Language and Literacy for Preschoolers

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hey everyone. Welcome to Teacher Time. We're so glad that you're here with us today. And if it's your first time—I saw some new people in the chat box—we're really glad that you're able to join us today. We have a great hour planned for you to talk about preschool language and literacy today. This is our second webisode of the preschool series.

I'm Judi Stevenson-Garcia, and I'm from the National Institute, sorry, the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're excited to be here with you today specifically to focus on preschoolers and how they develop language and literacy, and this includes all children, even those who are dual language learners.

I'm here today with Dr. Treshawn Anderson. Treshawn recently joined our team here at the National Center and she's going to be co-hosting our Teacher Time webisodes going forward. So we're excited to have her join our Teacher Time team.

Hi, Treshawn.

Treshawn Anderson: Hi guys, I'm so happy to be here and to join you guys all with this Teacher Time. This is great. So, like Judi said, we are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning and we're excited to be here today to talk to you about the development of language and literacy for all preschoolers, including children who are dual language learners. We've heard from many of you over the past few weeks on MyPeers on how you support language and literacy development in English, children's home languages, and tribal languages as well, which is great. And so your interest in supporting language and communication really inspired us to focus this episode on two preschool sub-domains in the Early Head Start—the Head Start, sorry, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or the ELOF, we'll just say ELOF, that's much easier to say. So today we're talking about vocabulary and phonological awareness.

Judi: And just to set the context up, a reminder, we call this Teacher Time, when we use the term teacher, we're really talking about all of the adults in early learning settings who are working with young children. So any adults who work in group care, teachers, and family child care providers, and we know we have a huge variety of roles represented in our audience today. So we recognize that there's a wide variety in the types of learning environments for preschoolers that you may work in a classroom with all 3-year-olds, or you may be a family child care provider who supports children with a range of ages.

But we hope that the information that we give you will be useful for you in your setting and in your role, and that you'll find the resources really helpful. So we're hoping this hour will be as interactive as possible, so keep chatting, adding comments and questions, and we'll do our best to address them as we can.

And Treshawn and I like to hang around a little bit after the webisode too, so, you know, if we run out of time and there's some more questions popping up, we'll stick around and we can chat with you even after the webisode is finished.

Treshawn: So before we go into today's topic, and especially for those that are coming in new with us, we'll quickly remind you about our schedule for Teacher Times this year. So we have eight Teacher

Time episodes total: four infant/toddler, four preschool, and today's show marks our second preschool Teacher Time webisode, so welcome back for those that have come back. Each episode features real-time challenges and successes that teachers have shared with us and we ask teachers and family child care providers who work daily with preschoolers to tell us about their challenges and successes in supporting children's growth and development. So we're using those stories this season as a starting point for our discussions. Each episode highlights culturally and linguistically responsive practices that support all young children's development in learning and this includes children who are dual language learners. And we also share some examples of highly individualized teacher practices to help you provide an inclusive environment for children with suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities.

Judi: OK. So, let's jump into our topic for today. So, as Treshawn mentioned, we're going to focus on vocabulary and phonological awareness. So these are just two components of the larger language and literacy domain of the ELOF, but they're connected to each other and you'll start to see the connections as we go through the different concepts. But we wanted to just focus, 'cause language and literacy is so broad that it's really hard to talk about in just an hour, so we're going to just focus on these two components.

So, to start off, I see lots of you are still chatting and saying, "hello" in the chat box, but if you want to just type in really quickly on the chat box, let us know why you think vocabulary is so important for preschoolers. You know, I have a preschooler at home and I know, Treshawn, you have kids on either side of the preschool years.

But it's been so interesting for me to see just the growth and the vocabulary of my 4-year-old this year and just kind of how he's so interested in playing with new language and the new words that he comes out with. Sometimes I'm like, "I didn't even know you knew that word. How did you know that word?" But I see some response, social development, yeah. Vocabulary is so important for preschoolers, their foundation for learning. Yes, it gives them tools to organize and understand their thoughts. Wow. Great ideas and emotions. Fantastic. It gives them a voice. Right.

Treshawn: That's important right now for my 2-year-old. He wants to express himself.

Judi: The expression of emotion, too, I think is really important, right? Being able to say how you're feeling is huge. Increased thought process and express themselves. Yeah, this is great. You guys are talking faster than I can hear you, [Laughing] I mean, than I can read. Increases the child's language, social development. Yeah, these are all really important factors around vocabulary development.

So we definitely want to think, when we're talking about vocabulary, you know, just some of the main points. I mean, as some of you have mentioned, we know from the research that a large vocabulary is important because it's the foundation for children learning to read and understanding what they read.

Some of you even said that that it's foundational for so much of their learning. And when the ELOF talks about vocabulary development, the expectation there is really that by the end of preschool, children will understand and use a wide variety of words for a variety of purposes. And that may seem kind of like hard to put your finger on. Like what does a variety mean? We're going to talk a little bit about that today. But what we do know is that preschoolers really have a vast, a really wide capacity to use interesting language. They take in new and interesting words, they can create complex sentences, and they can understand complex information.

And as somebody mentioned in the chat, they use it to organize their thinking about the world. And so we offer that to them as adults who work with them, we help them to begin to understand how vocabulary can do this for them. And they're beginning to understand word categories and relationships among words. Like they understand, you know, that, like, a hammer and a saw are tools, those are words that we would use if we could categorize them as tools. Or like shape names, right, they would understand that a hexagon and a cylinder, those are shape name words. And so they're beginning to categorize their understanding of how these words go together.

And we also know that children who are dual language learners are sometimes, are building vocabulary in two languages, and sometimes even more than two languages, and it's important to remember that the words they understand and say may be different in their home language and in English. So they may understand more words in English than they're able to say and they more understand more words in their home language than they're able to say or vice versa. So it's really important to make sure that we're communicating to families about the vocabulary development that children are undergoing at home so we can make sure we understand the whole child.

They also, dual language learners, also show different patterns of English acquisition, depending on how long they've been exposed to English, what their abilities are, and the support or exposure that they're getting at home and the development of their home language. So we want to make sure that we're paying attention to the nuances and don't expect necessarily the same—the same development in a home language or for a child who's a dual language learner than we might expect for someone who's only learning English. And we know for all children, the experiences that they have throughout the day allow them to build their vocabulary.

So from the time you start working with them, they say good morning to the time they leave, there really is ... We're giving them many opportunities and learning experiences to build on their vocabulary. This can happen through reading books or through engaging in math or science. I don't know how many of you maybe know preschoolers who know all of the different names of dinosaurs. My 4 year old knows all the different names of dinosaurs and it's amazing to me—he's just added those to his vocabulary, words that I don't even have in my vocabulary right now.

And so they understand the relationships between these words they're starting to make sense of words, maybe such as opposites, right? So they understand that there can be relationships between words. The opposite of up is down; the opposite of big is small. And so they're building their vocabulary and building their relationships among the words. And finally, you know, we

want to make sure that we are remembering that our response to children and our interactions with children still needs to be very individualized and so, depending on children's language background, they may have needs that are different and also if children are diagnosed with disabilities or have a suspected delay, they may need additional supports or modifications depending on what their individual learning needs are.

So, for example, some children may need listening devices to help them hear spoken language better. Some children need extra support in expressing language. So it may be helpful to learn to sign some words that are meaningful to the child. We just want to make sure that we are meeting each child where they're at so that we can build on their vocabulary and on their knowledge and skills. Remember, the goal of this is really to support our preschoolers in preparing to be successful learners in school and that's what vocabulary will do for them.

Treshawn: Yeah, and as a teacher, you know, we really have an important role to play. You expose children to interesting and new words and you help children begin to learn and use these words to express themselves, so we're going to watch some teachers—watch some videos of teachers as they support children's vocabulary development. And as you watch, tell us the strategies you see her using and how the children respond. Use the chat box to do that.

[Video begins]

Educator: You know, a laboratory is the room that scientists use to do experiments. So your ... The sensory table, you guys, that was your laboratory for your experiment that you guys were doing.

Child: We weren't at the sensory table.

Educator: Oh, were you making the—were you making the magic goop at the table? So you were using the table for your laboratory.

Child: I have a laboratory! [Video ends] [Another video begins]

Teacher: Who knows this body part here?

Children: Antenna!

Teacher: What are these body parts?

Children: Antenna!

Teacher: Antenna. So, let's put our antennas up. We're moving our antennas around to figure out what's going on around us. Hmm. Oh, I touched a rock. I need to move back. I feel a vibration, something is coming. Those are the antennas. [Video ends]

Treshawn: Yes, I see people saying, "Making real-world connections and using your laboratory." Imagine what a kid feels like if they know that they have in their own laboratory at school, that'd be awesome.

Judi: I know, right?

[Laughing]

Treshawn: I like how she's acting out the antennas, too. That's how you make it real. If you just say "antenna," that just sounds weird, but then you put it out and the kids know, "Oh yeah, those things that stick out of their heads, I know what that is." Really making it real for them.

Judi: That connection to the real world I think is so important. Do an action or show pictures, right? So the one teacher was using a word in a book, right, and connecting it to the child's real experience in the classroom, and the other teacher was using a book but also demonstrating what the antenna actually did—visual with the vocabulary.

Treshawn: And Georgia said gestures and words for DLL, I think that's really important because we can use all the words and show them the words in the book, but really making it real really makes that connection for children with them, dual language learners.

Judi: And I love that she expanded it. She's like "Oh, I ran into a rock," right? "Oh, I feel a vibration," right? So it's not just this is what antenna, but this is what they do, which is, I think that was really great. I thought that was great, acting that out. Yeah, visual along with vocabulary, yeah definitely. This is great. Let's take a few minutes and outline some of the key points around phonological awareness just to kind of set the stage for that. So we know that preschoolers are really beginning to grasp how written language is structured into sound and symbols.

They play rhyming games and they learn the names of letters and associated sounds. And phonological awareness is also mentioned in the ELOF and the expectation there for preschool children is that by the end of preschool, they're going to start demonstrating awareness that the spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound. And again, that might sound a little bit odd. Like, what does that mean? But when you think about what preschoolers do with language, and again I'll use my 4 year old as an example, we like to play this game where we pretend that somebody other than him has done something exceptional. Some days he'll eat like three bowls of pasta for dinner and I'll be like, "Wait a second, what did you do with Nico? You must be Bico."

And he thinks it's hilarious, there's this other kid named Bico, you know, who ate all of this because I know Nico would never eat all of this pasta. But we play these little games with his name and I'll just change the first letter and that's just, those games are what help children understand, like, "Wait a second, my name isn't Bico, it's Nico," right? And so he's understanding that there's a difference in the first sound of his name. And so kids start to play with language that way and so by the end of preschool, we really want them to be understanding that you can ... That—that words are made up of smaller segments of sound and really start to make the connections between the sounds and the words.

And we're going to share with you today, our guest expert is going to talk to you a little bit more about strategies that you can use to support children's development in this area. And so it's important to remember that supportive vocabulary is not just about using big words like antenna like we just saw, but using a variety of words to intentionally expand their dictionaries in meaningful and engaging ways.

So we can repeat what children say and then offer an extension or ask a follow-up question. And this back and forth show children that we're interested in what they have to say and that it

builds their confidence in using the language that they know. And so, for example, my 5 year old, of course she's out of the preschool range, but, when, you know, you ask her about her day, she gives me the good old, "Good," but, you know, don't worry, I ask all the follow-up questions to get the real juice about her day. And then likewise, my toddler's very into talking about his day at a fundamental level. And so, you know, when we're doing puzzles and he's used the letter M, he'll say, "M for Maximus" and so that's really expanding on he's using that written language "M" to really symbolize his name which is awesome, and, you know, we do all the letters that way.

So one thing to remember is because all children are learning to use language to express themselves, we want to leave plenty of room for it. So while repeating and extending, it's also important to be aware of the sounds unique to children who speak a language other than English or sounds that may be difficult for children to express. Especially if they have only spoken their home language for like the first three or four years of their life. I know my daughter still has a problem saying her R's. That's kind of a hard letter to say. But anyway, it's also important to communicate with families about whether and how they play with language in their home, like do they have silly word games, can we say Nico Bico at school. Do we keep an eye out for, sorry, and then we also want to keep an eye out on how we support their phonological awareness.

And so we're going to watch another video of teachers supporting children in this area. And as she interacts with young children, keep an eye out on how this teacher supports phonological awareness and then tell us in the chat box again what you've noticed.

[Video begins]

Teacher: I'm going to give you word, and you're going to tell me what the beginning sound is. "S," Diego? "F?"

Class: "F." "N" or "M?"

Class: N. Are you ready Mr. Brian? All right. Can you see it? The word is nose. Nose.

Class: "N!"

Teacher: I hear Casey. Casey, what's the answer, Casey?

Casey: M.

Teacher: M. Let's see. Is it mose? Fose? Nose? So, what's the first letter?

Class: N!

Teacher: N. Did we get it right? Correcto, correcto. Good job.

[Video ends]

Treshawn: So to help us think about effective teaching practices that support vocabulary and phonological awareness, we invited some experts to share some important information and strategies with us.

So we've got Carrie Germeroth and she is one of our detail partners and was a guest expert on the last season's infant and toddler Teacher Time episode, and then we'll have Dr. Linda

Espinosa who's a member of our research to practice board and professor emeritus at the University of Missouri Columbia. She was our language and literacy guest expert on the last season's pre-K Teacher Time and they both got together to discuss vocabulary and emerging literacy, so let's watch. And as you watch, please remember to add comments or questions in the chat box.

[Video begins]

Carrie: Can you share a little bit about what we can do to support preschooler's language development?

Dr. Linda Espinosa: Of course, and thank you for having me. I think language development, vocabulary development, is one of our primary tasks as a preschool teacher, is to really help children learn and use appropriate levels of language and again, this falls under the category of oral language development, which is fundamental to everything that comes later in school.

So I guess the thing that we know now about speaking with children, because we've known for a long time that speaking with children is really important, have conversations with children, expose children to words ...

Carrie: Printed environment.

Linda: ... to the printed word, to rare words, to complicated sentences. But it's not just that. It's not just the number of words that we use with children, but it's that interactive quality so that sort of responsiveness to the child's interest and picking up on if the child's building the block structure three blocks high or whatever, and then we start to help that child build up both the conceptual understanding of let's say he's building a garage or a library or whatever, and we start building up that conceptual vocabulary with extending the language. But it's in response to something that the child is telling us he is interested in.

Or if it's a girl, if it's developing a menu and that might require writing out some words with the menu. That attaches to a desire to recreate a scene that she has been in. And so that it's not just bombarding children with language and language and language because we've heard this forever, but it's really about tapping into existing levels of knowledge and then using our adult expertise to extend that to these new levels of complex words which maybe they haven't understand like, "Oh you're stomping out of the room now. Stomping out of the room." And then maybe we can physically act that out. This is what stomping means.

Or somebody has made a picture of a certain type of a dinosaur, rhinoceros, or whatever, and that's a new word. So we make sure that they have an opportunity to see that in a picture. So they see that picture, if you don't have the object there right in front of you, they start to attach these things across multiple domains—visual, sensory, oral—put them all together, and that's how then that they extend that vocabulary and knowing the meaning of that word.

Carrie: OK, I love all the different ideas that you just shared. I love the idea of really picking out those rare words and, you know, connecting, again, with things that are meaningful for children. The nice thing is that all of these are things that teachers and providers and our viewers are probably already doing in their classroom that are very connected to the language modeling, the mention of the class, as well as concept development. So, you know, it's really

nice to see some of those connections across and hopefully things that people are already doing and just reinforcing that. What about some specific strategies to support phonological awareness?

Linda: Phonological awareness, which again, is the child's ability to understand the certain sounds are consistent and always stay the same and they build into words. Like I got a seal here. Seal starts with "S" and builds into the word seal, so seal's attached to -eal. And that beginning letter, S, sounds like lots of other beginning letters and we might start to focus on that. Here's my seal. Is this a silly seal? Well, how would we know if this is a silly seal? Is there anybody in here who's name starts like seal? Do we have a Sally in the classroom? You know, and so maybe we have a Sally, but to start to attach those sounds to letters and letters are the beginnings of words, and that's that whole phonological awareness.

So, if during infancy, we emphasize the sounds themselves just alone and now they're attached to these words, and then those sounds are also attached to letters. And then the letters start to come into play because they always sound the same. Well, except in English. Not always, because irregularity in English. But that they help you then with the process, eventually, as decoding so that children start to pick up this relationship between sound, symbol, and we can do that through these really creative and engaging games that children like to play, like matching letters, like finding rhymes, like doing the alliterations, choo-choo-choo, what else can? And then they come up with words or even silly words, make up words.

Carrie: Fun, games, yes.

Linda: Right, right, but that they get those connections between the sounds and they start to— they start to rearrange them in different ways, meaning they're in control of those sounds and they can start to create.

Carrie: And I assume books as well are obviously another great avenue to support phonological awareness.

Linda: Of course, and "Brown Bear, Brown Bear," our favorite. One of our favorite with a very repetitive pattern so that they know that this has lots and lots of alliteration and pictures.

Carrie: Very interactive, too.

Linda: Very interactive so children will read it to you, of course, eventually. Brown bear, brown bear, brown bear. They love to say that: brown bear, brown bear, brown bear, you know, to repeat those sounds. And then what do you see? Which again, extends their memory so they can make predictions about what's going to happen further on in the book. All these things are aspects of literacy that we're building up through very appropriate levels of use of books to help them with book handling, to help them with book usage, and to, in my opinion, a very strong part of this is to help them develop this love of books. [Video ends]

Judi: So that was really—a really helpful video. I saw just from reading your comments, I can see that some of you got some really great ideas about strategies for using in your classroom or in whatever learning setting that you're working in. Acting out vocabulary words like when a child was stomping out of the room, it'll help the child understand what their action is. I think that's fantastic. And somebody mentioned something about, I think it was Joanne, all learning takes

place in the context of relationships. So what she's saying is making so much sense. Children learn more when you are connected to them in the moment, right? And I think one of the things she mentioned was kind of this like going on and on and on about you don't want to overwhelm just with like this vocabulary and talking that doesn't mean anything. We have to build relationships with them and really connect to what they're interested in so that when we support their vocabulary, that it has meaning for them.

So we're going to watch a video, a couple videos, of teachers using some of the strategies that Linda and Carrie talked about. So, as you watch, go ahead and keep chatting in the chat box about the strategy that you're observing. So these are going to be specific videos kind of showing teachers using some of the strategies that Dr. Espinosa just mentioned. So, let's watch.

[Video begins]

Educator: What do you see? They are the same. Or what do you see, they are different? So today, in a circle time, we review about the life cycle that we talk about before, but today we have green peas and then the dry ones, so we have the children to compare about it. See this on here?

Class: No.

Educator: Savannah, you want to give it a try? This will help the children increase their observational skills and inquiry skills, and also they can express their ideas about what they see. What is inside here and what is inside here? They all so, so, so. So we say we all have ... [Speaking native language] So when they looking into a different kind of peas, I was expecting that they be able to clear out the difference between two of them and be able to give me some words describing what they see.

Child: But sometimes the peas not look just like the brown peas.

[Video ends] [Another video begins]

Educator: Friends, would you like to stomp your name or would you like to be a cheerleader for your names? Cheerleaders? Help me read the names. Who's next? Sebastian. What letter does it start with?

Class: "S!"

Educator: "S," and it sounds like "S" is for Sebastian. Sebastian. OK, what letter does Nicole start with?

Class: "N!"

Educator: N and it sounds like? "N," Andrew yes, you did it. Everybody go "Nnnn." ♪ N is for Nicole ♪ ♪ N, N, Nicole ♪ Who's next?

Class: Bridget! What letter does it start with? It sounds B." B. ♪ B is for Bridget ♪ ♪ B, B, Bridget ♪ Who's next? Is it Natalia? First you put the "M," then you put the "-elanie." Put it all together and you have ... Melanie! and it starts with what letter? What letter does Melanie start with? "M." Who's next? Read it—read it, Sebastian. It's right here, look.

Child No. 1: Jayden!

Child No. 2: Jayden.

Educator: First you put the "J," then you put the "-ayden." Put it all together and you have ...

Class: Jayden.

Educator: Jayden.

[Video ends]

Judi: Both of those videos, I think, were really interesting for two different things. In the first video, we had the teacher really supporting children through using science to support their use of new vocabulary and so she was asking them to compare, which I thought was really interesting. And you see the children—and thanks Sandy for helping us with the translation there about one of the children mention something about a seed—and so the teacher responded and validated his use of his home language, which I thought that was really great.

And the second video around phonological awareness, I think it's a game, it's a transition activity, all of the kids are involved, and it kind of goes back to what I was saying about being playful with Nico's name, right? You know, some of the children thought they knew whose name was on the card but she pointed them to the first letter and the sound of the first letter and combined it with the rest of the name, which I thought was ... It helps all of the children be successful and she even validated the one child who got the letter sounds right, which is something that she noticed that maybe he hasn't done before. And you can tell in both of these classrooms that there's a really warm, trusting environment that's been set up. This is a safe place for children to explore both using new vocabulary and exploring sounds.

And both teachers are responsive to the children's observations and their questions. And I think also what's really great, especially in classrooms where you have dual language learners, the teachers are, you know, give time for children to respond, especially in the first video, she waited for children to be able to express themselves, which is really important, and I think it's important for us to remember when we're talking with young kids that they are really young and sometimes, especially when they're trying to use new vocabulary, we need to just give them that moment and wait—a little wait time for them. And sometimes the time feels like forever, but really to wait if we can, and sometimes in a large group setting, it's harder to do that, but to give them that time so that they can say what they need to say.

And I also noticed, and some of you noticed this in the chat box as well, that the teacher uses self-talk and parallel talk so she'll describe what she's doing or she'll describe or repeat what a child says, or talk while she's doing something as well. So those are other strategies that teachers can use to model language use for very young children. And so looking at these two dual language classrooms with dual language learner in it makes me think of some of the unique strategies they might need to put into place to support dual language learners and we know that lots of you work with children who are dual language learners.

So we also asked Dr. Espinosa, while she was sitting down with Carrie, for some specific teaching strategies for supporting young dual language learners and their development of language and literacy. So, as you listen to this next video, we want to make sure, sorry, that you are sharing with us in the chat box maybe strategies that you've used for working with dual

language learners. I know some of you have already shared some of your strategies. And then listen to Dr. Espinosa's strategies and let us know if there's anything new there for you that kind of sponsored some new thinking for you.

So, let's watch.

[Video begins]

Linda: For all English language—or dual language learners—we want to make sure that they have opportunities to learn to be exposed to print, be exposed to the same levels of sophisticated language in their home language, so that that home language acts kind of as a—a parallel path to acquiring and becoming proficient in English. And sometimes teachers don't understand that if children are read the same book in Spanish, or any other language, that that is just as effective to helping them acquire English as reading it in English is more effective that they don't understand English but it's as effective as any literacy activity you might do in English. So helping them learn to read if you have the capacity to helping them to learn these skills in their first language, by either if you have staff that can speak that language or you can enlist ...

Carrie: Community, somebody in the community here.

Linda: Anybody, anybody. There are places that have been really successful. But you would be surprised at how many community resources there are to help you achieve this goal of literacy with children who are dual language learners. So I would say get that language into the classroom, help that child have some experiences in that language, continue to use music, continue to use all of your good rich language experiences, and from what we know now it is probably best to separate them out.

So if you have your support system in the child's home language, you have some labeling in that, you have some books available that can be read, have that time separate from when the child is in an English-only setting, say the teacher is reading a book in English or the teacher is conducting a large group in English. That should be in English, and it should be bounded by English with maybe a few comprehension strategies. But when they're speaking in their home language, in typically a very small group with an adult to support that, keep that in the home language. So we kind of keep the two languages separate throughout the day and the child makes those connections to bring them together, with one exception. I can't go away without—without mentioning this.

One of the things that we have learned that helps children early on, say when they're 3 and they're just being exposed to English, helps them learn that English has its own structure, and its own rules and its own sounds is to develop these cognate charts, or charts with the same word. Telefono, it means telephone in Spanish, it means telephone in English and it sounds the same. So if you pictures on both sides and you color code it, so this is telefono in Spanish, this is telephone in English, and you put a picture in it and you color code each of the languages, they make those connections that these sounds are not unique to that one language, and that can expand their language by as much as 30% right off the bat because there are so many cognitives—cognates between Spanish and English that it really does expand their ability to express themselves which might take quite a while.

Carrie: And this is all outlined, I believe, in the Planned Language Approach and information that the viewers can then go and find some more information about how to specifically do just what you're saying.

Linda: Right. I have really barely skimmed the surface of what's in this plan. It's a wonderful comprehensive approach toward programs adapting to the needs of families and children who are not native English speakers. And it's very comprehensive; it's very wonderful. But I have really just skimmed the surface.

Carrie: Of course. Well thank you so much for skimming the surface and providing us with just a few little good nuggets of information that we can take back, and hopefully start using right away. [Video ends]

Treshawn: Well I know Linda said there that she was just skimming the surface and we could really spend a day talking about how to support dual language learners and their language and literacy development, but I hope that you found Linda's explanation there to be helpful. And if you need additional information about supporting dual language learners, you definitely can look on the ECLKC for more information. It's called the Planned Language Approach. If you look on ECLKC, you can find it. And there's lots of information there.

What's highlighted here is just two little pieces or two components of supporting children. And this actually works, the tips in here work for all children, it's not just about dual language learners. But it's a guide, there's extra ideas about teaching supports, there's examples of what these practices will look like in the classroom, and then there's lots of different resources for supporting dual language learners. So if you're interested, you definitely want to check that out.

So, let's just take a few minutes to talk about the context for all of this learning. This, as so many of you have mentioned, the consistency in the relationship that we develop with young children, and the rich language interactions that you have with them throughout the day, help them to learn to use language and new words to express their curiosity about things, the materials that they're using, and the people and the experiences that they have in their environment.

And as children grow, they begin to show increasing interest in and curiosity about the world around them. I had my son, just the other day, he asked me, we were at a stoplight and he asked me, we were in the car and he asked why we went when the light turned white, and I was like, "The light doesn't turn white, the light turns green." But he was paying attention to—because he was sitting in the backseat of the car—he was paying attention to the walk—the crosswalk sign. And so when the light turned white, it's this white person, this image of a white person walking across a street, and he was interested in the light turning from a red hand to the white light of the person walking across the street. And so we got to have a conversation about pedestrian crosswalks, so I got to incorporate a new word. We talked about pedestrians and how pedestrians have a different light to follow than the people who are driving in the cars.

And so it was within this context of his world and his interest that we got to do some vocabulary building. And so that's what you do on a daily basis. And it's not just about bombarding children, it's about really supporting their curiosity, where are they interested in things, where do they have imagination, and how can you foster language and support them

through those opportunities, helping them to learn language and support their development in their approach to learning.

And this domain focuses on how children learn rather than what they learn. It includes initiative, curiosity, creativity, and when children apply these skills, they're able to learn new skills and then set new goals and meet them. So this is really where their learning gets scaffolded. And they learn to do things that are challenging, frustrating sometimes, things that require them to persist or you know, that might take time to accomplish. This supports them in that approach.

So we're going to watch a video of a preschool teacher. She's providing a safe learning environment and then she's encouraging initiative and curiosity, and while she's doing that, she's supporting vocabulary by narrating what the children are doing and she's giving them new words as they're exploring. And so, as you watch this video, let us know in the chat box what strategies do you see this teacher using that's supporting children's learning and development, both in supporting their approaches to learning and then also supporting their vocabulary development.

So, let's take a look.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Yesterday during small group time, we went outside to look for the roly-polies, remember? Where did we go find the roly-polies?

Class: In the grass.

Teacher: The roly-polies live in the dark, wet, moist areas. How do you know that?

Girl: 'Cause they live under the dirt.

Teacher: Because it lives under the dirt. Yes, and under where it's dark. Today we're going to observe our roly-polies. We're going to use our senses to find something out. We may use our eyes to look at the roly-polies or we need to touch them to find out what it feels like. Oh, here's one. That's a real roly-poly. I'm going to pass them out, yes.

Child No. 2: It tickles.

Teacher: Does it tickle when you touch it? So when you pick it up, it tickles? Oh it does tickle, you're right. How do you know that that's the baby one?

Child No. 2: It's white.

Teacher: It's white. Remember when we talked about during small group time that the roly-polies that are born are white and clear? Are you using your magnifying glass to look at your roly-poly? Oh, sometimes we might find some worms inside the soil. Does the worm look like the roly-poly?

Child No. 3: No.

Teacher: What does the worm look like?

Child No. 3: It wiggles.

Teacher: It wiggles. Yours is crawling up your hand. [Video ends]

Treshawn: Well, gee, I wish my teachers let us play with roly-polies when I was little. [Laughing] It seems so much fun. Luckily, I do that now with my kids. But you know, it was so cool and interesting because she really provided a safe environment for those kids and there were probably some children that weren't used to holding bugs or maybe were told not to or it just wasn't, you know, something that they do at home. But just look how safe they were playing with those.

And so when you're curious about things and you wonder what you're curious about and you wonder out loud, that helps them develop curiosity and they hear the words that you use to express your curiosity and then they'll start doing the same thing and start using language in creative ways, like using new and interesting words, making up sounds, rhymes, and songs, and writing down the fun and interesting things that they say. So family values and beliefs, and cultural practices also affect how children approach and engage in learning. So, like I said, there's some children that may not have experience playing with roly-polies, so we always have to be considerate of that.

And it's important to find out from family members what language or languages they speak at home, how language is used, like, you know, what words do they use for comfort or words for managing children's behavior or what are their expectations for children's use. And what their children already know and enjoy in the languages that they hear at home. Because knowing what families value in terms of their approaches to learning will help you understand the children you work with so that you can better meet their needs.

Judi: Yeah, I think this is a great example of creating a safe environment and I see some of the responses, so many people are mentioning this is a hands-on, right? So this is something that exposes—the children are exploring with their senses but they're also grasping these concepts. And somebody said the teacher acknowledged what the little girl said and clearly repeated the response, right? So she's validating. So the safe space is, "I'm going to use new words," and then the teacher validates you using those words by repeating what you said, "Oh, that was interesting.

Oh, you noticed that, you know, we talked about when the bugs when they were born that they were white and you noticed that." And so there's that validation and the children were, you could tell that they were, you know, freely expressing themselves and she was providing them with new words. You all noticed that those words even came out in some of their illustrations, right? So she's providing those words and then when they illustrate the activity, they use those words to describe their pictures, which is exactly what you want to be doing in terms of building vocabulary.

OK, so that's great and thank you so much for all of your responses. You guys are definitely picking up on the key themes here. The last thing that we're going to talk today about is assessment.

So we know that it's really important that while we're engaged in these interactions with young children, that we are also making sure that we're paying attention to what they're doing and saying and documenting it so that we can really build on the current skills that they have. If you

remember way back on the beginning, I mentioned individualization, right? Vocabulary and phonological awareness is not one-size-fits-all. It definitely needs to be built based on where children are in their development. And so we need focused observation, intentional engagement with children, which we just saw in that video, that teacher was very intentionally engaged with children in a way that allowed her to observe their knowledge and skills. And so we want to make sure that the goals that are in the ELOF help us—we use them to help us understand what to expect of preschoolers in terms of their vocabulary and phonological awareness.

And then we use our ongoing assessment tools to document what we learned about children's growth and development. It's also really important, and I don't think we can mention this enough, to make sure we establish two-way communication with families about the language children are hearing and understanding and using at home. They may use and they may understand different words at home than they do in the group care setting.

So we want to make sure that we're communicating there about how children use and play with language at home and because it may be different, we may sing different songs or different rhymes at school than they do at home depending on their family's language and literacy practices. So it's really important to just establish that relationship with families so we can share what we're observing in all of our different settings.

And families, as always, are the best source of information about their children's growth and development. Another thing that you might have to do if you're working with children who are dual language learners is to highlight the benefits of being bilingual, especially with families who want their children to learn English and they may mistakenly think that to learn English well their child needs to stop using their home language, which we know is the exact opposite. We need to let them know that a strong foundation in their home language is what helps them learn English and that children really benefit from continuing to use their home language while they're learning English.

So, let's watch a video of two teachers who are reviewing their assessment information and based on that assessment information, they're making a plan about how they're going to support a specific child in her ability to use words to make requests. So, let's take a look and we'll talk about it after.

[Video begins]

Teacher No. 1: OK. So Jenny, one of her goals is to ... Using her words to request. And, you know, we've kind of been working on it a little bit, we've started to but she hasn't made a ton of progress this far, so I was thinking we can really up the instruction much more so than we're working on it with the other kids and maybe collect some data to decide, you know, if we need to change our instructional strategy or if it's just the practice opportunities.

Teacher No. 2: OK, that sounds great. Are we going to use like a, throughout the whole classroom day or do you want a certain time of day that we're really going to push it more than others? Is there a time of day that you want me to really focus on when we're doing this or ... ?

Teacher No. 1: I was thinking, you know, maybe pick a couple of times to focus on in terms of the data collection just because I know within a regular day sometimes it's just not possible to mark data down as easily. But then I think it—it would be a great one to work on throughout the day and provide instruction all throughout the day. And then maybe at the end of the week ... So what are we aiming for? Maybe like 10, five, 10?

Teacher No. 2: I think it's realistic, for sure.

Teacher No. 1: For data, OK.

Teacher No. 2: Five to 10.

Teacher No. 1: And then at the end of the week, we can maybe take a look and see where she's at, and whether we need to change something.

[Video ends]

Judi: So what I like about this video is that they were talking about documentation that they had collected and with a very specific goal of this child using language to communicate a need. And so I think it was really great for them not only to say, "We need to collect more information about this, but how long are we going to collect information, how many—how much information do we need, and then when are we going to come back and talk about it and see if we need a new plan?" And that's really what you want to be doing in terms, obviously in terms of all the children's growth and development, but this is very focused on an individual child and her needs around vocabulary use and then a very specific plan for how they were going to both provide an intervention or specific instructions, and then document whether or not the child responded to that and then come back to it.

So this is the assessment process that we need to engage in and I see, Jeanette, thank you, documentation from coworkers is very helpful, right? And this is, you know, two workers working together but we can also talk about any other staff who may be engaged with a child or with a parent, right? They may be—they may be fine expressing their needs at home and they're only having a challenge at school or they might be having a challenge at home as well, which is why that two-way communication is really important. Yeah, definitely. Parents and teachers should be on the same page and getting parents engaged in the assessment process is really key. One other thing we want to make, oh go ahead.

Treshawn: I just want to say I think what's important, too, is sometimes as teachers in the group care setting it's like, we shy away from doing individual planning for children because we feel like we're going to leave, you know, the other children out, but, you know, little do we know there may be some children that are on the same level as that child that you're being intentional about, or that are on either end of the spectrum, and either they're there or they're well past that. And it's OK to either review for the child that's already past that developmental level or to challenge the child that's just coming up. So it's OK to be intentional, you know, about a specific child because it really can help with the whole classroom environment.

Judi: Yeah, you may think about grouping children, right? If you have a child who's really strong in a certain area, you might work to have a small group or intentionally group them together in a play time so that they have the opportunity to learn from each other, definitely. So we want

to make sure that we use ongoing assessment as the base from which to plan all of our interactions and learning experiences. Documentation is key so we want to be able to make sure that we're documenting those nuanced differences in children's growth and development. And having a focus on what you want to document is really helpful, right? So we know we're going to document this week about her expressing her needs, that's where our focus is going to be. So we can understand her development and her response to—to what we're putting into place in terms of our interaction. This is a way to engage families, to help them understand the importance of their child's development, and to help you understand how their child is developing at home.

And you can ask for information about what they observe at home, where they might have a time where they struggle with their child, or where they might have success with their child. And parents can help you interpret the things that we observe or they can kind of fill in the things that we aren't able to observe when we don't see the child. We want to make sure, as always, that we're implementing culturally and responsive practices that support all children's language and literacy development. So especially in this case around vocabulary and even the specific case about expressing needs, it's really important to understand what the family expects their child to do at home because their expectations may be different than what we expect in a early learning setting.

So we want to make sure we understand the whole child, their knowledge and skills, in the home language and in English. And then finally, this is just a great assessment and documentation information is great to share with others. This is what we understand about your child or if there are others who are working with this child or these children in the community or in other programs to share that information so everyone really has a good picture of where this child is succeeding and the things that they're learning as they go through our time in our program.

We'll look forward to seeing you guys next time. Have a great weekend and we'll see you again soon.