



**February 2013:
Working with Bilingual Spanish-Speaking Children & Families**

Recent News

This month's most exciting news has been President Obama's proposal of a new plan to expand early childhood education. While we are waiting to see more details about his proposals when the President's budget is released in March, his mentions of early learning in the State of the Union demonstrate commitment to this critical priority. Learn more about his proposal today:

- [Fact Sheet: President Obama's Plan for Early Education for all Americans](#) - see the details of what the President is proposing and a [blog post from ACF](#) about what it means for Head Start
- [President Obama's Plan for Universal Preschool](#) - read or listen to Nobel Laureate Economist James Heckman explaining the research behind high-quality early childhood education, and how the Impact Study has been misused
- [Head Start Leading in Early Childhood Education](#) - an opinion editorial by NHSA's Executive Director, Yasmina Vinci, outlines the importance of early learning opportunities for the most vulnerable children

Resources

[Latino Kids Data Explorer](#)

The National Council for La Raza has prepared a wealth of resources about the experiences of Latino children. The link above connects to their data center where you can find data from your state; for more on research and policy related to meeting the needs of Latino children, check out [Preschool Education: Delivering on the Promise for Latino Children](#).

[Assessing Dual Language Learners' School Readiness](#)

Visit this link for a newsletter from AccELLerate! - the quarterly review from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition - and check out the overview of the FELLA-HS Project (Florida English Language Learners Attending Head Start: A Cultural Analysis) which examined the use of early childhood assessments with a dual language learner population.

Research

Curriculum and Assessment Considerations for Young Children from Culturally, Linguistically, and Economically Diverse Backgrounds

by Linda Espinosa for Psychology in the Schools

This summary of the research on young children from diverse backgrounds addresses how children's backgrounds affect their experience of the classroom; how English language learners acquire their second language; and what considerations need to be made in the assessment of English language learners. The authors also offer key components for features of high-quality early childhood programs, curriculum adaptations, instructional approaches, and assessment recommendations for meeting the needs of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse children.

Dual language and literacy development of Spanish-speaking preschool children

by Mariela Paez, Patton Tabors & Lisa Lopez for the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology

This study addresses the different patterns of language development for a cohort of 4 year olds who were either bilingual (English and Spanish) or monolingual Spanish speakers. Bilingual children attended Head Start or public pre-K programs in Massachusetts or Maryland; monolingual children attended Head Start programs in Puerto Rico. The study examined a range of oral language and early literacy skills at the beginning and end of the Head Start year.

By the end of the year, bilingual children - most of whom had been taught predominantly in English - had made small gains in English literacy skills and oral language but had lost some skills in Spanish relative to age-level peers. Overall, bilingual children had stronger early literacy scores than oral language scores. Bilingual children were significantly behind developmental norms in both languages, and behind monolingual Spanish Head Start children in most areas measured. These findings reflect in part that the environment of instruction affects language development in either language as does cumulative time hearing and interacting in a language. Other research supports the theory that over time, children's developmental gap narrows as they gain language skills. Because of the importance of oral language skill to vocabulary development and later success in reading comprehension, the research team recommends programs consider how to support oral language skills for bilingual children.

Early Growth of Mexican-American Children: Lagging in Preliteracy Skills but not Social Development

by Alma Guerrero, Bruce Fuller, Lynna Chu, Anthony Kim, Todd Franke, Margaret Bridges & Alice Kuo in the Maternal and Child Health Journal

While research has documented that Latino children learning two languages tend to enter school behind white peers in terms of language development, this study takes a closer look at whether the same pattern is true for social-emotional development. The study examined children of Mexican heritage, other Latino heritage, or white children, with data taken from Early Childhood Longitudinal study. Parental demographics differed across these groups, as did home environments and maternal practices. Mexican-American mothers demonstrated warmer parenting behaviors but also lower rates of cognitively-stimulating activities with their children.

At 48 months, Mexican-American children remained significantly behind white children in language and cognitive skills, however there was no significant difference for social-emotional development. Children of other Latino heritage were not as far behind white children in their language and cognition, which may reflect different risk and protective factors. Implications for Head Start programs include the need to focus on supporting parents in engaging in preliteracy skills with their young children and yet supporting and reinforcing behaviors that encourage healthy social-emotional development.

[Preparing Early Childhood Teachers to Work With Young Dual Language Learners](#)

by Marlene Zepeda, Dina Castro & Sharon Cronin for Child Development Perspectives

This short thought piece from several researchers on dual language instruction addresses what teaching staff need to know in terms of language development and cultural diversity and what they need to be able to do to teach and assess dual language learners. The authors also call for a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce for early childhood education.

[Abriendo Puertas: Opening Doors to Opportunity - A National Evaluation of Second-Generation Trainers](#)

by Margaret Bridges, Shana Cohen & Bruce Fuller of the UC Berkeley Institute of Human Development

Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors is a train-the-trainer model that disseminates a parent training approach to empowering parents with tools to be part of their children's learning. This evaluation documents the history of the program, the participants in the evaluation, and the dramatic growth in parents' knowledge about social-emotional skills and development, health, parenting, advocacy and more.

Discussion Questions

Linda Espinosa writes:

For young children from culturally and linguistically diverse groups, their early socialization experiences and the accompanying values acquired in their home and community environment frequently are not those celebrated by the school setting and used as the basis for academic learning and achievement.

1. Do you think this is true in Head Start programs? In your local elementary schools?
2. What could be done to increase the celebration of children's diverse experiences?
3. Do the outcomes for bilingual children in your program align with the findings in the studies above in terms of language and cognitive delays? If not, what interventions or instructional practices have been effective?

Do you know of other recent research that may be of interest to the Head Start field? Do you have other questions, comments or concerns? E-mail Emmalie Dropkin (edropkin@nhsa.org).