

## PART 4.1 FAMILY HANDOUT

# How Play Supports Your Child's Home Language

This handout offers a way for you and your family to share your ideas on the connections between home language development and everyday play interactions. After watching two short videos of families, you can reflect on what you saw and how it relates to your own family's way of interacting. Communicating in your home language when playing with your child is critical to their language development. A strong start in the home language can help children become multilingual and can foster social-emotional well-being through stronger family ties, positive multilingual self-identity, and cultural connections.

### Three Key Ideas: Connection, Communication, and Consistency

Three key ideas frame children's language learning and guide our exploration:

- **Connection.** Joyful connections between children and their families provide children with opportunities for learning their home language.
- **Communication.** Communication with children during everyday interactions develops their home language.
- **Consistency.** Consistency when using their home language gives children many opportunities to hear and practice their home language throughout the day, and every day.

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: Julian Plays with Grandpa



#### Discuss

- **Connection.** In what ways did Julian and his grandpa, Carlos, show joy? In what ways did Carlos follow Julian's lead?
- **Communication.** How did Carlos use language with Julian, and how did Julian respond?
- **Consistency.** Do you imagine that Julian and Carlos play frequently using their home language? Why or why not?

#### Reflect

- How do you use your home language with your child, and how does your child respond?
- In what ways are you thinking about your child's home language development as part of your family's everyday interactions and routines?

## Watch: Zadié Plays with Mom and Grandma



### Discuss

- **Connection.** In what ways did Zadié, her mom Jennifer, and her grandma, Concepción, show joy? In what ways did Jennifer and Concepción follow Zadié's lead?
- **Communication.** How did Jennifer and Concepción use language with Zadié, and how did Zadié respond?
- **Consistency.** Do you imagine that Zadié, Jennifer, and Concepción play frequently using their home language? Why or why not?

### Reflect

- How do you use your home language with your child, and how does your child respond?
- In what ways are you thinking about your child's home language development as part of your family's everyday interactions and routines?

## Strategies to Promote Home Language Learning

The videos show families connecting joyfully, communicating during everyday moments, and consistently using their home language. In the videos, adult family members act as home language models for children. Families also make connections to culturally meaningful materials, objects, and family practices. Table 1 provides more information on the ways in which families act as strong language models.

**Table 1**  
**Families as Strong Home Language Models<sup>1</sup>**

What are the strategies?	What do the strategies look like in action?
<b>Listen attentively and responsively to children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen and carefully observe children’s verbal and nonverbal communication</li> <li>• Respond to the specific information in children’s communication</li> </ul>
<b>Extend and expand children’s communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe what children say and do</li> <li>• Repeat what children say</li> <li>• Ask open-ended questions</li> <li>• Engage in back-and-forth exchanges</li> <li>• Include singing, reading, and writing in children’s play</li> <li>• Make connections to family cultural traditions and practices</li> </ul>
<b>Support children’s concept and vocabulary development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use new words and rich vocabulary</li> <li>• Describe your own thoughts and actions</li> <li>• Explain and talk about concepts, ideas, actions, and feelings</li> </ul>
<b>Start and continue conversations with children about their interests and experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with children during play, routines, and family activities</li> <li>• Follow and expand on children’s interests</li> <li>• Support children to act out real-life experiences</li> <li>• Make connections to family cultural traditions and practices</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Language Learning Project. (n.d.). Supporting Home Language through Language Models [Video]. Vimeo. <https://www.multilingualearningtoolkit.org/resource/video-supporting-home-language-through-language-models/>