

FAMILY HANDOUT

How Your Family's Language Goals and Practices Support Multilingualism

This handout offers a way for you and your family to share your ideas about the language goals you hold for your child. After watching short videos of families, you can reflect on what you saw and how it relates to your own family's approach to multilingualism. Communicating in your home language is critical to children's language development. A strong start in the home language can help children become multilingual and can foster socio-emotional well-being through stronger family ties, positive multilingual self-identity, and cultural connections.

Guiding Principles: Language Goals and Practices

As you think about and set your own family language goals and practices, these research-based principles can inform your approach:

- Setting language goals for children's multilingual development guides intentional family language practices.
- Your everyday family language practices are central to children being able to hear and use each language.
- Practices that sustain culture and language support children's social and emotional well-being and strengthen family ties.
- Together, families and educators can partner to promote multilingualism for children at home and at school.
- Communities that value multilingualism create opportunities to sustain families' culture and language.

The term "home language" is inclusive of children with one home language and children raised in families with two or more home languages.

Watch, Discuss, and Reflect

Watch

Family Language Goals and Practices for Max



Mom (Debbie): "My hope for Max is to instill love for his culture through language. And I'm hoping he can help others within our community."

"My parents mainly talked to him [Max] in Spanish. I think we had this unspoken agreement that they would take care of the Spanish and I would take care of the English aspect."

"The challenges I face with Max's bilingualism would be . . . sometimes I forget to speak in Spanish because I'm mostly speaking English in my work or out at the store. . . . There's also the pressure of society, of fitting in and wanting to speak English all the time."

"I chose the Lighthouse for Max because I can see how involved they are with their students. . . . I believe that the teachers here support Max to be bilingual."

"What I like to do is open up our family photo album, and I talk to [Max] about our family and our cultures. . . . I also like to implement playdates with other children who speak Spanish. He has cousins who only speak Spanish."

"Max is exposed to the Vietnamese culture as well. . . . My mother-in-law, she only speaks Vietnamese, but Max loves her. He's very open to the different foods and to their customs as well. They do things a little bit differently, but he's super open to it and he loves visiting with my husband's [Max's stepdad's] side of the family."

Family Language Goals and Practices for Zadie



Mom (Jennifer): "Since she was a little girl, her father and I have spoken to her in Spanish, since I was pregnant. . . . And my goal is for her to keep on learning Spanish with her grandma, with me, and her father."

Mom: "And as I say, you have to be bilingual in order to get a decent job; to be able to communicate with other people at school, in her community."

Grandma: "I sing, I dance, I read stories to her, I tell her stories about me, about my family in Mexico."

Grandma (Concepción): "And that is my dream—to see her grow, to keep on instilling to her the Spanish language because English she will learn at school. So that she keeps on studying all the way. . . . And that she follows her grandma's example, . . . and her mother's example."

Family Language Goals and Practices for Julian



Mom (Karen): "We have made the decision as parents that we speak Spanish at home and at school they speak English, but never to stop speaking Spanish to him."

Dad (Julio): "I have always spoken this language and I believe that for me it was very important to instill in my son at an early age to learn this language so he could express himself and communicate with people from my family. . . . I believe it is crucial to speak it and understand it so perfectly so that doors may open anywhere."

Dad: "I think he [Julian] learned a lot of things in Spanish because we used to play a lot with stuffed animals, little cars, and over time he started to use the same words that I used when we were playing, he himself says those words."

Mom: "It is very important, and you have to be aware of the value that when you grow up, knowing both languages helps you, and it opens the doors to many things in life."

Discuss

- What connections between language and culture did families talk about?
- What goals did families hold for children's multilingual learning, and how did families reach them?
- What influence did family members, school, and community have on children's everyday multilingual learning?

Reflect: Setting Your Family Language Goals and Practices



What goals do you have for your child's language development in the home language? In English?

What are some of your reasons for those goals?

Which family members can help your child to better learn specific languages? What opportunities does your child have to engage with those family members on a regular basis? Who else can help in this way?

What activities, events, and celebrations do you participate in as a family that promote the value of being multilingual and multicultural?



How does your child's early learning and care program partner with you to support your child's language learning?

What language resources does your community offer?