WIDA™ Early Years

Making Connections:

Using the Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards and WIDA Early Years Resources to Plan Instruction for Young Multilingual Children

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Overview of WIDA and WIDA Early Years

WIDA, an organization within the University of Wisconsin–Madison, works to advance academic language development and academic achievement for culturally and linguistically diverse children and youth through high-quality standards, assessments, research, and professional learning for educators. WIDA resources for K–12 systems are used by 40 states, territories, and federal agencies, as well as over 500 international schools around the globe.

WIDA Early Years promotes equitable early care and education (ECE) opportunities for young multilingual children. It is a unique system of services and resources focused specifically on promoting multilingual children's language development. WIDA Early Years was established to support the growing number of children in ECE settings who are developing two or more languages.

WIDA Early Years partners with state agencies to provide comprehensive services and access to resources for state leaders, higher education faculty, and ECE professionals who serve multilingual children and families. To learn more about WIDA Early Years and our member states, visit wida.wisc.edu/EarlyYears.

Virginia Partnership Snapshot

In October 2021, the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Division of Early Childhood Care and Education entered into a partnership with WIDA Early Years as a new member state. Made possible by the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, this collaboration focuses on addressing a need throughout the state for professional learning resources focused on supporting young multilingual children and their families. In its inaugural partnership year, the Division of Early Childhood Care and Education launched statewide access to WIDA Early Years eLearning, a series of self-paced online modules and webinars for ECE educators.

Section 1: Introduction

Multilingual children bring to their **early care and education** (ECE) environments a wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as cultural and linguistic resources that help them learn, grow, and flourish. These resources, or assets, have the potential to enrich the learning opportunities for everyone present in a child's ECE environment, including all children and adults (WIDA, 2019). Like many ECE educators who work in linguistically diverse environments and plan instruction for young children, you may be asking yourself:

- What should I know and consider when planning instruction for multilingual children?
- How can I use standards to plan instruction that engages children in learning while also promoting multilingual children's language development?
- What can I do to plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children?

If questions like these are coming to mind, we invite you to continue reading Making Connections as it can help answer these questions and more.

Making Connections introduces several key terms which you will find in **bold** throughout the document. Some terms are defined in the sections they appear, but not all. See the Glossary for a full list of key terms and definitions.

Multilingual children are culturally and linguistically diverse children, ages birth to five years, who are learning two or more languages. Multilingual children are exposed to multiple languages in their homes, communities, and/or ECE settings, and they develop and use language in dynamic ways. In the field, these children are commonly referred to as dual language learners, or DLLs.

The Need for An Equity Lens When Working with Standards

You may have noticed we referenced the term *standards* in the previous section. As you will see, Making Connections examines the use of standards when planning instruction for multilingual children. Early learning and development standards, sometimes referred to as *early learning standards* or *early learning guidelines,* are available in all 50 states and the District of Columbia (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2019). In essence, early learning and development standards outline what young children participating in ECE programs, such as preschool or PreK, should know and be able to do (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). However, a review of several states' early learning and development standards found a need for state standards to comprehensively address the learning and development, including **home language** and English language development, of multilingual children (Espinosa & Calderon, 2015).

> ### Our Commitment to Equity for Multilingual Learners
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> WIDA has historically grounded its work in language development standards as a driver of equity for multilingual learners in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Making Connections presents the WIDA Early Language Development Standards and reflects this continued commitment to equity for young multilingual children in ECE settings.

To promote equity for multilingual children, it is vital for educators to take intentional steps in the planning of their instruction to ensure it is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate (Espinosa, 2020; National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2019). Since standards are often used to guide **curriculum** and instruction, we must look at them through an equity lens. When we work with standards through an equity lens, we interpret, or make sense of, standards in ways that allow us to see and consider the assets multilingual children bring to their learning, the many ways they can demonstrate their learning, and ways that we can use resources in our **environment** to ensure multilingual children have equitable opportunities to learn and develop language. Making Connections applies an equity lens to working with standards.

> ### Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards
>
> [Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Birth-Five Learning Guidelines](#) were published March 18, 2021. VDOE collaborated with over 300 early childhood experts and diverse stakeholders to develop the new standards, intentionally and persistently keeping equity for all learners, cultural responsiveness, and inclusiveness as integral to the process and final content. The new standards align to Virginia's Kindergarten Standards of Learning, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes framework and the state kindergarten readiness assessments (i.e., [the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program](#)).

Purpose of Making Connections

Making Connections is a resource for ECE professionals that

- Raises awareness about considerations needed when planning instruction for young multilingual children using standards;
- Introduces the concept of a **language-focused approach** to planning instruction;
- Provides an introductory overview of key WIDA Early Years resources; and
- Offers suggestions, tools, and sample plans to help teachers "make connections" between WIDA Early Years resources and their state's early learning and development standards.

An Intentional Focus on Planning

It is beyond the scope of Making Connections to comprehensively discuss teaching and learning cycles and all considerations necessary for providing multilingual children equitable, high-quality learning opportunities. We invite readers to use Making Connections as an introductory resource for deepening their knowledge and understanding about planning equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children.

Intended Audience

Making Connections is primarily written for ECE educators who plan, or will be planning, standards-based instruction for 3- and 4-year-old multilingual children. This may include ECE educators who work in center-based or home-based programs, state-funded preschool programs, and pre-service ECE teachers. In this document, *teacher* is used to refer to this primary audience.

Frequently Asked Questions About Audience and Use of Making Connections

Is this resource for me?

We recognize there are a variety of ECE professionals who collaborate with and provide support to teachers that may also benefit from Making Connections. This includes

- Instructional coaches and teacher mentors
- Paraprofessionals
- English learner (EL) specialists
- State- and local-level program leaders and administrators
- Teacher education faculty
- Home visitors
- Childcare providers
- WIDA Early Years Professional Learning Cohort facilitators/trainers

Is this meant to be used individually or can I use this resource with others?

Making Connections is an invitation for collaboration among all adults who serve multilingual children. It can be used

- To guide instructional planning through collaborative relationships (e.g., coaching, mentoring, co-teaching, family and community partnerships)
- As a resource for professional learning communities (PLCs)
- By faculty teaching coursework on multilingual children
- As a tool to initiate dialogue among state and local leaders around providing resources and support for ECE teachers

Is it okay to adapt the tools provided in Making Connections?

Making Connections is also an invitation for you to use the tools provided and adapt them as necessary so they work for you and the multilingual children in your care. We invite you to think of ways you can make the resources and tools presented here your own.

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Equity and Advocacy for Young Multilingual Children

At WIDA we are committed to advancing equity and social justice for multilingual children and youth in ECE and K–12 settings. This work includes challenging linguistic discrimination, cultural biases, and racism (WIDA, 2019). WIDA is proud to be one of more than 100 organizations nationwide that endorsed the position statement, Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education (NAEYC, 2019). "All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity" (NAEYC, 2019, p. 1). In addition, all early childhood educators must make it a "professional responsibility to help challenge and change policies, laws, systems, and institutional practices that keep social inequities in place" (NAEYC, 2019, p. 8). For multilingual children—who are often members of linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse groups—equity and advocacy are vital for ensuring they experience ECE opportunities that help them achieve their full potential and flourish as unique, multilingual, and multicultural individuals.

Are you ready to advocate for equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children? Here we list a few talking points to help you start conversations with peers or colleagues around advocacy for multilingual children:

- The nation's population of young multilingual children, ages 0–8 years, is on the rise while the number of monolingual children of the same age is on the decline (Park et al., 2018). ECE teachers must be prepared with the knowledge and skills necessary to plan and provide high-quality care and instruction to multilingual children (e.g., Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center, 2020; García et al., 2010).
- The evidence is clear: learning additional languages in early childhood benefits young children's cognitive and social and emotional development (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017).
- Advocacy requires certain knowledge, skills, access to resources, commitment, and courage. Educators of multilingual children and youth are often expected, or called upon, to serve as advocates for children and families, yet many are not prepared to do so (e.g., Staehr Fenner, 2014). Advocacy for multilingual children can include advocating for changes in program or school climate, change in policy and practice, and ensuring multilingual children have equitable access to resources and opportunities (e.g., Ortiz & Franquíz, 2017).
- Advocates for multilingual children call for equitable policy and clear guidance on the implementation of early learning and development standards and **asset-based**, instructional practice that provides multilingual children high-quality opportunities to learn new concepts while supporting their home language and English language development (Castro et al., 2011; Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center, 2020; Espinosa & Calderon, 2015; Espinosa, 2020).

Want to learn more? We invite you to explore WIDA Early Years resources and read the works cited here (see References section) to deepen your knowledge about equity and advocacy for multilingual children.

Virginia's Commitment to its Values of Equity and Inclusion

Virginia is committed to eliminating the predictability of student outcomes based on race, gender, zip code, ability, socioeconomic status or languages spoken at home. Achieving this vision of equity—specifically *education equity*— requires that expectations for culturally responsive practice among Virginia's early childhood workforce are established and viewed as critical to supporting the effective delivery of care and instruction to Virginia's diverse early learner population. VDOE has clearly articulated this foundational guidance within the ELDS document (see the *Guiding Principles* and *About Culturally Responsive Practice* sections, pgs. 7-8) and is aligning efforts to ensure all children have equitable opportunity to enter school ready to thrive. Visit the *Virginia is for Learners – About EdEquity VA* webpage for more information on the VDOE's equity commitments (#EdEqutiyVA).

A Language-Focused Approach to Planning Equitable Learning Opportunities

As teachers, when we plan instruction, we are designing active and engaging learning opportunities for children. What does this look like when we apply an equity lens? It means we purposefully plan learning opportunities for young multilingual children that provide spaces for them to use their full **linguistic repertoire**—which includes children's home language—to learn, make meaning, and demonstrate their learning (Castro, Espinosa & Páez, 2011; Castro et al., 2011; Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center, 2020; Espinosa & Calderon, 2015). Such spaces allow children to use and develop **expressive language** and **receptive language** skills.

Language is a tool for learning

As children use language, they learn; and as they learn, they use language. Language and learning are deeply intertwined (NASEM, 2017). It is vital to take both into account when planning learning opportunities for multilingual children. Language is, after all, the most powerful tool we have for making meaning and learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

WIDA Early Years resources highlight two language domains:

- **Expressive language:** Language used in speech and writing
- **Receptive language:** Language processed through listening and reading

As you will see, Section 2 of Making Connections provides suggestions and examples of how to consider children's expressive and receptive language as you plan instruction.

In other words, **equitable learning opportunities** for multilingual children allow children to engage in languaging and learning. **Languaging** is using language to make meaning of the world around you and to shape your knowledge and experience (Swain, 2006). It views language as an action word rather than a noun or named language like "English" or "Mandarin." For multilingual children, languaging reflects their full linguistic repertoire.

Languaging refers to the many ways we use language to make meaning of our environments, experiences, and learning.

Key Concepts to Help You Plan for Languaging and Learning

To help teachers think about language in more robust ways as they plan instruction, we introduce the four concepts listed here. Explore the tools and examples in Section 2 of Making Connections to learn how these concepts can help you plan meaningful opportunities for multilingual children to language and learn.

Language Practices	Language Interaction	Language Participation	Language Development
Children use language in dynamic ways to make meaning. How a child uses language will vary depending on the language and culture they have been exposed to, their identity, and where, with whom, how, and why they are using the language.	Children assume a variety of roles as they interact with others. It is important to first affirm the roles children feel comfortable taking on. Gradually invite children to take on varied roles so they have opportunities to try out and use different language.	Children use language for a variety of purposes. It is important for children to have multiple and meaningful opportunities to engage in activities that recognize their assets, stimulate their creativity and curiosity, and encourage them to use language in different ways.	Children develop language as they meaningfully interact with others and explore the world around them. Language development is an interactive, social process that occurs over time (WIDA, 2020). High-quality language interactions promote and support children's unique and dynamic language development.

When we purposefully plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children that allow them to engage in languaging and learning, we are taking a language-focused approach to our planning process. A language-focused approach is

- Rooted in equity and centers on what multilingual children can do with language;
- Promotes the dynamic language and **cultural practices** of multilingual children; and
- Positions **families** as experts who possess valuable knowledge about their children's language development.

In short, a language-focused approach to planning means we apply an equity and language lens to the design of active and engaging learning opportunities for young children. The concept tool on the next page summarizes a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities.

A Language-Focused Approach to Planning Equitable Learning Opportunities

WHAT

A language-focused approach to planning applies an equity and language lens to the design of active and engaging learning opportunities for young children. Early care and education (ECE) teachers who adopt a language-focused approach, purposefully plan, or design, equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children that allow children to engage in languaging and learning. This approach not only promotes children's overall early learning and development, it also promotes multilingual children's home language and English language development.

HOW

- *Reflect on your planning practice.* What sources of information about multilingual children's learning and development—including their home language and English language development—do you consider as you plan? Which standards do you reference as you plan instruction? How do those standards address multilingual children's language development?
- *Focus on what multilingual children can do.* A language-focused approach centers on what multilingual children can do with language. How can you apply knowledge you have about multilingual children to plan equitable opportunities for children to learn and demonstrate their learning?
- *Partner and learn from families.* A language-focused approach positions families as experts in their children's language development. How can you engage in meaningful, two-way communication with families to learn from them about the language children are exposed to and use in their homes and communities? How can you use what you learn from families to inform your planning?
- *Be intentional about addressing equity and language in your planning.* What resources are present in your environment and community that can help you provide multilingual children equitable learning opportunities (e.g., books and materials in children's home language, artifacts representing children's families and communities, volunteers who speak children's home language)?

WHY

Multilingual children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that allow them to use their language as a tool to help them learn, grow, and flourish as valued and unique individuals.

Using Your State Standards and WIDA Early Language Development Standards to Plan Equitable Learning Opportunities for Multilingual Children

Early learning and development standards outline what young children should know and be able to do (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Standards serve as a tool to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Figure 1 on pages 14-15 demonstrates the design and organization of Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards.

In addition to state early learning and development standards, there are also language standards. The WIDA Early Language Development Standards are designed for use with children ages 2.5–5.5 years old and correspond to five domains of children's development and learning: approaches to learning, language and communication development, cognition and general knowledge, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development. These domains are included or reflected to varying degrees in most state early learning and development standards (e.g., see Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2005).

The WIDA Early Language Development Standards are part of a framework, or system, that consists of different resources. This means that when using the WIDA Early Language Development Standards, teachers not only refer to the actual standards themselves and integrate them with their state's early learning and development standards, they also draw from WIDA Early Years resources to help them implement the standards in meaningful and equitable ways (see examples and tools provided in Section 2). The WIDA Early Language Development Standards are available in English and Spanish (see Table 1 and 2 on page 16).

Figure 1: Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards At a Glance

Approaches to Play and Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Communication, Language and Literacy Development
APL1. Curiosity and Initiative APL1.1. Being curious learners APL1.2. Taking initiative **APL2. Creativity and Imagination** APL2.1. Showing creativity and imagination **APL3. Executive Functions and Cognitive Self-Regulation** APL3.1. Focusing and paying attention APL3.2. Building working memory APL3.3. Thinking flexibly and adapting APL3.4. Inhibiting responses APL3.5. Persisting and problem-solving **APL4. Behavioral Self-Regulation** APL4.1. Managing actions and behaviors	**SED1. Positive Self-Concept** SED1.1. Developing self-awareness SED1.2. Developing self-confidence SED1.3. Becoming autonomous and independent **SED2. Emotional Competence** SED2.1. Seeing and naming emotions in self and others SED2.2. Expressing emotions SED2.3. Communicating feelings, wants, and needs SED2.4. Regulating emotions SED2.5. Showing care and concern for others **SED3. Interacting with Others** SED3.1. Developing relationships with adults SED3.2. Developing relationships with other children SED3.3. Engaging in cooperative play SED3.4. Solving social interaction problems	**CLLD1. Communication** CLLD1.1. Understanding verbal and nonverbal cues CLLD1.2. Using vocabulary and nonverbal cues to communicate CLLD1.3. Learning and engaging in conversational interactions **CLLD2. Foundations of Reading** CLLD2.1. Paying attention to print as meaningful CLLD2.2. Understanding ideas, vocabulary, and information in stories and texts CLLD2.3. Learning spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound CLLD2.4. Learning how letters and print work to create words and meaning **CLLD3. Foundations of Writing** CLLD3.1. Drawing, scribbling, and writing to communicate CLLD3.2. Developing writing habits and skills CLLD3.3. Handling writing tools

Health and Physical Development	Cognitive Development
HPD1. Using Senses HPD1.1. Learning through all senses **HPD2. Gross Motor** HPD2.1. Developing large muscle control HPD2.2. Exploring the environment **HPD3. Fine Motor** HPD3.1. Using eyes and hands together HPD3.2. Developing small muscle control **HPD4. Physical Health and Self-care** HPD4.1. Taking care of daily health needs HPD4.2. Adopting safe behaviors HPD4.3. Eating with healthy habits HPD4.4. Developing healthy habits for rest and sleep	**CD1. Science: The Natural and Physical World** CD1.1. Paying attention to the natural world CD1.2. Testing questions and ideas **CD2. Social Science: People, Community, and Culture** CD2.1. Learning about ways that people interact CD2.2. Understanding relationships and connections CD2.3. Learning about differences **CD3. Mathematics** CD3.1. Comparing numbers, counting, and recognizing quantities CD3.2. Understanding number relationships and solving problems using operations CD3.3. Geometric thinking and spatial reasoning CD3.4. Sorting, classifying, and patterning CD3.5. Describing, comparing, and measuring **CD4. Fine Arts** CD4.1. Exploring and expressing ideas through movement and dance CD4.2. Learning about and through music CD4.3. Building understanding, empathy, and relationship skills through drama and theatre arts CD4.4. Using visual arts media to express thoughts and feelings

Table 1: WIDA Early English Language Development Standards	
Standard 1 **Language of Social and Emotional Development**	Multilingual children communicate information, ideas, and concepts for learning and development in the area of social and emotional development
Standard 2 **Language of Early Language Development and Literacy**	Multilingual children communicate information, ideas, and concepts for learning and development in the content area of early language development and literacy
Standard 3 **Language of Mathematics**	Multilingual children communicate information, ideas, and concepts for learning and development in the content area of mathematics
Standard 4 **Language of Science**	Multilingual children communicate information, ideas, and concepts for learning and development in the content area of science
Standard 5 **Language of Social Studies**	Multilingual children communicate information, ideas, and concepts for learning and development in the content area of social studies
Standard 6 **Language of Physical Development**	Multilingual children communicate information, ideas, and concepts for learning and development in the content area of physical development

Table 2: Los estándares del desarrollo del lenguaje temprano del español de WIDA	
Estándar 1 **El lenguaje del desarrollo social y emocional**	Niños multilingües comunican información, ideas y conceptos para el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en el área de desarrollo social y emocional
Estándar 2 **El lenguaje del desarrollo del idioma y alfabetización temprana**	Niños multilingües comunican información, ideas y conceptos para el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en el área de contenido del idioma y alfabetización temprana
Estándar 3 **El lenguaje de las matemáticas**	Niños multilingües comunican información, ideas y conceptos para el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en el área de contenido de las matemáticas
Estándar 4 **El lenguaje de las ciencias**	Niños multilingües comunican información, ideas y conceptos para el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en el área de contenido de las ciencias
Estándar 5 **El lenguaje de los estudios sociales**	Niños multilingües comunican información, ideas y conceptos para el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en el área de contenido de los estudios sociales
Estándar 6 **El lenguaje del desarrollo físico**	Niños multilingües comunican información, ideas y conceptos para el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en el área de contenido del desarrollo físico

What about standards for home languages other than English and Spanish?

The WIDA Early Language Development Standards were specifically developed to support the English and Spanish language development of multilingual children ages 2.5–5.5 years. However, WIDA Early Years resources communicate and emphasize the importance of promoting children's home language and English language development, including languages other than English and Spanish (e.g., see the WIDA Early Years Promising Practices publication). Remember, a language-focused approach calls on teachers to take into consideration what multilingual children *can do* with language, and this includes the many different languages multilingual children and families bring to their ECE settings.

An Introductory Overview of Key WIDA Early Years Resources

This section introduces four WIDA Early Years resources that can be helpful to teachers working with standards to plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children. The resources highlighted here include the:

- WIDA Can Do Philosophy
- WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development
- WIDA Early Years Key Uses of language
- WIDA Early Years Essential Actions

WIDA Can Do Philosophy

The WIDA Can Do Philosophy (2019) is fundamental to our work at WIDA. It is more than a philosophy statement, it is an asset-based mindset and way of being. It advances our core belief that everyone brings valuable resources to the education community. Multilingual children bring a unique set of cultural and linguistic assets that have the potential to enrich the experiences of all children and educators. Educators bring knowledge and skills that help children reach their potential. Families bring knowledge about their children and expertise as children's first teachers. **Communities** offer diverse experiences and resources to build upon children's learning. Leaders bring knowledge and skills, as well as provide access to resources that help all members of the ECE community thrive.

Want to learn more?

This section provides an introduction, not an in-depth explanation, of four key WIDA Early Years resources. We invite readers to further explore each resource to deepen their understanding of the resources and concepts presented within.

Visit the WIDA website (https://wida.wisc.edu/) or contact us at EarlyYears@wida.us for information on how you can access the resources highlighted here or if you have questions about them.

> **How does the WIDA Can Do Philosophy apply to a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities?**
>
> A *can do* mindset, or asset-based thinking, is a necessary element of a language-focused approach. Remember, this approach centers on all that multilingual children *can do* with their language—including their home language and English. By focusing on what multilingual children *can do* with language, we send a powerful message that honors the various ways linguistic diversity contributes to children's learning and to the vibrancy of ECE programs.

WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development

Do bilingual or multilingual children learn language in the same way as monolingual children? How long does it take for children to learn a second language? Will learning more than one language confuse young children? Questions such as these are commonly raised by educators. The WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development (2020) provide ECE professionals with a broad perspective on key concepts related to the language development of young multilingual children. Core concepts embedded within the Guiding Principles include:

- The importance of **sociocultural context**
- Social justice and equity
- Dynamic language practices and language development

> **Sociocultural context** refers to the cultural, political, societal, and at times, historical, factors that shape or inform language development.

These principles can serve as a stepping-stone for expanding your knowledge and understanding of multilingual children's language development. Table 3 lists the WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development. Access the full version from the WIDA website to a see the list of references and key research highlights.

Table 3: WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development
1. Multilingual children are learning more than one language at the same time and adjust the use of their languages to different sociocultural contexts.
2. Multilingual children learn language and culture through their experiences at home, in the community, and in early care and education.
3. The languages and language varieties used by multilingual children and their families are valuable resources to be considered and incorporated into early care and education and into everyday routines and activities.
4. Multilingual children benefit from continuous home language development at all levels of English language development.
5. Multilingual children follow different paths for language development than monolingual children.
6. Multilingual children follow unique paths of language development according to their exposure to and opportunities for using their multiple languages.
7. Multilingual children approach learning language in different ways, with each child bringing a unique set of attitudes, habits, and preferences for language use.
8. Multilingual children, like other children, develop language through play-based activities that invite rich language interaction.
9. Multilingual children are developing language and literacy at the same time that they are also developing physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally.
10. Multilingual children's development of social and developmentally appropriate academic language is a complex and long-term process.

> **How do the WIDA Early Years Guiding Principles of Language Development apply to a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities?**
>
> Knowledge of how the language development and language practices of multilingual children are similar to and different from that of monolingual children is critical information for ECE teachers to have—especially for those who work in linguistically diverse ECE programs. While the tools and examples in Section 2 do not explicitly reference the Guiding Principles listed in Table 3, you will see that key concepts embedded within the Guiding Principles are reflected throughout.

WIDA Early Years Key Uses of Language

Teachers engaging in a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities must find ways to be intentional about the language they use and expose children to, as well as the language they want children to learn and use. It can be overwhelming to think about language in this way given that we are immersed in language, in various ways, throughout the day. The WIDA Early Years Key Uses of language are a resource to help teachers be intentional about language. The Key Uses of language define three specific purposes for using language embedded in early learning and development standards and commonly used in ECE settings (see Figure 2). The three Key Uses of language can serve as a "lens" to help teachers see and think about language in a more intentional way. The Key Uses of language can be found within the WIDA Early Years Can Do Descriptors (2016). They are also available in Spanish and can be found in Los descriptores Podemos: Educación temprana (2016).

Figure 2A: WIDA Early Years Key Uses of Language

Key Uses of Language	Purposes	Example Activities
Express Self	Sharing feelings, needs and wants, choices and preferences Sharing about self and child's own individuality Planning activities with others and assigning roles Negotiating with others, including or inviting others to join in activities	Daily routines Conflict resolution Interactive games Persuading others
Recount	Sharing past events and experiences Retelling stories Sharing discoveries Describing things, routines, pictures, or events	Storytelling Read aloud Show and tell
Inquire	Asking and answering questions Stating predictions and hypotheses Explaining observations, events, or phenomena Discussing topics with others	Science experiments Problem-solving Directions and instructions Presentations

Figure 2B: Los usos clave del lenguaje de WIDA Early Years

Uso clave	Definición	Ejemplos de actividades
Expresarse	Cuando los niños usan el lenguaje para expresar deseos, necesidades, opiniones, preferencias, sentimientos y gustos. También incluye el lenguaje de negociación y persuasión.	Discusión de reglas o rutinas Toma de ciertos roles Juegos o actividades colaborativas Resolución de conflictos
Relatar	Cuando los niños usan el lenguaje para compartir experiencias o descubrimientos, narrar historias o eventos pasados, proporcionar información y describir cosas, imágenes, personas o acontecimientos.	Cuentos o historias Actividades manuales Paseos o visitas a lugares especiales Área de bloques, juguetes o disfraces
Investigar	Cuando los niños usan el lenguaje para hacer y responder a preguntas, expresar curiosidad, categorizar objetos, participar en discusiones y resolver problemas y explorar el mundo. También incluye la creación de hipótesis, explicación de ideas u observaciones, conclusiones y reflexiones.	Experimentos Proyectos en la cocina o el jardín Actividades táctiles o mesas sensoriales Juegos o actividades relacionados con las matemáticas o las ciencias naturales

How do the WIDA Early Years Key Uses of Language language apply to a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities?

The Key Uses of language are a resource to help teachers be intentional about language. The planning tool introduced in Section 2 of Making Connections explicitly includes references to the three Key Uses of language: Express Self, Recount, and Inquire.

WIDA Early Years Essential Actions

The WIDA Early Years Promising Practices (2015) outlines 14 Essential Actions (see Table 4). The Essential Actions are research-based guidelines for supporting young multilingual children's language development. They are also a call for all adults who play a role in the early care and education of multilingual children (e.g., teachers, providers, families, leaders) to collaborate and take action in order to provide multilingual children equitable opportunities to learn and thrive.

No single Essential Action is considered more important than the others and they are not intended to be followed in sequential order. The Essential Actions can be integrated in various ways to help teachers take a language-focused approach to instructional planning. Which Essential Actions do you currently implement and how? Which are you interested in learning more about or trying in your local setting? The possibilities for implementing the Essential Actions locally are endless!

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How do the WIDA Early Years Essential Actions apply to a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities?

We recognize readers will come with various levels of background knowledge and experience with the 14 Essential Actions. We also know from experience in the field that audiences new to the Essential Actions find it easier to start by focusing on just a few at a time. Therefore, we intentionally focus on **Essential Actions 5 and 7** in Section 2 of Making Connections to provide practical examples of how teachers can use the Essential Actions to help them plan instruction.

Table 4: WIDA Early Years Essential Actions
1. Collaborate to ensure that all adults interacting with multilingual children support language development.
2. Gather information about multilingual children's cultures and the languages heard and used in the past and present in order to support language development.
3. Recognize and use the strengths, resources, and experiences of multilingual children and their families to support and enhance language development and learning.
4. Gather, analyze, and reflect on information in order to focus on the developmental nature and unique characteristics of multilingual children's language learning and development.
5. Apply information gathered about multilingual children: their cultures, how they use language, their language development, strengths, and resources.
6. Observe multilingual children's language use and development in a variety of routines and learning experiences throughout the day in all early care and education settings.
7. Connect language standards with early learning standards and guidelines to make curriculum accessible and meaningful for multilingual children.
8. Identify the developmentally appropriate academic language demands of routines, social interactions, and learning experiences.
9. Design language learning experiences with consideration for the sociocultural context.
10. Provide opportunities for all multilingual children to engage in higher level thinking.
11. Identify the purpose of the language used during routines and learning experiences.
12. Plan for language teaching and learning within specific areas of development and learning.
13. Use language supports to help scaffold language development and learning.
14. Provide multiple and meaningful opportunities for multilingual children to use their languages.

Section 2: Getting Started with Making Connections

Where should I begin? How do I get started? If these questions sound familiar, then this section is for you! Here we provide tools and resources to help your instructional planning. We also introduce Ms. Cora, a preschool teacher, and use her story to illustrate how she takes a language-focused approach to planning standards-based learning opportunities. Our hope is that Ms. Cora's story, and the tools and resources provided, help you make connections between your state standards and WIDA Early Years resources.

A Closer Look at Essential Actions 5 and 7

In Section 1 of Making Connections, we briefly introduced the 14 Essential Actions (see Table 4) and stated that Essential Action 5 and Essential Action 7 will be explicitly referenced in the tools provided. Why are we highlighting these two Essential Actions? Making Connections is intended to introduce readers to key WIDA Early Years resources—the Essential Actions being one of them. Therefore, we selected two Essential Actions to provide you examples of how they

> **WIDA Essential Actions**
>
> Look at Ms. Cora's story and sample plans to see how she addressed Essential Actions 5 and 7.

can be used or referred to as you plan standards-based instruction using a language-focused approach. Tables 5 and 6 help you take a closer look at key concepts of Essential Actions 5 and 7 and offer questions to guide reflection about your planning practice. After taking a closer look at these Essential Actions, think about one thing you can do to apply them to your planning practice.

Table 5: A Closer Look at Essential Action 5

Essential Action 5: Apply information gathered about multilingual children: their cultures, how they use language, their language development, strengths, and resources.	
Key Concept: Information about multilingual children's linguistic and cultural assets, interests, experiences, and dynamic language practices is a valuable resource to draw from while planning equitable learning opportunities. Family and community partnerships can help teachers gather such information. While planning instruction, teachers will want to consider their setting, environment, curriculum, activities, and resources as they think of ways to apply this type of information about multilingual children.	
Key Considerations	**Reflective Questions**
Setting: Time and location **Environment:** Physical space and everything in that space, including all materials, perceived attitudes, and messages.	• How does the setting and environment affirm multilingual children's identities, assets, as well as linguistic, cultural, and literacy practices? • How can information gained through family and community partnerships help you create an environment that promotes languaging and learning?
Curriculum: The knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding children are to acquire and the plans for the learning experiences through which their acquisition occurs (adapted from NAEYC, 2020).	• How does the standards-based curriculum reflect the multilingual children being served? How does it build on what multilingual children can do, draw upon their linguistic, cultural, and literacy practices, and foster the strengths they have? • What opportunities are presented in the curriculum for meaningful family and community engagement?
Activities: Learning activities specifically designed by teachers to promote learning and language development.	• How do standards-based activities enable multilingual children to demonstrate and draw upon their knowledge, experiences, and dynamic language practices? • What opportunities are there to meaningfully engage families and community members in such activities?
Resources: Cultural and linguistic experiences, practices, relationships, interests, background knowledge, and artifacts children and adults have acquired from home and the community.	• What resources can you include in your instructional plan to promote languaging and learning? How are children encouraged to utilize resources in the environment? • How can family and community partnerships help you gather resources that reflect children's families and communities?

Table 6: A Closer Look at Essential Action 7

Essential Action 7: Connect language standards with early learning standards and guidelines to make curriculum accessible and meaningful for multilingual children.	
Key Concept: As children use language, they learn, and as they learn, they use language. Understanding the relationship between language and learning helps teachers use standards to plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children. While planning instruction, teachers will want to consider language practices, language interactions, language participation, and language development.	
Key Considerations	**Reflective Questions:**
Language Practices Children use language in dynamic ways to make meaning. How a child uses language will vary depending on the language and culture they have been exposed to, their identity, and where, with whom, how, and why they are using the language.	• What have you observed about multilingual children's language practices? • How can you use these observations to help you use standards to plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children?
Language Interaction Children assume a variety of roles as they interact with others. It is important to first affirm the roles children feel comfortable taking. Gradually invite children to take on varied roles so they have opportunities to try out and use different language.	• What have you observed about roles multilingual children take as they interact with others? Which roles may be familiar to children and which may be new? • How can you use these observations to help you use standards to plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children?
Language Participation Children use language for a variety of purposes. It is important for children to have multiple and meaningful opportunities to engage in activities that recognize their assets, stimulate their creativity and curiosity, and encourage them to use language in different ways.	• How will children be expected to use language to learn and demonstrate their learning during standards-based instruction? • How will you create meaningful and equitable opportunities for multilingual children to use language for these purposes?
Language Development Children develop language as they meaningfully interact with others and explore the world around them. Language development is an interactive, social process that occurs over time (WIDA, 2020). High-quality language interactions promote and support children's unique and dynamic language development.	• What steps will you take to purposefully provide multilingual children ongoing opportunities to use and develop language during your standards-based lesson or unit of instruction? • What steps will you take to interpret and work with standards in ways that are equitable for multilingual children and promote their language development?

Tables 5 and 6 are resources to help you examine more closely Essential Actions 5 and 7. But, remember—there are 14 Essential Actions. So there's so much more to explore! As you become more comfortable addressing Essential Actions 5 and 7 in your planning, we suggest the following next steps to help you deepen your knowledge about the WIDA Early Years Essential Actions:

- Take time to examine the remaining 12 Essential Actions on your own, with a colleague, or within a professional learning community
- Review all 14 Essential Actions and identify which are already a part of your practice and which you may wish to begin to implement or learn more about
- As you explore the other Essential Actions, document your own key considerations and reflective questions

In addition, Figure 3 outlines additional steps you can take for getting started with Essential Actions 5 and 7. There are numerous ways to get started. What will work best for you?

Figure 3: Suggestions for Getting Started with Essential Actions 5 and 7

Review Essential Actions 5 and 7 ➔ review your state and language standards ➔ choose standards ➔ plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children

OR

Use your current plans ➔ review Essential Actions 5 and 7 ➔ choose state and language standards that match ➔ plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children

OR

Use your current curriculum guide ➔ review Essential Actions 5 and 7 ➔ choose state and language standards that match ➔ plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children

OR

Notice a new interest rising during children's play ➔ review Essential Actions 5 and 7 ➔ review your state and language standards ➔ choose standards that match ➔ plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children

Ms. Cora chose this last option. See her story for an example.

Language-Focused Planning Tool and Annotated Guide

The Language-Focused Planning Tool is designed to help teachers get started with a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children. The tool brings together the key concepts and considerations of Essential Actions 5 and 7 (see Tables 5 and 6). To help you use the Language-Focused Planning Tool, we've included an annotated version, which offers helpful guiding questions. The Annotated Guide is shown on pages 26 and 27, followed by the tool itself, on pages 28 and 29. Together, the Language-Focused Planning Tool and Annotated Guide offer one more way teachers can get started with Making Connections. So, what can it look like when a teacher uses these resources to plan equitable standards-based instruction? Review the Annotated Guide (on pages 26 and 27) to familiarize yourself with the tool. See Table 7 to learn more about Environment and Resources, one of the sections in the planning tool. Then read Ms. Cora's story and lesson plans to see examples of how she used the tool to plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children in her classroom.

Tools Available on the WIDA Website

Visit the WIDA website (wida.wisc.edu) to download a blank version of the Language-Focused Planning Tool and a copy of the Annotated Guide.

Table 7: Using Your Environment and Resources to Promote Equitable Learning Opportunities for Multilingual Children
Real Life Objects and Artifacts items representative of children's cultural and linguistic assets
Imaginative Play toys, models, or other representations of real objects and places, costumes and props familiar to children and representative of their families and communities
Groupings partner pairs, small group, large group, groups led by family or community members, teaching team groupings, language groupings
Multiple Means of Communication • spoken and written language • gestures, facial expressions, body language, demonstrations • images, equations/number lines, maps, symbols, diagrams, charts, graphs, visual schedules • photos, pictures and drawings, videos, podcasts, audio books • music, rhymes, chants, fingerplays, games

Language-Focused Planning Tool: Annotated Guide

Teachers can use the guiding questions in this annotated guide to familiarize themselves with the Language-Focused Planning Tool.

State Early Learning Development Standards and **WIDA Early Language Development Standards:** Which state early learning and development standards and WIDA Early Language Development Standards is this plan based on?

Language and Learning Goals: What are the learning and language development goals for the lesson? How are the goals informed by what you know about each child's assets and interests?		
Language Interaction	**Language Participation**	**Language Development**
• What role(s) have multilingual children assumed previously? • Which roles does this standard(s) expect children to assume? Does this represent a shift in practice for multilingual children? • What other opportunities are there for multilingual children to be encouraged to take on new roles? • What opportunities are there to utilize peers and adults as a resource for multilingual children? • How will you plan to use roles multilingual children already assume as a bridge to take on new roles during language interactions?	• How and when have multilingual children used language to express self, recount, inquire? • Which Key Uses of language does this standard(s) expect multilingual children to use: Express Self, Recount, Inquire, other? Will this Key Use of language be new for multilingual children? If not, can you plan to introduce and encourage new ways to use language? • How will you plan to build on familiar Key Uses of language multilingual children are already comfortable with?	• What language practices do multilingual children engage in? • What language do multilingual children understand and use to make meaning? • What language practices are multilingual children assumed or expected to engage in to meet this standard(s)? Does this represent a shift in practice for multilingual children? • How will you plan to expand multilingual children's language practices and language they are familiar and comfortable using?

Participants and Language(s) Used: Which children and adults will be interacting during this activity and what language(s) will be used and encouraged?

Plans
Setting Describe the setting (e.g., indoor dramatic play area, outdoor playground). **Activity** (Circle all that apply) Mealtime   Transitions   Routines   Teacher-Directed   Child-Directed   Large Group   Small Group   Outdoor Play   Other:
Language Interaction How will you plan for roles to be assumed by multilingual children, their peers, and adults during language interactions?
Language Participation How will you plan for encouraging language participation, targeted Key Uses of Language, or other purposes of language use with the lesson?
Environment and Resources How do you plan to use the environment and resources to create equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children? How will you encourage multilingual children to access resources available to them?
Notes Any next steps or reminders that you want to document?

Language-Focused Planning Tool

Teachers can use this tool to get started with a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children.

State Early Learning Development Standards:

WIDA Early Language Development Standards:

Language and Learning Goals:		
Language Interaction	**Language Participation**	**Language Development**

Participants and Language(s) Used:

Language-Focused Planning Tool, page 2

Plans
Setting
Activity (Circle all that apply) Mealtime   Transitions   Routines   Teacher-Directed   Child-Directed   Large Group   Small Group   Outdoor Play   Other:
Language Interaction (Circle all that apply) Listens Only   Initiates Conversations   Shares Ideas   Responds to Questions   Asks for Clarification   Asks for Permission Negotiates/Problem-solves   Explains Why   Other:
Language Participation
Environment and Resources
Notes

A Language-Focused Approach to Planning Equitable Learning Opportunities: Ms. Cora's Story

"Through conversations, I've learned that many families in our class grow their own fruits and vegetables," explains Ms. Cora. "They spend time with their children in the garden and have a lot of gardening expertise." Ms. Cora has noticed that the children's play themes have started to revolve around gardening. "Several children have moved the plastic fruits and vegetables from the dramatic play area to the sand table. They 'grow' food for others to 'cook' in the play kitchen! Other children have been drawing plans for gardens and building them with the tabletop blocks. Some brought vegetables from home to add to our science area—vegetables I have never seen, like Thai eggplants and Asian greens. The children take turns 'working' there, holding pencils and clipboards, answering questions!" Children have extended this theme to the library, art, and outdoor areas, as well. "The families and I are so excited to see the children's curiosity, motivation, and joyful interactions!"

Ms. Cora is a White, 4K (i.e., preschool) teacher in an urban, center-based classroom. Although Ms. Cora is most comfortable speaking English, she practices using phrases and words in other languages she has learned from the children and families she serves. She values the cultures, languages, and experiences of children and families and recognizes these experiences as an important foundation of the curriculum. She respects children as individuals and their families as experts on their children.

Ms. Cora continuously builds reciprocal relationships with families. She partners with family and community members to co-create a linguistically and culturally responsive environment that sends a welcoming message

to children and families—"You belong here." She also strives to increase her expertise by learning about the language development of the multilingual children she serves, utilizing families and other resources, and regularly monitoring her own practices. She intentionally focuses on language while planning for learning. The information she has gathered about children's interests, strengths, and language usage help her effectively plan and teach.

"It is my job to listen, observe, and facilitate children's languaging and learning to further their development," adds Ms. Cora. "I do this for all children, thinking about all areas of development. For the nine children in my group who are multilingual, I understand that they are developing language in unique ways and should be encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning and grow their learning. When planning, I consider their dynamic language practices, language interactions, participation, and language development. I use all the information I have gathered to plan language-rich, culturally responsive care and instruction."

Building on children's interests around gardening, Ms. Cora is busy planning upcoming activities. On the next few pages, see how Ms. Cora used the Language-Focused Planning Tool to apply all that she knows about the multilingual children in her classroom to plan three standards-based activities that provide equitable opportunities for children in her classroom to language and learn. You can also see an example language tool that Ms. Cora uses with her families to learn more about their home languages. You'll notice that when Ms. Cora uses the tools, they extend over multiple pages; feel free to extend and adapt the tools for your own needs.
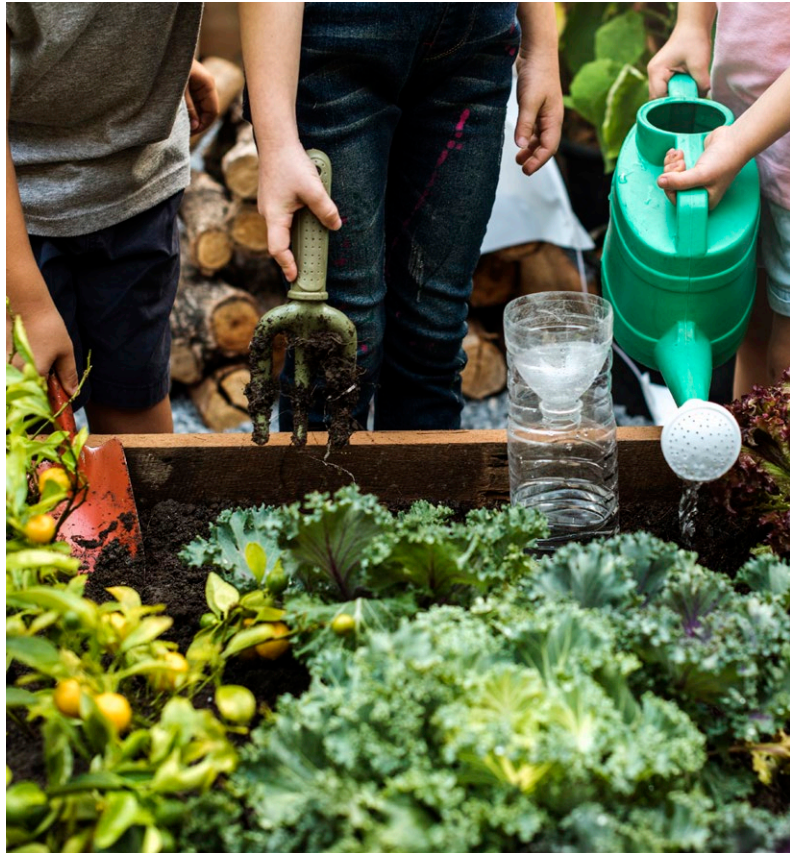
Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards

AREA FOUR: HEALTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT (HPD)
HPD2. GROSS MOTOR; HPD2.2. Exploring the environment; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months Chooses to participate in simple games and other structured motor activities (indoor and outdoor) that enhance physical fitness, such as songs with movement, throwing and catching balls (HPD2.2e) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Develops strength and stamina by spending extended periods of time playing and participating in activities that build strength, speed, flexibility, and coordination (e.g., tag, red light - green light) (HPD2.2f)
HPD3. FINE MOTOR; HPD3.1. Using eyes and hands together; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months Uses tools that require strength, control, and skills of small muscles such as a fork and scissors (HPD3.1i) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Uses objects with ease (e.g., fork, spoon, and sometimes a table knife) (HPD3.1j)

AREA FIVE: COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT (CD)
CD1. SCIENCE: THE NATURAL AND PHYSICAL WORLD; CD1.1. Paying attention to the natural world; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months Notices and talks with adults about changes in nature and in substances (e.g., water to ice) (CD1.1i) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Compares and categorizes observable phenomena (e.g., by collecting, organizing, and describing materials according to their physical characteristics) (CD1.1j) **CD1.2. Testing questions and ideas; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months** With adult support, asks a question, gathers information, and makes a prediction (CD1.2k) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** With adult guidance, plans and conducts investigations (CD1.2o)

WIDA Early Language Development Standards: Language of Science and Language of Physical Development

Language and Learning Goals: Independently engages in and performs fine motor and gross motor tasks; Observes, explores, gathers information, asks questions, and shares information.		
Language Interaction	**Language Participation**	**Language Development**
Roles: Initiates conversations, Asks for clarification, Expands responses to questions, Explains Why	Key Uses of language: Inquiry, Explaining Why	Using full linguistic repertoire to make meaning during language interactions

Participants and Language(s) Used: Multilingual children interacting with each other, peers and adults; Spanish, Hmong, Mandarin, Arabic, and English are used.

Plans

Setting   Afternoon, outdoor play and garden area

Activity (Circle all that apply)

Mealtime   Transitions   Routines   Teacher-Directed   (Child-Directed)   Large Group   (Small Group)   (Outdoor Play)   (Other: Garden)

Language Interaction (Circle all that apply)

Listens Only   (Initiates Conversations)   Shares Ideas   (Responds to Questions)   (Asks for Clarification)   Asks for permission

Negotiates/Problem-solves   (Explains Why)   (Other)

- Roam and model interactions: be sure to encourage children to take on roles I model!
- My Language: **Initiate conversations:** What are you playing? I want to learn. Can you show me, please? I would like to play, please. **Elaborate and clarify/explain why questions:** How do I play? How did you plant that seed? How did you use the shovel to move all that dirt? What do you think our seeds need to be able to grow? Why did you do it that way? Why did you choose that one?

Language Participation

- Ms. Flores (bilingual paraprofessional) to interact with Valentina, Gerardo, and their families
- Children's expressive language Inquiry: What is this? What do you like to eat/play/sing? How do you play? What do I do? What do I do now? First I... This is a... It is a... You do this... I like... My favorite is... Explaining Why: Because... Well, you do it like this because... I like to... I need to because... I want to because... No, you do it like this...

Ms. Cora's Language-Focused Planning Tool: *Outdoor Activity*

Plans
Language Development • Encourage families to use their home language (I will practice other languages.) • Encourage writing: labeling plants, lyrics to a song, how to instructions for a game or for gardening (I can model this.) • My language: How can you draw that? Should we write that? How should I start? What did you do first? Then what did you do? And next? Is there anything else I should know? Is there anything else I show write/draw/say? • Children's Language: First, we, then, next… This is how you sing it… This is what you should do… This is how you play… It goes like this…
Environment and Resources Peer-to-peer adult interactions in a variety of languages, body language and gestures, symbols and drawings, gardening photos, magazines and books, garden and gardening tools, gardening stakes and labels, chart paper, markers, chalk, outdoor play area and outdoor toys, knowledge about gardening, fruits and vegetables and familiar songs, and games children enjoy, valuing all language and cultural practices
Notes • Knowing that **inquiring** and **explaining why** may be a new practice for some children, I am going to also take this opportunity to engage in conversations with family members to discuss my emphasis on explanation and inquiry and see if asking why and explaining why is a valued practice in their family, and if their children engage in this practice regularly. If they do not, I plan to discuss whether it would be a type of interaction and participation the family might consider embracing at home, so the children have practice asking and explaining why in their home language.

Practical Pointers: *Outdoor Activity*

Here are some ways Ms. Cora intentionally embedded a language-focused approach into her planning.

Ms. Cora planned this activity as a free choice activity to allow children and families opportunities to demonstrate and build on what they know and how they use their home language. (See Ms. Cora's later example plan, Creating Language and Literacy Resources, to see how she connected the two activities.)

Garden stakes in multiple languages

This lesson provided a good opportunity for Ms. Flores, a paraprofessional, to interact with two students, Valentina and Gerardo, and their families. Ms. Cora and Ms. Flores discussed the language and learning goals and language examples prior to this activity.

Ms. Flores, Valentina, and Gerardo

Ms. Cora's Language-Focused Planning Tool: *Imaginative Play*

Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards

AREA ONE: APPROACHES TO PLAY AND LEARNING (APL)
APL2. CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION; APL2.1. Showing creativity and imagination; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months Begins to sequence actions in dramatic play (e.g., gathers pots, spoons, and plastic vegetables to "make soup") (APL2.1m); Connects dramatic play to story (e.g., acts as a familiar character) (APL2.1n) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Utilizes realistic and open-ended materials in cooperative play (APL2.1p); Shows purpose and inventiveness in play (e.g., collects different shapes of blocks to build a castle) (APL2.1q)
APL3. EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS AND COGNITIVE SELF-REGULATION; APL3.5. Persisting and problem-solving; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months Remembers solutions discovered before and uses them (e.g., uses a spoon to mix flour and water for playdough when fingers get sticky from using hands) (APL3.5p) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Figures out more than one solution to a problem (e.g., using packing tape with strings to hold cardboard pieces together when masking tape doesn't work) (APL3.5s)

AREA TWO: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SED)
SED2. EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE; SED2.2. Expressing emotions; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months Expresses feelings that are appropriate to the situation (SED2.2i) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Recognizes appropriate reaction to situations (SED2.2k); Uses words and respectful language to express thoughts and emotions (e.g., "I'm frustrated because Jay won't let me play" or "I'm excited to play with my cousin Santiago tomorrow.") (SED2.2l) **SED3. INTERACTING WITH OTHERS; SED3.3. Engaging in cooperative play; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months** Engages in associative play (e.g., playing in housekeeping with each child assuming individual roles) (SED3.3k); Begins to engage in cooperative play, playing with a few other children to carry out familiar roles (SED3.3l); Includes familiar adults in dramatic play (SED3.3m) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Builds on cooperative play, communication, and working memory skills by engaging in dramatic play with several other children, each taking on a particular role in a shared theme (SED3.3n)

WIDA Early Language Development Standards: Language of Social and Emotional Development

Language and Learning Goals: Participates in cooperative, imaginative play with others. Experiments and practices approaches to express needs, solve problems, solve conflicts, and to negotiate.		
Language Interaction	**Language Participation**	**Language Development**
Roles: All, with a specific "look for" around negotiating and problem solving.	*Key Uses of language:* Express Self, Recount, Inquiry, Explaining Why	Using full linguistic repertoire to make meaning during creative, imaginative play; engage in extended conversations

Participants and Language(s) Used: Children, Ms. Flores (paraprofessional), me; Spanish, Hmong, Mandarin, Arabic, and English are used.

Ms. Cora's Language-Focused Planning Tool: *Imaginative Play*

See how Ms. Cora used the tool

Plans

Setting   Choice play time in the morning; kitchen play area and sensory table

Activity   Children can choose their play, but I assume they will continue to use the sensory table as their "garden," cook and serve food in the kitchen area, and play farmers' market. I will ask children prior to sending them off, what they are planning to play. Ms. Flores and I will use the opportunity to observe and note language practices, and use some teachable opportunities that arise to extend the conversations and model some negotiating/problem solving language as we engage in children's play as participants.

Mealtime   Transitions   Routines   Teacher-Directed   (Child-Directed (choice))   Large Group   (Small Group)   Outdoor Play

Other: Imaginative Play Areas   (Teacher–Guided)

Language Interaction (Circle all that apply)

(Listens Only)   (Initiates Conversations)   (Shares Ideas)   (Responds to Questions)   (Asks for Clarification)   (Asks for Permission)

(Negotiates/Problem-solves)   (Explains Why)   Other

- Roam and observe interactions (jot down a few language samples), engage with children in play and model interactions, specifically around negotiating and problem solving
- Our Language: **Negotiating and Problem Solving:** What happened? Is there a problem? Did you talk about it? How do you think you can solve this? Tell me more… What do you need? How can I help? Maybe… What if we try…

Language Participation

- Gather language samples around Key Uses, specifically for Valentina and Gerardo (Ms. Flores), Chue and Henry (Me)

Ms. Cora's Language-Focused Planning Tool: *Imaginative Play*

See how
Ms. Cora used
the tool

Plans
Language Development   • Encourage Children to ask for clarification and express their feelings (I don't like it when… I am upset because… I'm… Why did you do that? Are you… Let's talk about it.)   • Our language: Open-ended questions to encourage expanded conversations (Why… How… Tell me more… What do/did…   • What do you do in your garden at home? How did you all decide to… Why did you do it this way?)
Environment and Resources   Peer-to-peer interactions in a variety of languages, body language and gestures, gardening, cooking, farmer's market and food play items representative of the children's cultural practices, knowledge about gardening, cooking, farmer's market and food, valuing all language and cultural practices
Notes   Schedule a time for Ms. Flores and I to talk about our notes so we can plan some future activities together.

Practical Pointers: *Imaginative Play*

Here are some ways Ms. Cora intentionally embedded a language-focused approach into her planning.

See how Ms. Cora used the tool

Ms. Cora understands that children often use more complex, creative language during play, and play often affords them many opportunities to use language associated with social-emotional development. Therefore, Ms. Cora uses this child-directed activity as an opportunity to both observe children's language use and facilitate, or guide, language interactions. Ms. Cora does not direct or control the play.

Imaginative Play Area

The observations and notes Ms. Cora makes during the children's imaginative play time will help Ms. Cora think about and plan for the roles she and Ms. Flores may want to assume, and the kind of questions they may wish to ask, in future play activities.

Ms. Cora and Ms. Flores document their observations in several ways. They always carry sticky notes and pens, they write in a notebook they share.

Ms. Cora keeps her notebook handy.

Ms. Cora's Language-Focused Planning Tool: *Co-creating Language and Literacy Resources*

See how Ms. Cora used the tool

Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards

> **AREA THREE: COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT (CLLD)**
> **CLLD1. COMMUNICATION; CLLD1.3. Learning and engaging in conversational interactions;DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months** Continues a conversation through several exchanges with or without adult help (CLLD1.3k); Alternates between speaker/listener roles (CLLD1.3l); Asks and responds to questions (CLLD1.3m) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Engages in multiple back-and-forth conversations with adults in ways that can be goal directed (such as solving problems) (CLLD1.3o); Asks and responds to questions with accurate information (CLLD1.4p)
> **CLLD2. FOUNDATIONS OF READING; CLLD2.1. Paying attention to print as meaningful; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months** Understands that the print communicates the message in stories or other texts (CLLD2.1K) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Distinguishes among a variety of texts and their purposes (e.g., books, shopping lists, etc. (CLLD2.1l)

> **AREA FIVE: COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT (CD)**
> **CD2. SOCIAL SCIENCE: PEOPLE, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURE; CD2.2. Understanding relationships and connections; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months** Communicates about self as member of specific groups (e.g., neighborhood, faith community, team) (CD2.2e) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Communicates about self as member of many different groups, such as within a family, classroom, faith community, or sport team (CD2.2g) **CD2.3. Learning about differences; DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS: Early Preschool 34-48 months** Follows caregiver or educator's model to talk accurately and respectfully about similarities and differences present in the group (CD2.3f) **Later Preschool 44-60 months** Communicates about own family's culture and traditions and accepts that children and families are different (CD2.3j)

WIDA Early Language Development Standards: Language of Early Language Development and Literacy, Language of Social Studies

Language and Learning Goals: Orally shares ideas and messages about experiences and learning (home, community, and classroom) related to gardening and food. Understands text printed in books and other sources, no matter the language in which they are written, carries ideas, messages, and meaning. Demonstrates interest and curiosity about other children's home language and cultures.		
Language Interaction	**Language Participation**	**Language Development**
Roles: Listens only, Initiates conversations, Shares ideas, Responds to questions	*Key Uses of language:* Express Self, Recount, Inquire	Children demonstrating their language practices are valued and welcomed by using entire linguistic repertoire to grow language use; sharing language

Participants and Language(s) Used: Me (primarily English), Ms. Flores (English and Spanish), Ms. Cheng (Hmong and English), High School Volunteers (Arabic and English), Children (a variety of languages), Families (a variety of languages)

Ms. Cora's Language-Focused Planning Tool: *Co-creating Language and Literacy Resources*

Plans

Setting Begin day after outdoor activity / Small groups during morning center time / Large groups during several morning circle times
 	
Activity
 	
Small Groups:
• Begin to co-create a garden/food KWWL (Know, Wonder, Where, and Learned) chart and language walls
• Ask children what they know (K), what they still wonder (W), and where (W) we might find out.
• I need to be sure to share the small group plans and language examples with volunteers and Ms. Flores ahead of time so they can be prepared.
   • Ms. Flores (bilingual paraprofessional) – small group of Spanish speakers
   • Ms. Cheng (parent volunteer) – small group of Hmong speakers
   • High school student volunteers – small group of Arabic speakers
   • Me – small groups of English and Mandarin speakers
 	
Large Groups
• Use several large group times to gradually add words/phrases the children have created under the garden/food/photos/real objects/pictures on the language wall
• Add English to the KWWL words/phrases in other languages the children co-created in small groups
• Ask the children and Ms. Flores to help and use the notes the volunteers left me to help translate
   • Me/Ms. Flores – large group/many languages
 	
Mealtime   Transitions   Routines   (Teacher-Directed)   Child-Directed (choice)   (Large Group) (Small Group) Outdoor Play
 	
Other: Home-School Learning and Languaging Extension

Plans
Language Interaction (Circle all that apply) (Listens Only) (Initiates Conversations) (Shares Ideas) (Responds to Questions) Asks for Clarification Asks for Permission Negotiates/Problem-solves   Explains Why   Other • Adults model the roles of Listening, Initiating conversations and Asking questions. Give children an opportunity to ask each other questions and name things. (use popsicle sticks for turn taking) • Our Language/modeling: **Listening** (attentive, looking at speaker, nodding head, smiling **Initiate conversations** Let's talk about... Let's listen to... Let's give a chance to ask a question... {child's name} do you want a turn now to ask a question? **Asking questions:** What have you enjoyed doing in the garden? Tell me about what you did with your family. Do you use some of these tools in your garden? How do you help out in the garden? What kinds of food do you plant? What is this? How do we use it in the garden? Do you eat this food at home? Do you like it? What are some of your favorite foods? Tell us more...
Language Participation Children's expressive language: Express Self: Because... I like to... Yes, I like it... No I don't like it... Recount: It's a... I help... In the garden we... My mom makes... We eat... Inquire (see sample questions above)
Language Development • Encourage children to use their entire linguistic repertoire; take conversational turns; share their home language with others • My sample language script for large groups: **Language Wall:** Let's put some phrases and words up on our language wall. This word is in Arabic. See how beautiful it is written. This says... So where should I put it? Yes, thank you! **KWWL:** Let's keep sharing our questions and all we know with each other. Here is a question in Spanish—I love the way Spanish is written too. Ok, I am going to try and read it. Did that sound OK? I am going to write that question in English too so I can remember what you all wonder. Here is something you know written in Arabic—let's put that in English too.

Ms. Cora's Language-Focused Planning Tool: *Co-creating Language and Literacy Resources*

Plans
Environment and Resources Markers, paper strips for KWWL, large note cards for language walls, words/phrases, photos, drawings, real objects sent in by families, large KWWL chart, space for four small groups to work, place to display food or garden tools that cannot be added to language wall
Notes Future Activities and Home-School Learning and Languaging Extensions: We will make a few garden/food books, using all our languages, that we can use in our class library and send home on a rotating basis. I will ask some of our family/community volunteers to help. Together with the families, we can record some read alouds too, and create song/game books as well. We will also document our learning using photos, text, and other artifacts, and use the wall to engage in conversations with the children (I can send a photo of the wall to families so they have it handy).

Making Connections: Using the Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards and WIDA Early Years Resources to Plan Instruction for Young Multilingual Children

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Practical Pointers: *Co-Creating Language and Literacy Resources*
Here are some ways Ms. Cora intentionally embedded a language-focused approach into her planning.

For this lesson, Ms. Cora considered the messaging she wanted to convey around languaging an important goal. What messaging around languaging would you include in your lessons?

KWWL is a chart (Know, Wonder, Where (we can find out), and Learned) Ms. Cora uses to continuously document and connect children's learning and languaging. This is the first activity in a series of activities Ms. Cora is planning. She plans to add to the KWWL chart often as children continue exploration and activities in the garden, during a cooking activity, during Mealtimes, and as they read and create books and resources together.

Here is the KWWL Ms. Cora is currently creating
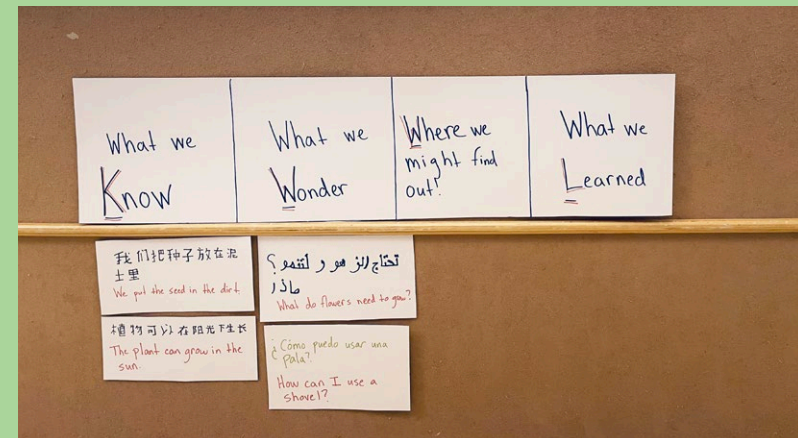
Ms. Cora co-creates the language wall with the children's and families' help and uses it to post words, phrases, drawings, photos and real objects connected to the children's learning and languaging. Language walls can be set up for many different topic/content areas or units of study.

Ms. Cora intentionally waited to begin the KWWL and the language walls until after the outdoor activity so all children had an opportunity to explore and build background knowledge. All of the children's languages will be represented on both resources.

Ms. Cora writes the words the children dictate as captions of their artwork they created for the language walls.

Practical Pointers: *Co-Creating Language and Literacy Resources*

Here are some ways Ms. Cora intentionally embedded a language-focused approach into her planning.

Ms. Cora invited families to share photos and real objects. She also developed a tool that she sent home to families to gather words and phrases connected to the children's learning. She used the tool to begin documenting the words and phrases she has been gathering from families and during small group activities. Ms. Cora engaged the children, families, and community members as respected resources for these activities.

Photo/English	Spanish	Arabic	Hmong	Simplified Chinese
garden				
vegetables				
shovel				

Photo/English	Spanish	Arabic	Hmong	Simplified Chinese
garden	el jardín el huerto	حديقة	vaj zaub	花园
vegetables	las verduras los vegetales	خضار	cov zaub	青菜/蔬菜
shovel	la pala	رفش	Rab duav	铲子

Frequently Asked Questions About Getting Started

Do I choose just one state standard and one language standard?

When deciding how many standards to use in a lesson or unit of study, we recommend you consider your local policy or guidance, setting, and the children, families and communities you serve as the foundation for your curriculum and planning. See Ms. Cora's plans for examples of how to integrate multiple standards.

Do I plan separate activities or can I plan an entire unit?

If connecting state early learning and development standards with language standards is new for you, we suggest you begin by planning just one activity. You can gradually move toward planning an entire unit. We wish to emphasize that whether you are planning one activity or a unit of study, planning should be centered around the children's interests, and their cultural and language practices.

Do I need to make separate plans for multilingual children?

Making Connections offers suggestions for how to get started with a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children. We recognize all young children are developing and using language as they learn, but the language practices and language development of multilingual children may look and sound different than that of their monolingual peers (WIDA, 2019). Therefore, when we do not take steps to intentionally plan meaningful opportunities for multilingual children that promote their learning and language development, we place them at risk of experiencing inequities in our classroom. We invite you to adapt these tools so they work for you and the children you serve.

Do I separately plan for expressive and receptive language?

We recommend you consider multilingual children's expressive and receptive language development in your planning. This includes thinking about the language you will use as you teach and the language children will be exposed to in the learning environment (e.g., materials, artifacts, environmental print) as that is language they will need to process (i.e., receptive language). See Ms. Cora's plans for examples of how to plan for expressive and receptive language.

I work with an English learner (EL) teacher. Do I still need to plan equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children in my classroom?

As advocates for multilingual children and their families, we strongly believe all teachers are language teachers. Therefore, yes, we invite you to explore the tools and resources provided here to help you get started with a language-focused approach to planning equitable learning opportunities. If you partner with an EL teacher, we invite you to find ways to collaboratively explore Making Connections together.

Section 3: Making Connections to the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition: Kindergarten– Grade 12

How do the WIDA Early English Language Development Standards connect to the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards Framework, 2020 Edition? Is Making Connections the same as the WIDA ELD Standards Framework? We recognize that questions like these may be coming to mind for readers familiar with WIDA standards and resources for K–12 or who may work in K–12 systems. As such, we wish to offer a response that promotes collaboration between ECE professionals and K–12 educators who serve young multilingual children. After all, the transition to kindergarten is an exciting time for young children and families that is full of opportunity for collaboration among educators and advocacy for multilingual children.

The WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, is anchored by four Big Ideas (see Figure 4) that are interwoven throughout the new edition. Like the WIDA Can Do Philosophy, they support the design of standards-based educational experiences that are student-centered, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and responsive to multilingual learners' strengths and needs.

Figure 4: Big Ideas in the 2020 Edition

Making Connections illustrates how these Big Ideas are also evident in WIDA Early Years resources. WIDA Early Years

- **Promotes *equity* for young multilingual children.** Our language-focused approach is rooted in equity and promotes equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children.

- **Promotes *collaboration* among all adults in a young child's life.** The WIDA Early Years Promising Practices and Essential Actions, in particular, Essential Action 1, discuss collaboration among adults (e.g., families, community members, educators, leaders). Ms. Cora's sample plans presented in Making Connections offer more examples of collaboration.

- **Offers tools and resources to help ECE professionals *integrate* content and language.** Making Connections offers tools and resources to help teachers integrate state early learning and development standards with WIDA Early Language Development Standards.

- **Promotes a *functional approach* to language development.** As stated in Making Connections, language is a tool for learning. In our work, we strive to raise awareness about the dynamic language practices of multilingual children and the many ways they use language to make meaning, learn, and interact with others and their environment.

We invite you to collaborate with others and explore ways to bring these four Big Ideas to life in your work with young multilingual children.

Glossary

Activities: Learning activities specifically designed by teachers to promote learning and language development.

Asset-based: Assets are resources or strengths. An asset-based mindset allows us to see children and families' cultural and linguistic practices, skills, experiences, and ways of knowing from their homes and communities as valuable resources. *Asset-based* and s*trengths-based* are often used in the field interchangeably.

Community: Refers to the broader environment where children live and grow; communities consist of businesses, organizations, places of worship, and locations where people gather formally or informally (e.g., parks, plazas).

Cultural practices: Dynamic practices, routines, and ways of being shared by members of a group. Cultural practices may change or vary based on context.

Curriculum: The knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding children are to acquire and the plans for the learning experiences through which their acquisition occurs (adapted from NAEYC, 2020).

Environment: Physical space and everything in that space, including all materials, perceived attitudes, and messages.

Early care and education (ECE): the out-of-home settings children attend prior to kindergarten (e.g., formal child care centers, family child care, relative/neighbor care, Head Start programs, school settings).

Equitable learning opportunities: Learning opportunities that not only help each child thrive by building on each one's unique set of individual and family strengths—including cultural background, language(s), abilities and disabilities, and experiences—but also eliminate differences in outcomes that are a result of past and present inequities in society (NAEYC, 2019).

Expressive language: Language used in speech and writing.

Families: Parents, siblings, extended family members, close family friends, guardians, and other adults who contribute in significant ways to children's development and education.

Home language: a term used to refer to the language(s) spoken, heard, and represented in families' homes and communities. For multilingual children and families, home language may include English. We intentionally reference home language and English language development in Making Connections to bring to readers' attention the importance of considering a child's full linguistic repertoire when planning equitable learning opportunities.

Languaging: Using language to make meaning of the world around you and to shape your knowledge and experience (Swain, 2006). It views language as an action word rather than a noun or named language like English or Mandarin.

Language-focused approach: An approach that promotes the dynamic language and cultural practices of multilingual children. It is rooted in equity and positions families as experts. A *language-focused approach to planning applies an equity and language lens to the design of active and engaging learning opportunities for young children.* ECE teachers who adopt a language-focused approach, purposefully plan, or design, equitable learning opportunities for multilingual children that allow children to engage in languaging and learning. This approach not only promotes children's overall early learning and development, it also promotes multilingual children's home language and English language development.

Language development: An interactive social process that occurs over time to expand what children can do with language.

Language interaction: Children assume a variety of roles as they interact with others. It is important to first affirm the roles children feel comfortable taking on. Gradually invite children to take on varied roles so they have opportunities to try out and use different language.

Language participation: Children use language for a variety of purposes. It is important for children to have multiple and meaningful opportunities to engage in activities that recognize their assets, stimulate their creativity and curiosity, and encourage them to use language in different ways.

Language practices: Dynamic and flexible ways of using language. Language practices will vary based on context.

Linguistic repertoire: Languages, language varieties, and registers that combine into a set of dynamic resources from which language users can draw when they communicate. A linguistic repertoire is not fixed from birth. Rather, people develop their language resources as they go through life by engaging in a variety of contexts in local and global communities.

Multilingual children: Culturally and linguistically diverse children, ages birth to five years, who are learning two or more languages. Multilingual children are exposed to multiple languages in their homes, communities, and/or ECE settings, and they develop and use language in dynamic ways. In the field, these children are commonly referred to as dual language learners, or DLLs.

Receptive language: Language processed through listening and reading.

Setting: Time and location.

Sociocultural context: The cultural, political, societal, and at times, historical, factors that shape or inform language development. For example, in early childhood, this can be the relationships and interactions with peers and adults across home, ECE, and community environments that provide opportunities for children to use and develop language. These interactions and relationships, however, occur within societies where historical factors and policies may influence beliefs and practices that impact children's language use and development of their home language and English.

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Making Connections:

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WIDA™ Early Years