Home Language and Dual Language Learners

**POLICY / APPROACH:**

Our approach to children’s language acquisition is developmentally and linguistically appropriate, recognizing that children have individual rates of development as well as individual interests, temperaments, languages, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles. We provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity, and family composition. Children develop best if they have continued opportunities for learning their home language as well as developing skills in English. Communication with children and families will be in the family’s primary or preferred language, through bilingual staff or interpreters, who understand and support each family’s home culture.

**HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:**

1302.31(b)(2) Education and Child Development Program Services: For dual language learners, a program must recognize bilingualism and bi-literacy as strengths and implement research-based teaching practices that support their development.

1302.31 (i) For an infant or toddler dual language learner, include teaching practices that focus on the development of the home language and expose the child to English.

1302.33(c) Characteristics of screenings and assessments

1302.35(c)(4)(i) For infants and toddlers, focus on the development of the home language, while providing experiences that expose both parents and children to English.

1302.51(a)(1)(3) Parent activities to promote child learning and development.

1302.90(d) Communication with dual language learners and their families.

1302.101(b) (2) Program Management and Quality Improvement: Coordinated approaches that ensure the full participation of children who are dual language learners and their families.

**PROCEDURES:**

Early Head Start and Head Start provide ongoing coordinated approach to support for continued development of each child’s home language using the Planned Language Approach. This includes:

Assessment and Screening: screening for children is completed in their home language with tools that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, ongoing, and completed by a person who speaks that language. Language neutral / language free assessment for cognitive, social
emotional and physical development is completed. Children’s language development is assessed in their home language, as well as their English language acquisition.

Early Head Start: For an infant or toddler dual-language learner, home visits, classrooms and socializations include teaching practices that focus on the development of the home language when there is a teacher with appropriate language competency. Experiences are provided that expose the child to English.

Home visits and Conferences: Home Visits and other communications are conducted in the children and families’ primary or preferred language and / or through an interpreter. Family conference forms include information on children’s strengths in Spanish language and literacy as well as the acquisition of English. Individual goals for children who are DLL’s include steps for maintaining home language at home and school.

Materials: Written materials are translated into the family’s home language. Classrooms are labeled in the primary languages of children in the class, including various postings and materials to reflect the current cultures, (e.g. books, alphabets, toys, artifacts, instruments, songs, etc.). English: black ink; Spanish: blue ink; and other languages: green ink. Activities are adapted to meet the needs of children who are DLL’s (e.g. visual, picture schedule, etc.)

Teaching principles: Each child and family’s unique culture and ethnic background is supported, free of stereotypes or assumptions. Classroom staff members include qualified native speakers when possible. All classroom and home visitors staff will be trained and have an understanding that language learning happens when children have opportunity to hear and respond to language, are involved in back and forth conversations, are interested, and hear different words in meaningful ways. Staff will focus on research based principals of promoting the “Big 5” which will lead to later school success:

- 1. Background Knowledge
- 2. Oral Language and Vocabulary
- 3. Book Knowledge and Print
- 4. Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing
- 5. Phonological Awareness

Parent Education: Teachers, Specialists and Family Advocates promote and teach families about the importance of maintaining the home language for their child. Families will be informed of all procedures to support DLL in the classrooms.