Finds items in a group that do not belong and comments

## **2. Arranges things in a series**

- Sees mistakes in sorting
- Arranges objects in order of smallest to biggest
- Inserts a new item in a line of arranged objects

## **3. Reproduces patterns in different ways**

- Repeats and extends simple patterns (blocks, rhythm, etc.)
- Describes the pattern when asked using descriptive words
- Creates patterns independently using various materials

## **4. Reconstructs and recalls the sequence of events**

- Recalls more than three steps in a familiar routine, game, etc.
- Reconstructs the sequence of events yesterday
- Arranges 4 to 5 pictures in a logical sequence and tells a story

## **5. Understands quantitative relationships**

- Counts from 1 to \_\_\_ by rote
- Uses one-to-one correspondence in counting
- Compares larger and smaller, many and few
- Uses comparative words to describe sizes (big, bigger, biggest)
- Uses tools to measure length, weight, volume
- Adds and subtracts within 10 using manipulatives

## **6. Shows awareness of and uses geometric shapes**

- Can solve simple puzzles
- Recognizes and can describe differences in shapes
- Recognizes and names shapes in the environment
- Draws and names primary geometric shapes

## **7. Understands basic spatial relationships**

- Shows understanding of position and direction words
- by following directions
- Uses position and direction words correctly

## **8. Shows awareness of time concepts**

- Knows daily schedule
- Knows time concepts (day/night, morning/evening)
- Understands yesterday, tomorrow, last month, before, after, first, later, etc.
- Knows sequence of days of week, months, seasons

# KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

## **1. Demonstrates general knowledge**

- Knows colors by name
- Identifies by name a wide range of objects in his/her environment
- Tells about her/his house, school, and other locations in the community
- Tells about jobs and roles in the community
- Has awareness of some national holidays

## **2. Seeks information from various sources**

- Asks questions

# Creativity

## CREATIVE APPRECIATION

### **1. Shows interest in and appreciation for his/her own work and work of others**

- Shows her/his work to others
- Comments positively on work of others

**2. Looks for beauty and harmony defined by own criteria**

- Comments on pleasing objects, products, situations
- Comments on what likes about own work and work of others
- Notices patterns and relationships

**3. Demonstrates creative persistence**

- Becomes deeply absorbed in some activities
- Enjoys working in a group or by her/himself
- Forms strong interests

**CREATIVE CAPACITIES**

**1. Shows interest in creative activities**

- Shows positive feelings when engaged in creative activities

**2. Shows imagination**

- Uses materials and ideas in original ways
- Connects past experiences to unknown experiences

**3. Expresses self in a creative manner in a variety of areas**

- Expresses self through art, movement, music, etc.
- Combines things or ideas in new ways
- Demonstrates flexibility when expressing concepts, ideas, feelings

**4. Personal interpretation**

- Gives his/her opinion about ideas and products
- Shows openness to different opinions
- Has a sense of humor

# Physical Development

## GROSS MOTOR

*not observed   beginning   developing   consistent*

### 1. Demonstrates physical strength

- Throws a ball
- Lifts something while sitting
- Climbs on climbing equipment
- Does not tire easily
- Hops on one foot
- Jumps with feet together
- Kicks a ball

### 2. Moves with coordination and balance

- Rolls a ball to a destination
- Clutches a ball or beanbag with both hands
- Runs with control
- Skips with control
- Moves body over, under, and around objects
- Jumps rope
- Stands on one foot

## FINE MOTOR

### 1. Demonstrates control

- Shows hand preference \_\_\_\_\_ (right or left)
- Picks up and inserts objects easily
- Holds writing instruments and scissors with correct grip

### 2. Uses coordinated movement

- Shows hand-eye coordination
- Fits small objects together
- Zips and buttons
- Cuts on a line
- Draws or writes with control

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

*not observed   beginning   developing   consistent*

## **1. Follows everyday health and hygiene practices**

- Washes hands at necessary times
- Understands good dental health habits
- Gets regular rest and exercise
- Shows awareness of nutritious foods

## **2. Shows awareness of safety outdoors and indoors**

- Knows how to cross street safely
- Understands situations that can be dangerous (electricity, fire, medicine, strangers)

## **3. Knows body parts and their functions**

- Knows important body parts and describes their purposes
- Protects parts of body
- Describes physical pain or discomfort and identifies its location

