

# What is it in Spanish?: Integrating Multiple Languages in the Classroom

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## Introduction

Upon walking into the classroom, a visitor would immediately see a group of excited, curious, and diverse 3, 4, and 5-year-old students. Some would be engaging in quiet independent play, others would be deep in imaginative play with their classmates, and a few would be having a conversation with one of the three teachers. No matter how the students are engaging in play, language is always part of the equation. Language is defined as "a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release (Robins, 2021).

## Incorporating Spanish into the Daily Curriculum

With classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, incorporating Spanish (and other home languages) is always going to be beneficial.

Here are several ways that Spanish is woven into the curriculum:

- Utilizing bilingual students in the classroom as a resource to teach other students words in their home language
- Teaching colors, numbers, and foods in Spanish through repetitive songs and rhymes
- Labeling and referring to common items in the classroom using both Spanish and English
- Providing a variety of age-appropriate literature in Spanish and English
- Providing/offering family communication in home languages
- Adding/incorporating Spanish language into greetings, conversations, and familiar routines such as calendar time and gross motor activities

### Examples of Bilingual Literature in the Classroom



## Use of ASL in the Classroom

There is evidence that Sign Language, when used before a child can speak, helps that child to express themselves with gestures; this ability can have long-term benefits on children's social emotional capabilities and their ability to express themselves orally in the future (Hakim, 2016).

- Teach basic signs to students such as "stop", "potty", and "more" in conjunction with spoken language
- Introduction to letters of the alphabet and relate signs to letters in students' first names
- Reinforcing verbal commands like "stop" when volume level is high in the classroom or because we are wearing a mask
- Feature pictures of various emotions and corresponding signs in a calm corner



*"Language is not always verbal. We need to find the best way for children to communicate."*  
-Cassandra Rosile, M.S., CCC-SLP,  
Bilingual Speech Language Pathologist



## CONNECTIONS TO EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS

### Language & Literacy

- With modeling and support, use words acquired through conversations and shared reading experiences.
- Identify real-life connections between words and their use.
- With modeling and support use phrasing, intonation and expression in shared reading of familiar books, poems, chants, songs, nursery rhymes or other repetitious or predictable texts.

### Social-Emotional

- Engage in extended, reciprocal conversations with familiar adults.

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