The research base shows that attending to the social, emotional and cognitive skills of dual language learners in early childhood enhances their schooling experiences. Children from linguistic minority households also require language instruction which is sensitive to their unique backgrounds. Instruction in oral language proficiency, vocabulary, and preliteracy skills provides a strong foundation for later success. In particular, it is crucial that educators understand how best to effectively support the home language so that early literacy can be fostered in the home as well as school.

BALLANTYNE, SANDEERMAN, D'EMILIO, & MCLAUGHLIN, 2008, p. 35
The early childhood profession urgently needs guidance on how to apply the research evidence and scientific findings I have just discussed to our curriculum and assessment practices. We need to refine our thinking about “best practices” for young children who do not speak English as their first language. In addition, we need to know how to assess ELLs’ developmental and academic progress and how to build competencies during the early childhood years that will promote long-term school and life success. These strategies are discussed in this chapter.

**IMPORTANCE OF GOALS**

I have found that one of the most important steps for any early childhood program is to collectively decide on explicit language goals for their ELLs. This process of developing a shared vision and programwide consensus on the desired outcomes serves as a useful reference point when making decisions about specific strategies. Without such clearly stated and explicit goals, many programs migrate toward practices that promote rapid English acquisition at the expense of the child’s home language, or sometimes resort to a haphazard approach with no clear direction. Much recent research has found that the home language and cultural practices of young ELL children are fragile and susceptible to dominance by the English language and mainstream culture (Genesee et al., 2004).

Many well-intentioned early childhood teachers and administrators have implicit beliefs about the value of immersing the child in English versus maintaining the child’s home language as the road to academic success. (See Myths About ELLs in Chapter 5.) These deeply held beliefs about the role of home language and the early acquisition of English can unconsciously influence the classroom teacher’s use of language and send messages to the children about which language is more highly valued.

One large citywide preschool program that I worked with over two years had an enrollment of over 90% Spanish-speaking children from low-income homes. The staff professed a desire to support the children’s home language and incorporated many multicultural activities, Spanish language books, and culturally appropriate materials. However, during the second year, when I videotaped their daily lessons and activities, I found that 80% to 90% of their instructional and language interactions were in English. The most striking finding from the videotapes was that the staff, all of who were fluent in Spanish and English, spoke almost exclusively in English during the instructional time (small group, large group, and individual tutoring), using Spanish for transitions, group management, and simple directions. For example, the teacher might say to the child, “Venga aqui” (come here) and then commence to instruct the child in English, i.e., “We are going to write in your journal now. What did you see at the zoo yesterday?” Although this emphasis on English language instruction might help foster English achievement, it is also sending messages about the value of each language that may eventually contribute to home language loss.

A program that has qualified bilingual staff and bilingual resources might decide to implement a dual language program and agree to the following language goal:

*All children in ABC program will learn two languages. The native English speakers will learn Spanish (or Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and so on) and the non-native English speakers will learn English. Our goal*
is for all children to eventually become bilingual and biliterate and to function competently in a multicultural setting.

In contrast, a program whose children speak many different languages and has few if any qualified bilingual educators might decide on the following goal for the ELL children enrolled:

*The language of instruction in XYZ Preschool shall be primarily English.*

In addition, XYZ Preschool believes in the value of supporting the ongoing development of each ELL child’s home language and family culture. Instructional activities, classroom materials, family interactions, and all communications shall respect, value, and incorporate the home language and culture to the maximum extent possible.

Once all staff have thoroughly discussed the language goals for ELL children, then specific instructional methods and materials, curriculum approaches, and assessment procedures can be designed. This explicit statement of language goals for non-native English speakers will turn out to be critical as the program decides on the primary language of instruction, the methods to support each child’s home language, how to assess progress, and outreach approaches to families who may speak a different language and hold distinct cultural values. I have found that educators’ beliefs matter. In fact, your deeply held beliefs and attitudes toward language development, and whether you believe that being exposed to more than one language will confuse a preschool child and delay English acquisition or contribute to overall cognitive growth and English fluency, will influence how you respond to each child’s attempts to communicate, coloring your daily interactions.

Unless you believe “in your bones” that having a second language in addition to English is a gift and not a disadvantage, and that diversity is a resource not a problem to be solved, you are likely to respond to ELL children in ways that discourage the continued use of their home language—especially if you are not fluent in the child’s home language.

**SPECIFIC TEACHING STRATEGIES IN DUAL LANGUAGE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**

Many policy reports and program evaluations recommend that early childhood programs provide support for ongoing development of each child’s home language. Most often, very few specific practices are included in these recommendations. Therefore, programs are often left with little clear-cut guidance on how to design and implement practices that promote both English acquisition and the development of the home language. The following is a discussion of how to implement a dual language approach.

**WHAT DOES A HIGH-QUALITY DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM LOOK LIKE?** As each program develops specific language and/or literacy goals for its ELL children and native English speakers, it will be important to also make explicit the amount of instructional time that will be devoted to which language. If your program decides on a 50:50 dual language program, you can implement this model in a variety of ways.
Some of the research described in Chapter 5 implemented an A.M.-P.M. (or morning and afternoon) approach to language of instruction; they spoke English in the A.M. and Spanish in the P.M. (Rodriguez et al., 1995; Winsler et al., 1999). In this case, the staffing patterns and language fluency of the staff required this configuration. During the English portion of the day, English was the primary language used during instruction, transitions, and individual interactions. At this time, Spanish was used only when children clearly did not understand what was expected and a Spanish-speaking adult was available. The same principles were applied during the Spanish-only portion of the day. The program was careful to implement similar curriculum content during each session and alternated the A.M.-P.M. language times each week.

Other dual language program models (included in the research described earlier) have implemented language models that alternate the language of instruction each week—and have the children move from the Spanish language room with its Spanish-speaking staff to the English language room with its English-speaking staff weekly (Barnett et al., 2006). The common characteristic is the intentional and systematic shifting between each language so that it works out to be approximately 50:50 with comparable academic content taught in both languages. This approach can work for all language groups, both English language learners and native English speakers.

**WHO TEACHES IN WHICH LANGUAGE?** When implementing a dual language approach, it is ideal to have staff at all levels, from paraprofessionals to resource specialists, who are fully fluent in English and the children’s home language. Often this is not possible when communities are undergoing rapid demographic shifts and many new cultures and languages are represented. However, even when it is difficult to reflect all languages spoken by children and families, programs need to actively recruit fully qualified teachers who are skilled in all aspects of early childhood curricula and fluent in multiple languages. The tendency to employ teacher aides and parent volunteers who represent the languages and cultures of the families is an important part of the staffing process—but not nearly enough. When instructional activities with academic content can only be led by monolingual English speakers, it sends a message to the children and families that English is the high-value language and their home language is mainly used for secondary activities. This is a major challenge for the early childhood profession, but it cannot be ignored and must be aggressively addressed.

The other side of this issue also needs to be discussed. As I travel around the country working with early childhood professionals, they often want to know about their staff (often recently hired) who are native speakers of the child’s home language but not fully fluent in English. They describe well-intentioned paraprofessionals who are able to provide comfort and guidance in the child’s home language, but not much assistance in English—that, or they speak broken, ungrammatical English. Although I fully support the intentional hiring of a more diverse workforce (indeed, it is a professional imperative), I also know that all children need to have competent language models who can communicate with them using standard language representations. To have complex, extended conversations in a linguistically rich classroom environment, all staff need to commit to improving both their pedagogy skills as well as their ability to use multiple languages fluently and correctly. This may require ongoing professional development
Early childhood teachers can discuss picture books with ELL children in their home language in addition to English.

for both native English-speaking staff and those who speak the child’s home language but who are not fully fluent in English.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM

The research repeatedly stresses the importance of a high-quality, comprehensive curriculum for all children—especially for ELL children. Programs that implement curricula that address all aspects of early development (and not just cognitive or early literacy skills) by highly qualified teachers consistently outperform more limited models. Comprehensive curricula are not focused solely on literacy skills or cognitive development; they attend to children’s social-emotional and motor development, as well as their overall health. Comprehensive curricula also actively partner with parents and often provide extended services for families. A recent report from the National Center for Children in Poverty, Effective Preschool Curricula and Teaching Strategies (Klein & Knitzer, 2006), concludes that high-quality preschool programs can reduce the achievement gap for children from low-income homes, but they need to include the following:

• an intentional curriculum that is research based;
• teachers who are actively engaged with all young children;
• a focus on social and regulatory skills;
• adaptations to cultural and linguistic diversity;
• focused, direct, intentional instructional interactions;
• new ways of assessing student progress and classroom quality; and
• effective teacher professional development and support.
These features of high-quality curricula are just as important for English language learners as for native English speakers—but they are not enough. Good instruction for children in general tends to be good for ELLs in particular. However, in addition to clear, intentional interactions that are focused on important instructional goals, ELL children also require adaptations while they are in the process of acquiring English. The most recent research tells us that the achievement of ELL children is positively influenced by the same instructional variables as native English speakers, but to a lesser extent (August & Shanahan, 2006). These studies suggest that the elements of effective instruction in general ought to be the foundation of instruction for ELL students—however, ELL students need curriculum enhancements or accommodations (Goldenberg, 2006).

ELL students, like their native English-speaking peers, will benefit from the following teaching and learning strategies:

- active engagement,
- connections to their existing knowledge,
- opportunities to practice and apply new information,
- frequent reviews and practice,
- direct instruction on certain aspects of literacy,
- special attention to English vocabulary and English oral language development, and
- instructional accommodations to keep pace with their native English-speaking peers.

Claude Goldenberg (2006), a professor of education at Stanford University who has extensively researched bilingualism for young children, has recommended the following instructional supports for ELL students based on his review of three recent large national studies of bilingual students:

- strategic use of the primary language (e.g., when introducing concepts or new activities, be sure to use the child’s home language before introducing the concept in English so each child will understand the concept),
- consistent expectations, instruction, and routines;
- extended explanations and opportunities for practice;
- use of physical gestures and visual cues;
- focusing on the similarities/differences (cognates) between English and Spanish (home language) (e.g., make a point to use objects with Spanish–English cognates like telephone/teléfono, show the object and point out the English word and the Spanish word—their similarities and differences);
- extra practice reading words, sentences, and stories;
- focus on vocabulary development and check frequently for children’s comprehension (e.g., highlight key words in English while reading story books by explaining their meaning, offering synonyms, and using them in different contexts while frequently interacting with children to see if they understand the meaning of the words); and
- paraphrasing students’ language and encouraging them to expand.

The amount and quality of research on preschool instructional approaches for ELL children is not extensive. Although the NELP had over 1700 studies of early
literacy to review, of which more than 300 were rigorous, well-designed studies, the number of experimental studies examining the effectiveness of different curriculum models on preschool ELLs school achievement is at best in the dozens. In general, most of the findings from the NELP for native English speakers also apply to ELL children ages 3 to 6—however, again, curricular adaptations must be made. Reading books aloud to children is important for all children’s later literacy (National Early Literacy Panel Report, 2008), but the procedures used may need to be adjusted for ELL children. For instance, the Nuestros Niños Early Language and Literacy Program (Castro, Gillanders, Buysse, & Machado-Casas, 2005), developed at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina, has suggested the following practices for Spanish-speaking preschoolers:

1. Engage the children in pre-reading activities that identify key words and phrases that are essential to understanding the text; help the ELL children learn the key vocabulary by translating into Spanish (or home language) and using multisensory materials to illustrate the book meaning. (For example, provide objects described or included in the story so that children can hold them and associate the object with the word. In the popular book *Caps for Sale*, teachers can hand out different hats and have the children try them on while emphasizing the words *hat, brown, head, on top of*, and so on.)

2. Use good book-reading strategies including dialogic reading practices (described in more detail below under specific book-reading strategies) that prompt the children to interact and respond to the story. While interacting with the children during reading, the teacher will also need to consider which stage of English acquisition the child is in and adapt expectations accordingly (the stages are described in more detail in Chapter 5).

3. After reading books to children, provide opportunities for using the core vocabulary from the book in conversations and related extension activities (Castro et al., p. 79).

In summary, the research on ELL achievement suggests that recommended instruction is similar to good instruction for English-speaking children. High-quality instruction for all students also benefits ELL students; however, they need instructional enhancements and attention to the social-emotional climate as they become fluent in two languages—their home language and English. The evidence also underscores the need to provide special attention to English vocabulary and English oral language development for ELL children. With support for the home language and accommodations for English acquisition, ELL children are able to achieve multiple linguistic and cultural competencies.

**SPECIFIC STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS WITH HOME LANGUAGE SUPPORT**

Once you have decided on the language goals of your program and have chosen a model of instruction that supports your goals (i.e., dual language, 50:50, or primarily English instruction with home language support, 90:10), then you must decide who will provide instruction in which language during which parts of the
I often consult with programs that have little or no staff that speak the home language of the children. They will question whether they have the capacity to support the ongoing development of the children’s native language when they cannot use it during instructional activities or everyday interactions. At this point, it is important to refer back to the language goals of the program as well as the individual language goals for each child.

Even when teachers and ancillary staff do not speak the child’s home language, there are many specific teaching practices that will support native language development throughout the day in all kinds of learning situations. In addition, educators need to provide long-term help to build literacy skills in children’s primary language. The resources and expertise to implement some or all of the necessary strategies can be found in the list that follows.

To focus only on the acquisition of English and to not explicitly prioritize the ongoing development of each child’s home language will most likely lead to the fading of home language abilities over time. So, although introducing young ELL children to English while also supporting development of their home language even when you do not speak it and have no experience with the language can seem like a challenging, overwhelming goal, especially when many languages are represented in a single program, it is possible and should be a high-priority goal. In fact, even in programs with all English-speaking children, it is often desirable to introduce children to a second language.

The following specific practices have been shown through prior research to help young ELL children acquire English while also supporting the continued development of their home language:

1. Recruit bilingual paraprofessionals, assistants, family members, community volunteers, and/or older, more competent students to interact with, read to, and assist ELL children, individually or in small groups. Hearing their home language during valuable class time—especially hearing it read, will communicate the importance and status of the language of the home. In addition, those proficient in the child’s home language can teach new words to the whole class, thus promoting a dual language approach. By giving the home language attention, status, and value, the chances are increased that ELL children will continue to speak it with family members and experience the advantages of knowing more than one language.

2. Incorporate the children’s home language into the daily classroom activities through song, poetry, dances, rhymes, and counting. There are many authentic, multicultural literature books designed for young children that are written in two languages. Many will have English on one side of the page and the second language on the other side. A staff member fluent in English can read the English text and a staff member or volunteer fluent in the second language can read the second language text. A good example of this kind of book for English and Spanish speakers is *Pió Peep: Traditional Spanish Nursery Rhymes* (Ada & Campoy, 2004). Fortunately, there are many literature books, resource books, alphabet books, dictionaries, and songbooks written in two languages that are culturally and developmentally appropriate and are quite appealing to young children. Increasingly, there are also dual language
materials, animated stories, songs, and picture books available on the Internet, some of which are free! Appendix B contains a sampling of materials available in multiple languages.

3. **Use children’s personal histories to create identity texts.** Judith Bernhard, professor of early childhood education and researcher of bilingual education, and her colleagues have designed and evaluated an early literacy intervention for preschool and primary ELL children, the Early Authors Program, which links the child’s home culture with early reading and writing activities (Bernhard, Cummins, Campoy, Ada, Wintsler, & Bleiker, 2006). The children collaborate with family members, friends, caregivers, and teachers to create “identity texts” in which the children themselves are the main characters. By talking about, writing about, reading about, and publicly sharing their personal life histories, children are able to develop pride in themselves, create a positive orientation to literacy, and create meaningful and engaging text. This approach has been shown to result in improved language scores and enhanced reading comprehension. Appendix C contains a detailed description of this approach with reference materials.

4. **Use picture books and photo albums to make up stories with the children.** These can be told in any language and encourage participation of all children. Parents and other family members can also use these books to engage in extended conversations about shared experiences, family customs, recent outings, and/or different kinds of animals. These shared book readings are also an excellent time to explicitly point out vocabulary in both languages.

5. **Use small-group “read-alouds” with ELL children and native English speakers.** You can choose from a variety of books, but be sure to read books that are interesting to young children, culturally appropriate, and related to both the children’s background and the main theme of the week. Ideally, books used for read-alouds have rich and rare vocabulary that can be extended to cross-curricular activities. Predictable books are especially good for ELL children because they help children not fully fluent in English anticipate what will happen and participate in the reading. They also frequently use interesting rhyme and alliteration that promote phonological awareness. Appendix B contains a list of resources including suggested predictable books, big books, poetry books, rhyme books, and songbooks as well as informational books that are appropriate for young read-alouds with ELL children.

6. **Having young children take pictures of their “world outside of school” has also been shown to increase conversation between ELL children and teachers.** (Penn State Newsletter, 2009). After the children take multiple pictures of important events outside of their school day, they can be asked to share their favorites with a teacher. This will promote more interaction between the ELL children and teachers, improve the teacher’s understanding of the each ELL child’s language abilities, and support English conversational skills for the ELLs. Having the children describe their own pictures is a great way to increase the amount of complex language interactions between teachers and young children who are in the early stages of learning English.

7. **When reading with ELL children, it is important to allow them to use their home language as well as English during reading activities.**
8. Review key concepts and vocabulary before reading the book. Encourage the children to predict what will happen in the story—in the language in which they are most fluent. Show pictures or concrete representations (i.e., flannel board pictures) of key vocabulary and *chunks of language*. With ELL children it is important to frequently check their understanding in English. You can do this by asking them direct questions, asking them to hold up flannel board figures, asking them to stand up during key parts of the story or to demonstrate in other ways that they understand the story narrative and vocabulary used.

9. Make connections between the content of the story and the children’s own life experiences. During these discussions, be sure to allow enough time for the ELL children to formulate their thoughts and express themselves in their dominant language.

10. Keep the reading time short because ELL children may not have long attention spans as they are learning English—but gradually extend reading time as you see the children can maintain their attention. Strive to engage the children by using all your good book-reading strategies (e.g., let the children see the illustrations and print; use a dramatic reading voice to help the story “come alive”; use props, flannel boards, songs, rhymes, and concrete objects to promote understanding).

11. Use *dialogic reading techniques* (Whitehurst, 2004; see text box below) to encourage the children’s active participation in the activity. By using prompts and systematically engaging in back-and-forth dialogue about the content of the book, teachers are helping children construct meaning and comprehend text.

12. During all reading activities, it is important for the teacher to know which stage of English acquisition the child is in. The four general phases of second language acquisition are described in Chapter 5 and should be taken into consideration during language interactions and interactive reading activities. (See following list.)

   a. If the child is still primarily *using his or her home language* to communicate, then the English version of the story may not be understood. For these children, it will be important for someone, a volunteer, parent, or older child to read the book to the child in his or her home language, in school or in the home by a family member. If possible, have the book read to the child in his or her home language prior to the English reading so the child will already understand the story and can follow along.

   b. If the child is in the *nonverbal or observational* stage, then you will want to prompt children with language that allows the child to point to objects or responses. ELL children in this stage may not be ready to “go public”.

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**Dialogic Reading**

Teachers actively engage children in the reading process by using the PEER sequence:

- **P** Prompting the child to comment on the book
- **E** Evaluating the child’s response
- **E** Expanding the child’s response
- **R** Repeating the prompt and checking for understanding
with their new language—but may have an extensive receptive vocabulary that they can demonstrate nonverbally. During this stage, the child should not be pressured to respond with English—but given lots of opportunities to listen and respond non-verbally.

c. If the child is just beginning to use English in telegraphic or formulaic speech (i.e., children are just beginning to use common phrases like I wanna, and repeat syllables and words that they may not completely understand), then you will want to ask “what, where, when” questions that do not demand complex language use. Children may repeat “high-function” phrases often, even when they are not conversationally appropriate. During this stage, use verbal prompts such as the following: “What did the boy find? Where did the family go? Goldilocks ate the _______ [child is prompted with the teacher’s pause to fill in by saying ‘porridge’], and it was _______ [child is prompted to fill in the missing word by saying ‘cold’].” In these examples, the child is asked to use familiar vocabulary but not complex grammar that he or she has not yet mastered.

d. As the child becomes more fluent and moves into the productive language stage, you will want to increase the linguistic demands in English and ask open-ended recall questions that require more academic and de-contextualized language. As with any intentional teaching, it is important for you to continuously assess the child’s abilities, adapt the teaching expectations as you observe emerging abilities, and increase the language demands as the child becomes more capable.

13. After reading a book to ELL children, provide opportunities to use the new vocabulary, make connections between their own life and the text, and extend the early literacy skills to other areas of the curriculum. It is also important to explicitly promote phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and knowledge of print during the reading lessons. For ELL children, these skills can be taught in either their home language, especially if the home language is alphabetic like Spanish, or in English. These are skills that, once learned in any language, will transfer to a second language. So, if you are reading a book in Spanish, you can point out the letters of the Spanish alphabet, help the child to sound out Spanish words, and sing rhyming songs in Spanish with the knowledge that the children will apply these literacy skills to English reading. Once children know these early literacy skills, they can apply them to the English language!

Question: How might you adapt your instruction for a child who was in the very beginning stage of English acquisition?

**ASSESSMENT APPROACHES: HOW TO COLLECT ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Conducting accurate, systematic, and meaningful assessments can provide key insights into the development and emerging abilities of our children, thus providing the basis of effective individualized instruction. In general, early childhood professionals...
follow the set of *Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments*, developed by The National Education Goals Panel (Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz, 1998) which identified four broad purposes for early childhood assessments:

1. to promote learning and development of individual children;
2. to identify children with special needs and health conditions for intervention purposes;
3. to monitor trends in programs and evaluate program effectiveness; and
4. to obtain benchmark data for accountability purposes at the local, state, and national levels.

As the children and families we serve become increasingly diverse culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and economically, it is important to remember that all assessment procedures and instruments carry the potential for bias. This is especially true when teachers and children do not share the same cultural and linguistic background. For example, if a young girl from Taiwan enters a preschool program and the teacher does not understand her language or customs, how is the teacher able to accurately rate her social competence? If the young girl never responds to a social initiative by an adult and avoids contact with boys, but cheerfully watches out for younger children from her neighborhood, would the teacher understand the girl's social strengths and rate her accurately? Or if this same child can recognize five Chinese characters, but no letters of the English language alphabet, is she developing age-appropriate early literacy skills? Without knowing how our curriculum goals and expectations are translated and reflected in different and often culturally specific patterns of behavior, this teacher may underestimate the social and academic competencies of this young girl.

Even authentic and direct assessment information such as classroom observations of children's behavior can reflect mainstream biases when school personnel do not understand the cultural background and home languages of the children. This underscores the need for school personnel to reach out to families and increase their understanding of diverse family values, customs, and expectations for behavior. Increased understanding of culturally specific patterns of behavior that demonstrate developmental progress is essential for the early childhood workforce; it also highlights the need to aggressively recruit and train a more diverse workforce including ECE professionals at all levels—not just para-professionals. In order to accurately assess all children it will be critical for administrators, supervisors, psychologists, support specialists, as well as teachers and assistants to both reflect the culture and languages of the children they serve as well as possess the teaching knowledge and skills to understand when specific adaptations are needed for children from diverse backgrounds.

However, to meet the demands of program accountability and child assessment, the following recommendations are offered for young ELLs:

- Assessors need to understand the process and stages of acquiring a second language so they can accurately interpret the language proficiency of an emergent bilingual child, both in English and in the child's home language.
- The child’s early language experiences, with particular attention to home language learning opportunities, must be considered when assessing oral language
Chapter 6 • Promising Curriculum, Instructional, and Assessment Strategies

proficiency. Bilingualism may result in a slower rate of vocabulary development than children learning a single language. As children are acquiring two languages and becoming bilingual, one language may dominate. This is normal. It does not mean that the child is necessarily language delayed or disordered. Results of any vocabulary test or other similar assessment must be interpreted with caution if the child is a preschool-age or primary-grade ELL child and must be done within the context of the information on the child’s early language experiences.

• The child must be assessed in the home language as well as in English. Knowing how the child is progressing in the home language is important for long-term academic success and educational planning. When assessment instruments are not available in the child’s home language, multiple assessment methods (i.e., observation of child in different contexts, direct child assessments, informal language interactions with teachers and other adults) combined with information from parents can provide insights about the child’s age-appropriate language abilities. It may not be possible to precisely know each ELL child’s level of home language proficiency, but by using a variety of methods and assessors, teachers can make good estimates of home language abilities.

• Parents and other family members must be included in the assessment process. With the help of translators, if necessary, parents can share information about the child’s language competence with siblings, peers, parents, and other adults.

• It is recommended that all children who speak a language other than English in the home receive an individualized language plan (ILP). (See Appendix D for an example.) This ILP should contain information from multiple sources about the child’s current language competence in the home language as well as English and identify specific instructional goals that capitalize on the child’s functional strengths. The ILP should also include strategies for including family activities and community resources whenever possible. For instance, if the child appears somewhat delayed in productive language ability in the home language and is just entering a preschool setting, the immediate priority may be to strengthen the home language learning opportunities through a combination of family interactions and community assistance. For this child, because the first language is not well developed, it may indicate a slower exposure to a second language (English) and more intensive home language support.

• Assessment information should be frequently collected and reviewed by all the teaching staff to monitor changes in language and overall development. There should be regular staff meetings (weekly if possible, at least monthly) that focus on careful analysis of assessment information and instructional activities should be adjusted accordingly.

• Classroom assessment activities should be frequent, include multiple procedures, and reflect the goals of the program’s curriculum. This type of assessment should be ongoing and repeatedly capture information on what skills and abilities (and in which languages) children demonstrate in natural settings.

The matrix in Table 6.1 offers suggested procedures for gathering information about different aspects of language development for children who are ELLs.
Teachers can gain information about a child's language abilities through focused one-on-one interactions.

### TABLE 6.1 Matrix for the Language/Literacy Assessment of Young ELL Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose for assessment</th>
<th>Types of measures/procedures</th>
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| Determination of language dominance | □ Parent/Family Survey with questions about language use, interaction patterns, and language proficiency  
□ Teacher observation of language usage across multiple contexts  
□ Possible use of English language screener |
| Language proficiency | □ Language samples across multiple settings  
□ Standardized language measures of receptive and productive capacity used cautiously, i.e., Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey (WMLS); Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) and Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (ROWPVT)  
□ Teacher ratings and/or observations |
| Language outcomes | □ Informal assessments aligned with curriculum goals in language of instruction  
□ Language narrative samples in home language and English  
□ Standardized tests in English and home language (see examples of tests in previous row) |

*Source:* Data from *Assessing Young English Language Learners for Developmental Outcomes*, commissioned paper for the National Academies of Science Committee on Child Assessment and Outcomes, by L. Espinosa, 2008a, Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: ECE SETTINGS WHERE ELL CHILDREN CAN FLOURISH

As in high-quality early childhood teaching for all children, early education for young ELL children needs to be intentional, based on extensive knowledge of the children’s background and prior knowledge, infused with respect for the home language and cultural values, and combined with continuous assessment procedures. Intentional teaching for ELL children begins with explicit language and literacy goals that identify and build on home language strengths while systematically introducing the children to all aspects of the English language. It also includes a comprehensive curriculum that reflects the principles of a high-quality intentional preschool curriculum (see box below) (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education [NAECS/SDE], 2003).

In addition, at a symposium hosted by the National Center for Children in Poverty, which focused on the essential conditions for success for young children living in poverty, the participants identified the following characteristics of a high-quality intentional curriculum (Klein & Knitzer, 2006):

- is research based;
- emphasizes teachers actively engaging with children;
- includes attention to social and self-regulation skills;
- is responsive to cultural diversity and ELLs;
- is not teacher proof—allows for teacher judgment and knowledge to influence content and pacing; and
- requires new ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive to measure classroom quality, teacher effectiveness, and student progress.

The intentional teaching strategies for young ELL children will look similar to high-quality instruction for all young children, but will include specific adaptations and enhancements for children whose home language is not English. During all

Joint Position Statement on Curriculum (NAEYC/NAECS/SDE)

Policy makers, the early childhood profession, and other stakeholders in young children's lives have a shared responsibility to implement a curriculum that is

- thoughtfully planned,
- challenging,
- engaging,
- developmentally appropriate,
- culturally and linguistic responsive,
- comprehensive across all developmental domains, and
- likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children.

parts of the daily schedule—arrival, circle time, choice time, snack time and lunchtime, small group/direct instruction, transitions, outdoor time, and pickup/departure—children’s home language and cultural knowledge will be used as resources and as the foundation for building dual language competency.

Summary

The latest research and program evaluations are helping us to answer the question, What exactly does it mean to provide linguistically appropriate instruction to young ELLs? Although we do not know all the answers, the available evidence does lead to certain recommendations. Early childhood educators need to make specific instructional adaptations for ELL children: support for the child’s home language leads to the best long-term growth and development; as much individualization and small-group instruction as possible; incorporating and building on each child’s prior knowledge, frequent and continuous monitoring of the child’s stage of language development; and finally, a general, high-quality, intentional curriculum. The strategies described in this chapter offer concrete approaches to lessons consistent with the research and easy to implement. These recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive—but a beginning point. As we all become better informed about how to promote long-term achievement for young ELL children, creative teachers and curriculum developers will surely add to this volume. These basic principles derived from research can be used to guide specific decision making. For it is in the day-to-day, minute-to-minute decisions that teachers make about when to respond, how to respond, which language to use, who to include, and how to judge progress that will determine the educational fate of ELL children.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. How many different languages do you speak? If you speak more than one language, at what age did you learn the second language? What do you remember about learning a second language?
2. How would you know if a young ELL child understood basic concepts like fast, bigger than, up, down, and so on, if they knew them only in Mandarin, a language you do not understand?
3. How might you proceed if you suspected that a child from Thailand who had just recently enrolled in your program had very limited home language abilities? Who would you contact and what resources might you use?
4. Describe one curricular adaptation described in this chapter that you could try out with an ELL child. What music, video, or book materials might help you with this adaptation?