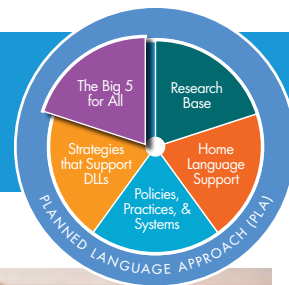# THE BIG 5

HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHING SUPPLEMENTS: INTRODUCTION

High-quality language and literacy experiences in early childhood lay the foundation for all children's development and learning. The Big 5 For All: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement resources offer practices to help education staff plan more individualized, culturally and linguistically responsive, learning experiences for young children who are dual language learners (DLLs) and who also have disabilities or suspected delays. Meeting the individual needs of children supports equitable learning and helps create high-quality inclusion environments that promote a sense of belonging for all children.

These Big 5 For All: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement resources are designed to be used together with the materials at Planned Language Approach (PLA): Big 5 for All to support children's development and learning across five skills that are essential to later success in school:

- Background knowledge
- Oral language and vocabulary
- Book knowledge and print concepts
- Alphabet knowledge and early writing
- Phonological awareness

WHY ARE THE BIG 5 IMPORTANT?

Exposure to more than one language brings many cognitive, linguistic, and social advantages that may help young children with disabilities who are DLLs overcome potential challenges due to their disability and other socioeconomic or environmental risk factors associated with poor academic achievement.[1] When given appropriate access to language, early literacy learning opportunities, and instructional supports, many children with disabilities who are DLLs are able to develop communication and early literacy skills similar to their typically developing peers.[2]

1   Dina C. Castro, "The Development and Early Care and Education of Dual Language Learners: Examining The State of Knowledge," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 29, no. 4th Quarter: 693–98, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.08.003; Elizabeth D. Peña, "Supporting the Home Language of Bilingual Children With Disabilities: From Knowing to Doing," *Journal of Communication Disorders* 63 (September–October 2016): 85–92, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2016.08.001.

2   Gregory A. Cheatham, Rosa Milagros Santos Gilbertz, and Ayfer Kerkutluoglu. "Review of Comparison Studies Investigating Bilingualism and Bilingual Instruction for Students with Disabilities," *Focus on Exceptional Children* 45, no. 3 (November 2012): 2–12, https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v45i3.6681; Veronica P. Fleury, and Erin M. Lease, "Early Indication of Reading Difficulty? A Descriptive Analysis of Emergent Literacy Skills in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder," *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 38, no. 2 (August 2018): 82–93, https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121417751626; Jin Hee Hur, Patricia Snyder, and Brian Reichow, "Systematic Review of English Early Literacy Interventions for Children who are Dual Language Learners," *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 40, no. 1 (January 2020): 6–23, https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121419894623.

As education staff create culturally and linguistically responsive and engaging environments for all children, it is critical they ensure every child has equitable opportunities to learn and thrive. For children with disabilities who are DLLs, this means providing resources and supports that address both special education and bilingual and needs.[3]

The Big 5 align with the Language and Literacy domain of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF). Many of the ELOF skills, behaviors, and concepts are relevant for children with disabilities and can be used as annual goals in a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP). Often, annual goals need to be broken down into smaller, intermediate learning objectives that represent gradual steps leading to the annual goal. For children with disabilities who are also DLLs, the IFSP/IEP goal and objectives should address both English and the child's home language.

WHAT WE KNOW

- Children with disabilities can learn more than one language! Similar to their typically developing peers, children with disabilities who are DLLs have the capacity to learn multiple languages and should have the opportunity to maintain their home language while also learning English.[4]

- Children with disabilities who are DLLs and are taught in both or all their languages benefit more than their peers who are only taught in their second language.[5]

- Children who are DLLs and have a disability need both languages to develop and communicate effectively in all their environments.[6]

- Children who are DLLs and have a disability or a suspected delay may need individualized supports in their home language, in English, in sign language, or in other ways to help them learn and communicate effectively.[7]

3 Peña, "Supporting the Home Language," 2–12.
4 Division for Early Childhood. "DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education." 2014.. http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices.
5 Lillian K. Durán, et al. "Bilingual and Home Language Interventions with Young Dual Language Learners: A Research Synthesis." *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* 47, no. 4 (October 2016): 347–71. https://doi.org/10.1044/2016_LSHSS-15-0030; Maria Adelaida Restrepo, Gareth P. Morgan, and Marilyn S. Thompson, "The Efficacy of a Vocabulary Intervention for Dual Language Learners With Language Impairment," *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research* 56, no. 2 (April 2013): 748–65, https://doi.org/10.1044/1092-4388(2012/11-0173); Gabriela Simon-Cereijido, and Vera F. Gutiérrez-Clellen, "Bilingual Education for all: Latino Dual Language Learners With Language Disabilities," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 17, no. 2 (February 2014): 235–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2013.866630.
6 Cheatham, Santos Gilbertz, and Kerkutluoglu,"Review of Comparison Studies," 2–12; Donia Fahim, and Kelly Nedwick, "Around the World: Supporting Young Children With ASD who are Dual Language Learners." *Young Exceptional Children* 17, no. 2 (June 2014): 3–20, https://doi.org/10.1177/1096250613477870; Mark Guiberson, and Kyliah Petrita Ferris, "Early Language Interventions for Young Dual Language Learners: A Scoping Review." *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* 28, no. 3 (August 2019): 945–63, https://doi.org/10.1044/2019_AJSLP-IDLL-18-0251; Elizabeth D. Peña, and Tamara G. Halle, "Assessing Preschool Dual Language Learners: Traveling a Multiforked Road," *Child Development Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (February 2011): 28–32, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2010.00143.x.
7 Cheatham, Santos Gilbertz, and Kerkutluoglu,"Review of Comparison Studies," 2–12; Fahim and Nedwick, "Around the World," 3–20; Guiberson, and Ferris, "Early Language Interventions," 945–63; Hyejin Park, Gregory Cheatham,and Margarita Jimenez-Silva. 2017, "Supporting Oral Language Development for Dual Language Learners With Disabilities Through Adult Feedback," *Young Exceptional Children* 21, no. 4 (August 2017): 238–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096250617725504.

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INDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION: A TIERED APPROACH

The Head Start Program Performance Standard, 45 CFR §1302.61(a), states, in part: Programs must ensure the individualized needs of children with disabilities, including but not limited to those eligible for services under IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act], are being met and all children have access to and can fully participate in the full range of activities and services.

Education staff must ensure their Head Start program offers high-quality language and literacy experiences to all children. The Planned Language Approach (PLA) Big 5 resources offer staff guidelines and practices for promoting background knowledge, language, and literacy skills that are essential to children's later success in school. For children who are DLLs, staff need to make sure they promote these skills in each of the languages a child is learning. When a child who is a DLL also has a disability or a suspected delay, education staff may need to use individualized instruction to meet the child's learning needs.

Education staff can support every child's learning by working very closely with families and other professionals to fully understand the needs of each child. Individualizing instruction means adjusting instruction to address individual children's abilities and needs. It involves:

- Observing each child to understand a child's needs, interests, and abilities.
- Making a change to an activity or routine to support a child's access and participation.
- Providing more structured and specialized teaching.

A TIERED APPROACH TO INDIVIDUALIZATION

To help education staff provide every child with the type and amount of support the child needs, it is helpful to use a tiered approach framework. In this type of framework, there are three levels or tiers of support, starting at the bottom with practices that are universal and necessary for all children to learn and develop, then moving up with the provision of more specific, individualized practices for children who need additional support.

FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Used together, the [Framework for Effective Practice](#) and the tiered approach to individualization will guide staff in implementing linguistically and culturally responsive practices to support all children in their development of the Big 5 language and literacy skills. The Framework for Effective Practice represents five integral elements of quality teaching and learning for children ages birth to 5 in all program options. The five elements of the Framework for Effective Practice include:

Foundation: Providing nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions and engaging environments

- First Pillar: Implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices

- Second Pillar: Using screening and ongoing assessment of children's skills

- Roof: Embedding highly individualized teaching and learning

- Center: Engaging parents and families

For children who may need additional support, education staff may look more specifically to the roof of the Framework for Effective Practice, which is Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning. The roof of the Framework for Effective Practice provides three tiers of practices to help education staff provide more individualized teaching. These practices intensify in levels of support from the bottom to the top. These practices are:

- **Curriculum modifications.** Education staff make small changes to activities or materials for some children. These changes, called curriculum modifications, will allow a child to participate more fully in daily activities and maximize learning.

- **Embedded teaching.** Education staff provide more structured teaching throughout the day for a few children who may need added practice to make progress on learning objectives.

- **Intensive, individualized teaching.** For a few children, education staff provide more intensive and specialized instruction matched to a child's individual learning objectives.
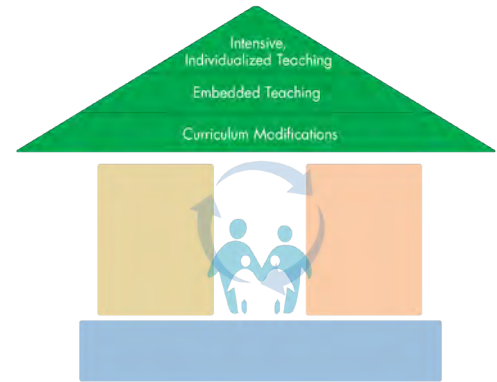
Home visitors can help families use these individualized practices at home. They can work with families to identify and try curriculum modifications and help families plan for offering children more opportunities for practicing skills at home. They can also model strategies and assist families in implementing specialized instruction at home and during group socializations.

PLANNING FOR HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Providing individualized teaching takes planning. This means education staff intentionally provide modifications and individualized supports throughout the day and assess how well they are working. Home visitors can work closely with families to learn more about family cultural and linguistic backgrounds and help them individualize instruction in children's home languages.

- **Using an activity matrix.** Children with disabilities may also require more frequent opportunities to practice routine skills. An activity matrix is a useful tool for planning these opportunities. It enables education staff to plan and organize learning opportunities for children who need extra support at accessing and participating in everyday activities and routines. Home visitors can help families create an activity matrix to plan for using modifications or providing more frequent instruction within their regular daily routines, such as using a child's favorite story at bedtime to teach new vocabulary in the home language.

- **Teach-assess-adjust.** When providing individualized support, education staff constantly observe and assess how well a child is learning a new skill. They watch carefully for the child's response and adjust their level or type of support as needed. One term for this is teach-assess-adjust. Notice that this is a cyclical process—like a cycle of inquiry where you have an idea, test it in practice, and use the results to make the idea better—or to change it. Home visitors can encourage families to share their observations on their child's learning.
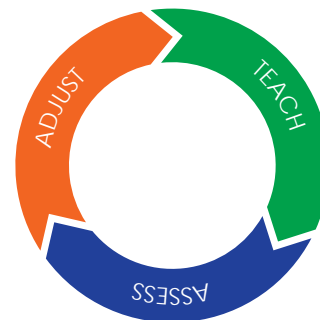
Teach: Provide support.

Assess: Observe how a child responds to your teaching.

Adjust: If the child is progressing, continue with your teaching plan.

If a child is not progressing as expected, change your strategy.

If a child has accomplished a learning goal, move on to a new goal.

For more information on making modifications, using an activity matrix, and other practices in the Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning section of the House, see the 15-minute In-service Suites on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website .

GETTING STARTED

Review information at Planned Language Approach (PLA): Big 5 for All for All to make sure you have high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive practices in place that promote language and early literacy learning for all children in your program. For children with disabilities who are also DLLs, look for more information in *The Big 5 For All: Children with Disabilities* resources. You'll find practical strategies and examples of modifications and supports to use with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. *The Big 5 For All: Children with Disabilities* resources include:

- Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement

- Background Knowledge: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement

- Book Knowledge and Print Concepts: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement

- Oral Language and Vocabulary: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement

- Phonological Awareness: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement

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