


Preschool English Learners
Principles and Practices to Promote
Language, Literacy, and Learning
A Resource Guide


California Department of Education (2007)

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Chapter 1:
Introduction to the Resource
Guide

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A preschool English learner is:

- A child whose first language is other than English and as a result is learning English as a second language
- or
- A child who is developing two or more languages, one of which may be English

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Core Beliefs

- Understanding the English learner requires gathering as much information as possible about the child and his or her family and community.
- There is an important relationship between language, culture, and learning.
- Language is a tool for learning.
- There are multiple paths to childhood bilingualism.

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Core Beliefs

- Language development and learning are shaped by children's experiences.
- Second language acquisition is a complex process.
- Acquiring oral language fluency in English differs from acquiring academic English, the formal language of the school.
- Being able to communicate in more than one language empowers children in a multicultural society.

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Principles and Practices

1. The education of English learners is enhanced when preschool programs and families form meaningful partnerships.
2. Children benefit when their teachers understand cultural differences in language use and incorporate them into the daily routine.
3. Successful practices promote shared experiences in which language is used as a meaningful tool to communicate interests, ideas, and emotions.

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Principles and Practices

4. Language development and learning are promoted when preschool teachers and children creatively and interactively use language.
5. Experimenting with the use, form, purpose, and intent of the first and second languages leads to growth in acquiring the second language.
6. Continued use and development of the child's home language will benefit the child as he or she acquires English.

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Principles and Practices

7. Code switching is a normal part of language development for many bilingual children.
8. Coordination and collaboration among families, teachers, and specialists become crucial in supporting the language and literacy development of children with disabilities and other special needs.
9. Engaging in multiple literacy practices, such as reading books, singing songs, and reciting poetry, is part of the daily life of many families.

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Principles and Practices

10. Offering a variety of opportunities for children to explore written materials and their meanings as well as the sounds of spoken language through rhyme and alliteration builds the language and literacy skills of preschool English learners.

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Questions for Reflection

- What ideas stood out most for you today?
- How can you apply that information to your work now or in the future?
- To apply these ideas, what further information or support do you need?
- What actions do you need to take?
