



*The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool*  
Research Foundation  
English- and Dual-Language Learners



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Each child brings unique home-language experiences to school. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that nearly 25 percent of children entering kindergarten speak a language other than English at home. In Head Start programs, more than 30 percent of children's families speak languages other than English.

An evolving body of research points to practices that effectively support English- and dual-language learners—children who are learning more than one language. This group includes children who have heard and learned two or more languages since birth (*simultaneous bilinguals*) as well as children who begin learning another language when they enter a different care or educational setting. Of those children in the United States who are English- or dual-language learners, 85 percent are Spanish speakers (Office of Head Start, 2008).

There are many important differences among young English-language learners, including the languages they hear and speak at home, the social and economic resources available to their families, their levels of English proficiency, and their families' literacy practices. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* includes resources that enable teachers to design individualized approaches that build on English-language learners' strengths and prior knowledge and actively engage children's families in supporting children's development and learning.

*The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* can be used in classrooms where the teacher and children all speak English, in classrooms where teachers provide instructional support in both Spanish and English, and in classrooms where other languages are spoken. Teachers' use of the system's English and Spanish curriculum components depends on several factors: the language(s) spoken by the teachers, the language(s) spoken by the children, the language(s) spoken by other staff members in the classroom, their programs' policies, and the level of families' engagement. It is essential for teachers to have a planned language approach that takes all of these factors into account.

By following best practices, early childhood teachers intentionally promote children's acquisition of English. When introducing English to children in an early childhood program, it is important to implement an *additive* model of language acquisition (supporting both English and the children's home languages), not a *subtractive* model (substituting English for the home languages) (García, 2003). When teachers and other school personnel communicate respect and appreciation for the children's home languages and when families continue to use their first languages, children value and show positive outcomes in both their home languages and in English. Children who have the opportunity to learn two languages should be encouraged to maintain both so they can become proficient in their home languages as well as English and enjoy the linguistic and cultural benefits of bilingualism.

Helping children who are dual-language learners maintain and build their home languages while promoting English fluency is important for three critical reasons. Doing so enables children to

- develop their primary cultural identities
- stay closely attached to their families' customs and traditions
- progress toward becoming fully bilingual (Espinosa, 2008)

As Genesee, Paradis, and Crago (2004) explain,

Children's identities and senses of self are inextricably linked to the language they speak and the culture to which they have been socialized. They are, even at an early age, speakers of their languages and members of their cultures. Language and culture are essential to children's identities. All of the affectionate talk and interpersonal communication of their childhoods and family life are embedded in their languages and cultures.

With this research as the foundation, *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* was carefully developed to help teachers intentionally promote positive learning experiences and outcomes for children in both English and their home languages. All of the materials for teachers, children, and families are published in English and Spanish.

In addition, the instructional strategies support children's development of skills in other home languages. This system enables teachers intentionally to support children's development and learning in English and in their home languages, thereby helping children become confident, successful bilingual learners. Here are some of the ways that *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* helps educators implement best practices in their classrooms.

What Research Says About English- and Dual-Language Learners	Components of <i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool</i>
Social-Emotional and Environmental Supports	
<b>Regular routines help children feel comfortable and confident by helping them understand what to do and when</b> (Tabors, 2008).	<i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation</i> provides guidance on creating consistent routines. It also shows an example of a daily schedule that includes pictures to give children visual information about what will happen next.
<b>Children need to feel included as valued members of the community</b> (Tabors, 2008).	<i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volumes 1–5</i> provide comprehensive guidance for including all children in learning experiences and enabling them to demonstrate what they know and can do in nonverbal as well as verbal ways.
	<i>Volume 1: The Foundation</i> explains how teachers can build a positive relationship with each child and develop a classroom community.
	Advice is also offered throughout <i>Volumes 1–5</i> for creating classrooms where children feel confident about taking learning risks and practicing new skills. Teachers are guided to create nonthreatening learning environments where children can experiment with the sounds, rhythms, and patterns of English.
	Levels of English language acquisition are explained in <i>Volume 1: The Foundation</i> and <i>Volume 3: Literacy</i> , so teachers can form appropriate expectations of children at various levels of English proficiency.
	<i>Volume 3: Literacy; Volume 5: Objectives for Development &amp; Learning</i> ; and the <i>Teaching Strategies GOLD™</i> assessment system suggest pairing children who are dual-language learners with children who are more proficient in English. They also offer ideas for guiding activities with small groups of children whose skill repertoires vary.

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Social-Emotional and Environmental Supports, continued			Oral Language Supports, continued		
<p><b>Children need spaces where they can get away from the pressures of communicating or interact individually with another child or adult</b> (Tabors, 2008).</p>			<p><i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 2: Interest Areas</i> gives teachers guidance on setting up interest areas, including suggestions for cozy spaces where children may be by themselves or with one other child.</p>		
Oral Language Supports			<p><b>A solid foundation in their home languages helps children acquire English</b> (Garcia, 2003).</p>		
<p><b>Small-group and individual learning experiences, including time for reading together and informal conversations, promote children's receptive and expressive English language skills</b> (Torgesen, 2002).</p>			<p><i>Volume 1: The Foundation; Volume 3: Literacy; and Volume 5: Objectives for Development &amp; Learning</i> guide teachers in scaffolding instruction for children with diverse proficiency levels. Instructional and assessment strategies are provided for different levels of English language acquisition. Key vocabulary is taught through songs, poetry, chants, games, role-play, e-books, and read-alouds.</p>		
<p><i>Intentional Teaching Cards™</i> present a variety of engaging small-group activities that support children's development and learning in English and in Spanish. Teachers are guided to introduce new ideas first in children's home languages to promote concept and vocabulary development. With the Spanish activity on one side of the card and English on the other, the <i>Intentional Teaching Card™</i> activity can be presented to Spanish-speaking children first in Spanish and then, a few days later, in English.</p>			<p><i>Book Discussion Cards™</i> in Spanish help teachers intentionally introduce new vocabulary and promote children's receptive and expressive Spanish-language skills through repeated read-alouds and meaningful exchanges.</p>		
<p><b>Pairing nonverbal communication (e.g. gesturing, physical demonstrations, and facial expressions) with English words aids children's comprehension</b> (Goldenberg, 2006).</p>			<p><i>Mighty Minutes™</i> in Spanish provide teachers with interactive songs, rhymes, finger plays and other enjoyable activities to maximize learning during brief transitional periods throughout the day.</p>		
<p><b>Children need intentional oral language supports to help them learn English</b> (Castro et al., 2006).</p>			<p><i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 3: Literacy</i> offers practical strategies for communicating with young English-language learners. These include parallel talk, self-talk, repetition, extension, peer and teacher modeling, and keeping directions and other language short and simple. Daily oral language activities spark purposeful, authentic communication with English-language learners.</p>		

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Oral Language Supports, <i>continued</i>			Literacy Supports, <i>continued</i>
<b>Children's prior knowledge and experiences should be incorporated into the program to make learning relevant for them</b> (Goldenberg, 2006).	<p>The studies featured in <i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool Teaching Guides</i> are in-depth investigations designed to engage children in interesting topics that are relevant to their daily lives. All children, including dual-language learners, have prior knowledge of and experience with the study topics, such as clothes, trees, and balls. Each study is organized as a series of investigations. Each investigation is based on a meaningful question that encourages children's active participation. Strategies for encouraging family involvement are also provided.</p> <p><i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation</i> offers extended discussions of family–teacher partnerships and of the importance of varying teaching strategies in response to differences among individual children. <i>Volume 2: Interest Areas</i>, includes letters that may be adapted to support communication between teachers and families.</p>	<b>Reading experiences for dual-language learners should include read-alouds in their home languages and books related to children's prior experiences and daily lives</b> (Castro et al., 2006).	<p>The children's books included in <i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool</i> were carefully selected and developed to represent a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. This rich collection of literature in Spanish and English includes alphabet books, counting books, nonfiction books, concept books, and narrative picture books that encourage children's exploration, interaction, and enjoyment.</p> <p><i>Book Discussion Cards™</i>, in Spanish and English, provide teachers with specific, sequential guidance for conducting repeated read-alouds. They emphasize comprehension and recall skills while promoting vocabulary and higher-level thinking skills.</p>
Literacy Supports			Mathematics Supports
<b>Children who are learning English benefit from opportunities to see their home languages as well as English written and used in the classroom</b> (Tabors, 2008).	<p><i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 3: Literacy</i> provides guidance for labeling materials, interest areas, and wall posters in families' languages. It also explains how to color-code languages to help children distinguish them.</p> <p><i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 2: Interest Areas</i> and <i>Volume 3, Literacy</i> present techniques for incorporating print materials in the children's home languages throughout the interest areas and even outdoors. Teachers are encouraged to include print that is meaningful, functional, and interesting. Many specific examples are provided.</p> <p>The Spanish and English <i>Teaching Guides</i> include daily and weekly plans with shared writing activities.</p>	<b>Language plays a central role in teaching and learning mathematics. Words can help anchor concepts and questions can lead children to explore mathematical ideas</b> (Robertson, 2009).	<p><i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 4: Mathematics</i> includes detailed information about how teachers can support English- and dual-language learners in learning mathematics. Specific hands-on strategies for teaching mathematical concepts and helping children learn mathematical terms are included.</p> <p>Practical guidance is provided to help teachers understand the components and process skills of mathematics and how to make mathematics comprehensible and fun for children who are learning English.</p>
Assessment Supports			

What Research Says About English- and Dual-Language Learners	Components of <i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool</i>
Assessment Supports, continued	
<b>Children should be assessed in their home language as well as in English</b> (Espinosa, 2009).	<i>Teaching Strategies GOLD™</i> is a research-based tool for assessing all areas of children's development in both English and Spanish. It includes objectives, indicators, and examples that specifically reflect the unique patterns of Spanish language and literacy development.
<b>Teachers should assess children's progress in acquiring English</b> (Espinosa, 2009).	<i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool</i> and <i>Teaching Strategies GOLD™</i> include objectives for children's acquisition of receptive and expressive skills in English. Assessment strategies are also suggested in <i>The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 3: Literacy</i> .

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