Supporting Oral Language Development in Dual Language Learners

Ideas for using this video within your program

Watch the video as a group, or ask staff to watch on their own.

1. At a staff meeting, ask each staff member to write down at least one strategy covered in the video. Review these strategies as a group. Ideas might include:
   - Encourage families to continue to speak the first language at home
   - Use gestures and visual cues
   - Establish routines so children know what to expect
   - Pair dual language learners with peers who can provide support
   - Learn key phrases in children’s first languages
   - Point out cognates
   - Use their language to help them understand what is happening (if you speak the language)
   - Read books or sing songs in both English and their first language (if you speak the language)

Discuss which strategies teachers are already using and what is working well. Which strategies would staff like to try? Ask each classroom team to identify one new strategy they’ll try in the next week. What kind of support do they need to make this happen?

2. As a group, make a list of the languages spoken by the children in the program. Discuss what staff already know about these languages. Are there staff with some language skills? Identify what staff would like to learn.

3. Ask each classroom team to identify a language represented in their classroom that they don’t know much about. Have each team list some key words and phrases they’d like to learn to be able to connect with the children and families in their class and/or that they might like to display in writing in their rooms. Ask staff to identify a resource that can help in their research (e.g., a parent, an online resource, etc.) and then write down the translations for their key words/phrases (making sure they know how to pronounce them as well!). Encourage teachers to try saying the translations at appropriate times in the classroom once they are confident in being able to remember and correctly pronounce them. Teachers should try using the words during group time, so all children can hear, and individually with dual language learners. At a later meeting, reflect on how things went. How did the children respond?

4. Ask classroom teams to identify materials to support children’s first languages (e.g., songs and books in their language, etc.) Would families be willing to share or loan a child’s favorite book or CD? Are there resources available to supplement the classroom’s book collection? Does the local library have children’s books in the languages you need?