

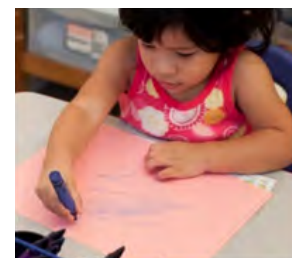


SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Children who are dual language learners (DLLs) are learning a new language while still developing their home language. It is important to ask families what exposure children have had to written language in English or their home language. Do parents or other family members read books in their home language? Do children live in a neighborhood where store signs or food in a grocery store are in their home language? Do parents or other family members write notes or shopping lists in their home language?



Take a moment to remember—writing is not just about learning how to spell and use punctuation (although these are of course important skills typically developed after the preschool years). Writing is fundamentally about a child's ability to effectively communicate ideas, feelings, theories, and hypotheses about relationships and how the world works. When adults intentionally support it, writing can support learning across all domains—math, literacy, science, social and emotional, and physical and motor development. Writing also promotes creativity and persistence, which are important school readiness skills.



Writing is a perfect time for children who are DLLs to practice their developing language skills across ELOF domains. There are many ways to support families who have children who are DLLs. Here are just a few:

1. Support parents as they encourage their child to write in whichever language they choose. Encourage parents to accept all levels of writing (the earliest form is drawing).

- Help parents figure out which stage of writing the child is in. It may be different in each language! Remind parents that when they write down what a child says, she may use two languages. As parents write what their child says, have them record their exact words.
- If possible, learn about any differences between writing English and the home language (e.g., different characters; writing from right to left). This will help you understand what the child knows about writing.
- Children's writing errors are learning opportunities. Error-free writing is not the goal or expectation for young children. Support parents as they encourage their child's invented spelling (which could be full of errors). It shows us that children understand how letters and sounds work together. For children who speak phonetic languages at home (such as Spanish)—as in, the way the word sounds is the way it is spelled—spelling in English can be challenging, because letters can make different sounds.
- Help parents understand which stage of writing their child is in. It will help you understand what supports to provide parents to help children progress.



2. Provide print materials in the child's home language.

- Make sure children have many opportunities to see their language in writing, such as books and pictures and labels.