Dual Language Learners
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NMAIMH competencies addressed
Theoretical Foundations
  • Cultural Competence
Working with Others
  • Supporting Others

There is nothing more exciting than a child’s first words. For most children, speech and language development occurs naturally, and within time, they can hold an active conversation. In New Mexico, we see many children who learn not only one, but two or more languages alongside. This is quite remarkable and an example of our rich cultural and diverse background. Dual language learners are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first home language. It is important to know the link between culture, language, and learning, but also to understand the benefits of knowing two or more languages.

Caregivers have a significant influence on their children’s language development and later school success. Families with children who are English learners ought to be encouraged to continue family traditions such as storytelling, family celebrations and household routines in their native language. The ability to hear, understand and respond to directions, stories, and complex language can be developed in any language and will help facilitate the development of those skills in English. When working with families who have limited English-language proficiency, home visitors will need to communicate in the parents’ preferred language, possibly retaining a bilingual interpreter may be necessary. Creating a space for family knowledge, beliefs, and concerns about their children’s language use and development at home give crucial insights into meeting the individual needs of dual language learners. The following link provides more information on dual language learners to support your work with New Mexico families.

http://www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/BSRC_When_Families_Speak_fnl.pdf
Questions to encourage discussion and reflection…

- How are you currently supporting families to read to the child in their home language?
- What are some things you do to support the family home language during a home visit?
- What new strategies will you incorporate into your practice to support dual language families?

References/Additional Resources
