

DEVELOPMENTAL SCIENCE AND THE EQUITABLE EARLY EDUCATION OF DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS



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Context

- Changes in the demographic composition of children and families served in early care and education programs.
- The school readiness gap.
- Increased accountability requirements.
- Early education programs not designed to meet the needs of diverse children.
- The educational success of these children is critical to the overall progress of our educational system and the economic future of the nations.

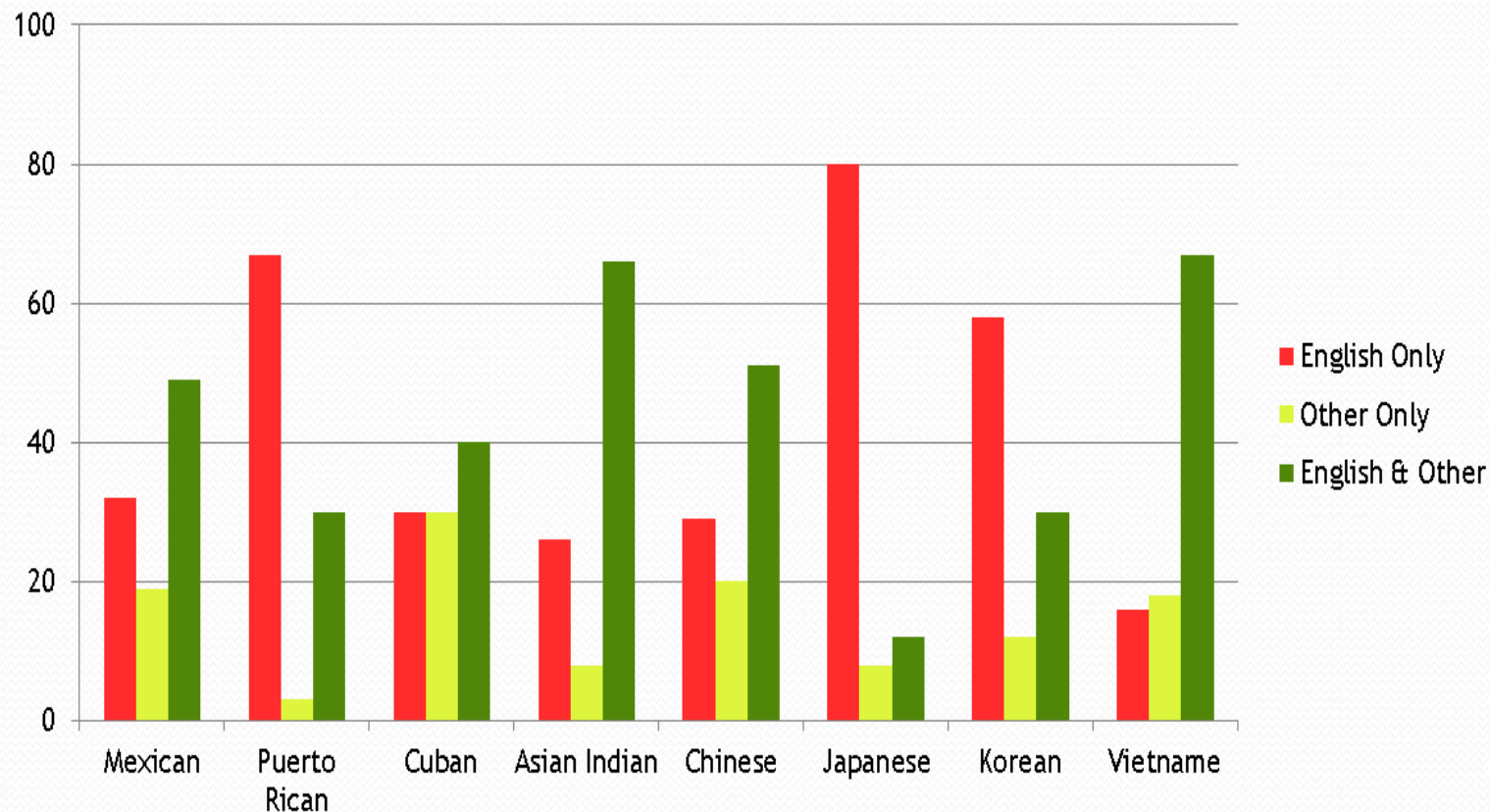
We are more diverse than ever...



Diversity within the DLL population

- Countries of origin
- Immigrant vs non-immigrant experience
- Proficiency in English and their non-English language
- Socioeconomic status and parental education

Language and Country of Origin



Winsler, et al. (2014). Early Developmental Skills of Diverse Dual Language Learners: The Roles of Home Language Use, Cultural Heritage, Maternal Immigration, and Sociodemographics in the ECLS-B. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29, 750-764

Considerations

- Developmental characteristics of dual language learners (DLLs).
- Socio-cultural contextual factors (societal, community, family, ECE setting)
- Early education not designed to address the needs of DLLs.

Developmental Competencies

Traditional Approach

- Monolingual norms
 - Two monolinguals in one
-
- Bilingualism affects all developmental domains



Cognitive development of young DLLs

- The experience with two languages, no matter how short, changes the way language is organized in the brain.
- Typically developing bilingual children show more advanced skills than their monolingual peers in non-verbal executive control skills (inhibitory control; cognitive flexibility; working memory)

Barac, R., Bialystok, E., Castro, D. C., & Sanchez, M. (2014). The Cognitive Development of Young Dual Language Learners: A Critical Review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29, 699-714.

Language and Literacy Development of DLLs

- Consensus that DLLs have two separate and connected language systems.
- Transfer exists between the two languages.
- DLLs often lag behind monolingual children in their single language proficiency.
- However, their total conceptual vocabularies (i.e., combined number of words known in each language) are similar in size or larger than monolinguals.

Hammer, C. S., Hoff, E., Uchikoshi, Y., Gillanders, C., Castro, D. C. & Sandilos, L. M., (2014). The Language and Literacy Development of Young Dual Language Learners: A Critical Review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29, 715-733.

Socio-emotional development of DLLs

Self-regulation

- DLLs showed higher levels of self-control than their English monolingual peers at K entry and continued to achieve higher levels through fifth grade.
- Fluent Spanish-English bilingual children had higher levels of self-control than native English speakers.
- Problem behaviors
 - DLLs found to have slower growth problem behaviors from kindergarten to fifth grade.

Halle, et al. (2014) The Social--Emotional Development of Dual Language Learners: Looking Back at Existing Research and Moving Forward with Purpose. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29, 734-749.



Context of development of Dual Language Learners in the United States

Societal Contexts

- Negative stereotypes
- Generational language shift

Language loss = cultural shame



Societal Contexts: From Vulnerabilities to Assets

DLLs have...

- lower infant mortality rates
- fewer physical and mental health problems
- live in two-parent families with a strong work ethic
- parents high education aspirations
- families support ECE experiences

These are ASSETS to ECE settings



Community Contexts: Multiple Languages

- + Diverse linguistic interactions
- + Presence and value of different languages in communities
- = conditions that promote bilingualism and bi-literacy continuum



Mature vs. Immature immigrant receiving communities

Family Contexts

Parenting beliefs and practices manifest in child behaviors

- *familismo, respeto, confianza*, and being *bien educado*
- *guan* and *chiao shun*

Language and literacy practices influenced by family members

- language proficiencies
- Language preferences
- Language beliefs

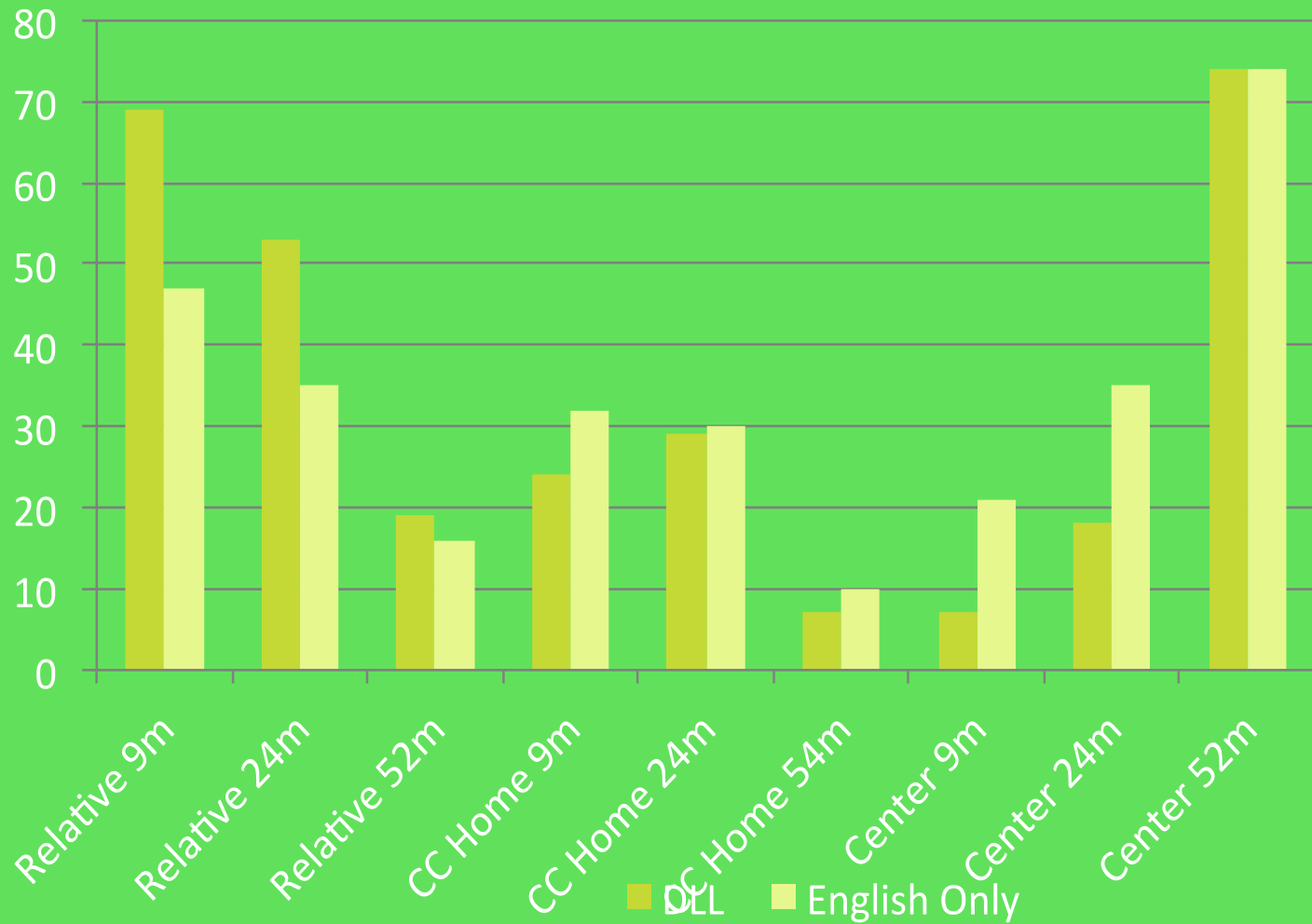


Early Care and Education Contexts

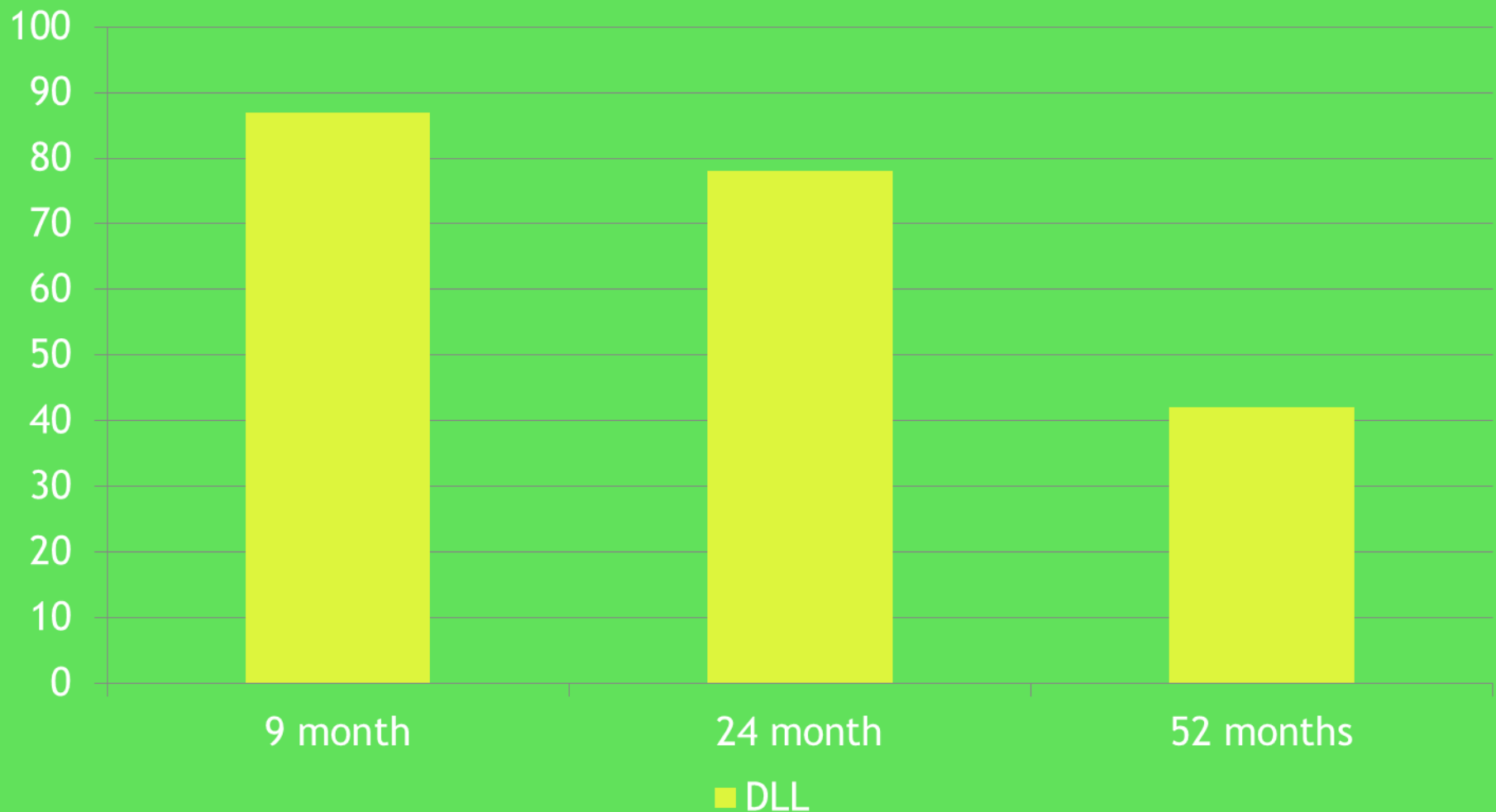
ECE appears to be especially beneficial:

- DLLs have larger gains than other children
 - in high quality center-based care
 - when their first language is spoken in setting
- Evidence suggests they are likely to
 - be in parental or relative care before PreK
 - be enrolled in center-based care by Pre-K
 - experience low high quality care

Type of Care



Bilingual Care



Early care and education for DLLs

- What constitutes the benefit of high quality instruction for monolingual English speakers is equally beneficial for DLLs (Goldenberg, 2006; Shanahan & Beck, 2006).

However...

- “High quality instruction ...alone would be insufficient to support equal academic success for language minority students.” (August & Shanahan, 2006, p. 448)

High quality early education for dual language learners

- Program characteristics
- Educator knowledge & skills
- Curriculum & instruction

Program Characteristics

A program that offers high quality early education to DLLs:

- Has policies that support first and second language development.
- Hires bilingual / bicultural staff.
- Has teachers who are qualified to work with bilingual/bicultural children.
- Offers ongoing professional development and technical assistance.
- Uses outreach and communication strategies that take into account families' diverse cultures and languages.

Educator knowledge & skills

Effective educators of DLLs need to be knowledgeable about:

- The structural aspects of language development (e.g., syntax, phonology, etc.) and the development of both first and second language.
- The relation between language and culture and its linkage to DLLs' developmental domains.
- Effective instructional practices to promote development and learning in dual language learners.
- The role of assessment and how to implement appropriate assessment strategies with dual language learners.

Diego clapping

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Curriculum & Instruction

A culturally *and linguistically* responsive curriculum should:

- Use instructional strategies targeting DLLs' developmental characteristics.
- Incorporate elements of children's cultural background/experiences.
- Include language and communication styles familiar to the children.
- Use children's language and culture as resources for learning!!

What do all these mean for early education?

- That high quality early care and education environments for dual language learners should take into account the unique features of these children's development and experiences.
- That early care and education programs need to support dual language learners' development of their two languages and promote multilingualism.
- Approaches to address this need can vary, going from full dual language immersion programs to English instruction with first language support, and should depend on the characteristics of the communities.
- Since these children are learning through two languages, assessments of development and academic performance should be conducted in their two languages.

Nuestros Niños School Readiness Program



- A professional development intervention to improve quality of teacher practices for promoting language, literacy, mathematics and socio-emotional development in young DLLs.
- Designed to complement core curriculum providing instructional enhancements to support educators in English-only classrooms.
- Teachers learn and apply core concepts, instructional strategies and classroom resources specific to support DLLs.

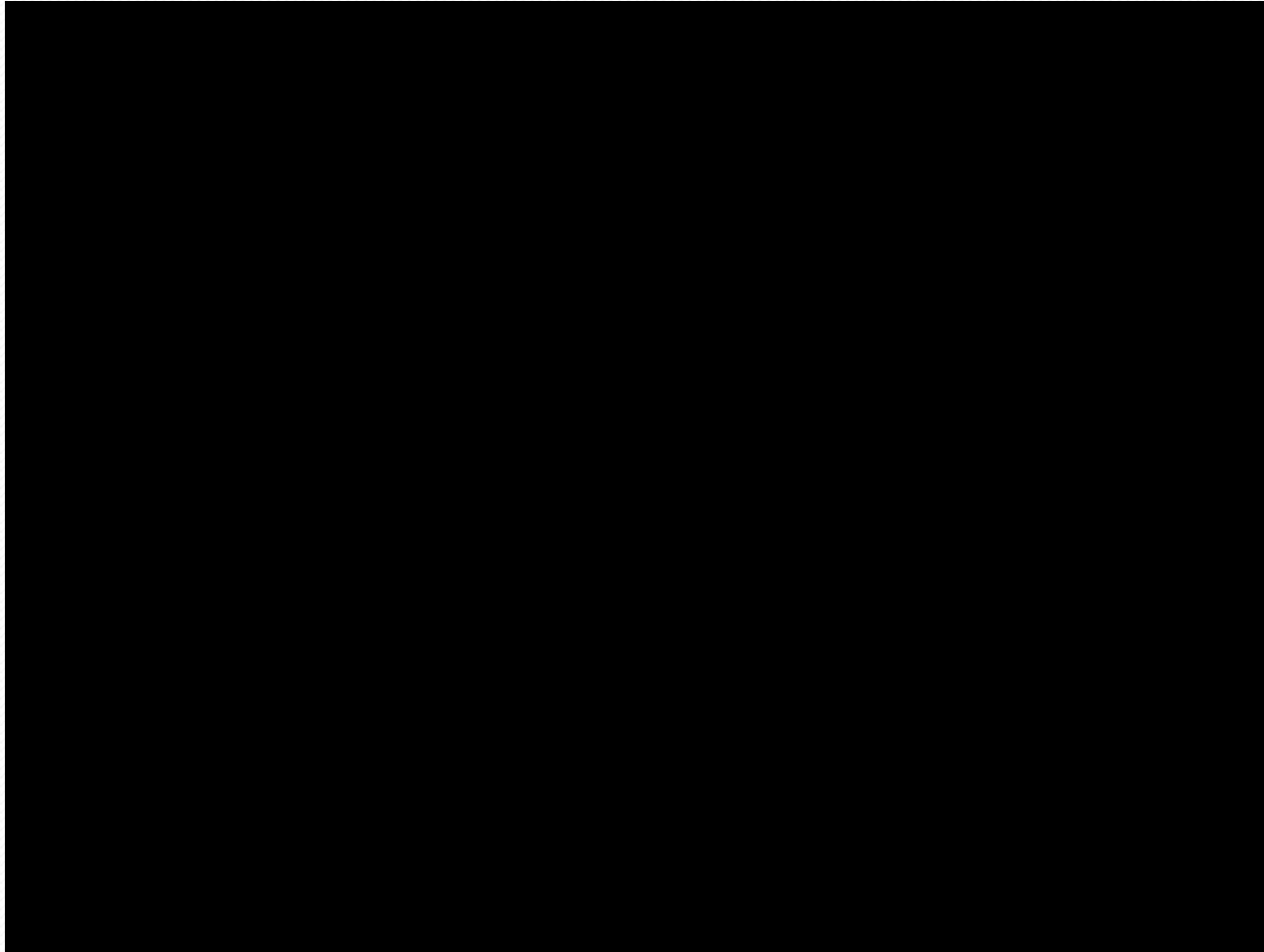
NNSR: Content areas

- Foundations for teaching young DLLs
- Socio-emotional development of young DLLs
- Bilingual language development
- Early reading in DLLs
- Early writing in DLLs
- Teaching mathematics to DLLs

NNSR: Components

- Institutes (3 days in Year 1 and 2 days in Year 2)
- Consultations (every other week in Years 1 and 2)
- Professional Learning Communities (every other week in Year 1; one a month in Year 2)

Reading aloud with DLLs



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Conclusions

- The dual language learner population is not a homogeneous group, to the contrary, it is very diverse in languages, national origin, immigration experiences, demographic characteristics, and early learning opportunities.
- The school readiness gap for DLLs is more directly related to poverty than to the fact that the children are growing up with two languages.
- In any case, they are “at risk” of not receiving the high quality early education they need to develop to their full potential.

Conclusions (cont'd)

- Young children have the capacity to learn more than one language, it does not confuse them or hinder English language development.
- *Bilingualism has no inherent negative consequences for children's development.* It may benefit young children, cognitively, linguistically, and socially.
- Strong language skills in the first language will facilitate English language development for DLLs.
- The use of the first language by the family can be a protective factor for dual language learners from immigrant families.

Related Resources

Castro, D. C., Gillanders, C., Franco, X., Bryant, D. M., Zepeda, M., Willoughby, M. T., & Mendez, L. I. (2017). Early education of dual language learners: An efficacy study of the Nuestros Niños School Readiness professional development program. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 40, 188-203.

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Gillanders, C. & Castro, D. C. (2011). Storybook reading for young dual language learners. *Young Children*, 66 (1), 91-95.

Gillanders, C., Castro, D. C., & Franco, X. (2014). Learning Words for Life. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(3), 213-221.

Zepeda, M., Castro, D. C. & Cronin, S. (2010). Preparing teachers to work with young English language learners. *Child Development Perspectives*.

Importance of being bilingual



¡Gracias! Thanks!



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