

# Fostering Dual-Language Learning in a Bilingual Infant/Toddler Classroom

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## “Come tu pollo.” “I did eat my chicken.”

Throughout the school year, teachers have noticed the children showing an interest in learning Spanish; one of the teachers in this classroom is fluent in Spanish and has been able to expand upon their interest in several ways. These include labeling classroom materials, singing songs, reading books, and speaking to children in all Spanish when giving them directives such as “Siéntate” or “sit down.” Teachers have observed children who have developed excellent receptive Spanish language skills. One child, whose home language is English, was told “Tíralo a la basura,” upon which he walked over and threw his paper plate in the trash; a teacher told another child “Come tu pollo” at lunch to which he responded, “I did eat my chicken.” Many of the children can count in Spanish, as well as, say and understand basic phrases such as “ven aquí,” or “come here.” Using two languages in the classroom also helps to make children who speak Spanish at home feel more comfortable in school. Incorporating multiple languages will allow teachers to promote a love of both languages for the children.

## Working with Environmental Print in Spanish and English



## Bilingual Brain Benefits

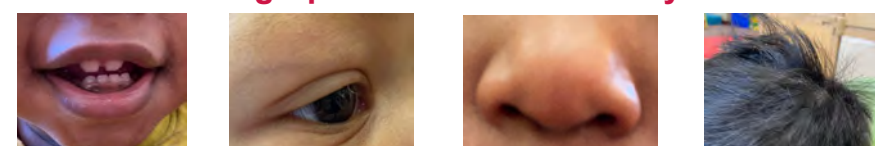
- Attention skills improve as children concentrate on which language to use.
- School engagement and performance scores are higher among children in dual language or language immersion classrooms.
- Empathy is strengthened as children count on social cues to figure out which language to use.
- Reading skills are built up because children must practice decoding two texts.
- Diversity and integration are a natural part of the classroom and can improve children's sense of belonging.

## Classroom Recommendations

- Incorporate children's home languages in the classroom
- Fill bookshelves with bilingual and monolingual books
- Ask families to provide and label photos in both languages
- Label classroom items in home languages
- Play music from various cultures and in various languages
- Learn and utilize 10-20 words from the languages of the children
- Use pictures to help children communicate and build vocabulary



## Modeling Spanish Words for Body Parts



BOCA

OJO

NARIZ

PELO



## Receptive Language Comprehension and Expressive Language

Dual language education helps children to experiment with different sounds and develop word usage. The children in have demonstrated an understanding of requests or statements of those around them in both Spanish and English. Many of the children have basic expressive Spanish as well, for example they often greet teachers with an “hola” in the morning.

## Exploring Colores/Colors



## Reading Spanish Books Together



## Conclusion

It is beneficial to have dual language learning in the classroom. By speaking two languages, the children begin to acquire a knowledge of both languages which can improve their attention, their language development, their empathy, as well as helping with diversity and inclusion. The children have been exposed to both English and Spanish for several years in the multi-age classroom. They already understand some phrases in Spanish. For example, ven aquí (Come here), ponte los zapatos (put on your shoes), lavate las manos (wash your hands), vamos a leer un libro (let's read a book). Native Spanish speaking children are welcomed into the classroom with the inclusion of their home language. This has helped the children connect with people of different cultures and backgrounds; it has allowed the Spanish speaking families to feel a connection with the teachers. “It is very important to realize that acquiring a language requires a lot of exposure to it,” said Erica Hoff, a developmental psychologist who is a professor at the Florida Atlantic University.

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