

PLANNED LANGUAGE APPROACH

A planned language approach (PLA) is a comprehensive, systemic, research-based way for Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care programs to ensure ideal language and literacy services for children who speak only English and for those who are dual language learners (DLLs).

All children are language learners, and some children are learning more than one language. Children who are learning English as an additional language are the fastest growing population in the country. It's essential that program staff can meet their unique language needs. A PLA includes varied strategies and resources to help staff ensure meaningful language and literacy learning in both English and children's home languages. A PLA includes language and literacy practices that work best when teaching children who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

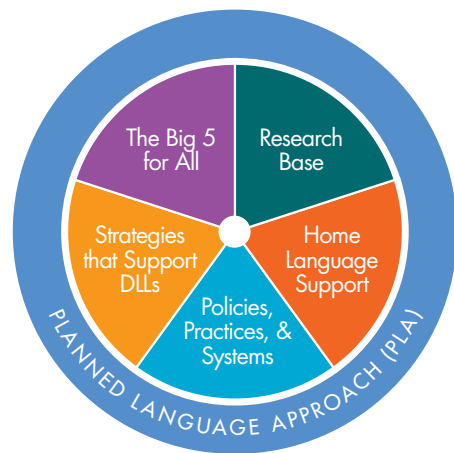


WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A PLA?

There are five key components to a PLA that programs can use to implement policies and practices that support children's language and literacy skills. Within each component, there are resources and materials designed to support program leaders, families, as well as education, family and community engagement, human resources, interpretation, and translation staff. The five components are listed below.

A **research base** in children's language development in one or more languages.

Home language support as the



foundation for English language skills.

Strategies to support DLLs so they can thrive in their home language(s) and English.

Policies, practices, and systems that sustain language and literacy development throughout all aspects of the program.

The Big 5 for All, which addresses the five key elements of early language and literacy development children need to succeed in school:

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

Who can use a PLA?

Program leaders can use the PLA to make decisions about program policies, curriculum, and instruction that are based on key language development research, prenatal to adult.

Program leaders and education staff can use a PLA to examine how they use language and literacy practices in all areas of the curriculum. For example, through observation or video feedback, staff can reflect on how they are incorporating the Big 5 into all areas of their curriculum throughout the day.

Home visiting staff can use a PLA to encourage families to incorporate language and literacy practices in their everyday interactions, such as taking a walk or going to the grocery store.

Program leaders and education staff can use a PLA with **children who are dual language learners**. For example, they could incorporate children's cultural traditions into songs, rhymes, and books. They might also model language by repeating what children say and adding a new word to help increase their vocabulary.

Professional development providers, including coaches, can use a PLA in staff development trainings.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO USE A PLA?

Using a comprehensive, coordinated approach to language and early literacy development helps families and education staff execute practices that children need to become successful readers and writers in elementary school. Research provides a clear picture of the many aspects of early language development that support children’s ability to read. The Big 5 is one component of PLA that supports these efforts.

Because a PLA is designed to work with all children and families, it also can support DLLs. A PLA integrates culturally and linguistically responsive practices that meet the needs of diverse children and families. Research shows that children who are DLLs are more successful in school when they develop strong language and literacy skills in both their home language and English. Bilingualism and biliteracy have important cognitive, social-emotional, learning, and global benefits. Implementing strategies from a PLA often supports children’s home language and English skills.

Where can a PLA be used?

A Planned Language Approach (PLA) can be used in any type of early childhood program, including

- Early Head Start, Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start;
- child care programs, including center-based, family child care, and public pre-K programs; and
- home visiting programs.

HOW CAN A PLA SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES?

A PLA provides resources and strategies for education staff and parents to support language and literacy development at each developmental stage. It offers handouts, guides, organizational tools, and videos to use with families and with program leaders in staff development—including education staff and human resource professionals. The comprehensive set of resources align with the [Dual Language Learners Program Assessment](#) that assists Head Start, child care, or pre-K programs to assess their management systems and services to ensure the full and effective participation of children who are DLLs and their families and helps programs make sure they have integrated culturally and linguistically responsive practices for all children.

A PLA works with any curriculum, including home-based, and offers strategies to address different components of curriculum. A PLA supports implementation of high quality language and literacy development at the system and program level. A PLA can also help support programs as they implement the following:

- **Head Start Program Performance Standards.** For Early Head Start and Head Start programs, a PLA can help programs meet HSPPS that require a program needs a coordinated approach to ensure the full and effective participation of children who are DLLs and their families.
- **A state’s early learning and development standards and/or the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.** A PLA’s comprehensive approach can help education staff in early childhood programs use research-based strategies to support all children’s language and literacy skills, including children who are DLLs.
- **Quality adult-child interactions.** Many early childhood programs assess the quality of teacher-child interactions using standardized tools such as the CLASS, ITERS, ECERS-E, HOVRS, or the ELLCO. Implementing a PLA can help strengthen these interactions by encouraging teachers and families to use strategies outlined in the Big 5 to boost children’s language and literacy development.
- **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).** Nearly every state and territory has either a local, regional, or statewide QRIS. Implementing a PLA may help early learning programs meet their state’s QRIS standards in multiple ways, by implementing language and literacy practices, boosting family engagement, or addressing the needs of children and families who are DLLs.

- **Family engagement.** A PLA has resources and strategies to help families work with their children to improve their language and literacy development. Whether it is through a home visitor or teaching staff at an early learning program, a PLA can help connect the program and family by supporting their child's English and home language development.
- **Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).** Program administrators at the systems level may need information on how early care and education programs in their state meet the needs of children and families who are DLLs. A coordinated approach to language and literacy development with research-based strategies is one way that early care and education programs can work with their state administrators to address this CCDBG requirement.

Click [here](#) for more information on PLA, including the collection of resources.