

Transformative Breakthrough from the Start, Part II

EMPOWERING BILINGUAL FAMILIES AND CHILDREN BY ISABEL LANDA

In my [previous e-resource article](#), I shared my story of connecting with a family and building trust through a shared experience. When the mother felt comfortable telling me her story of the trauma her family faced, trust was built. We were able to make adaptations in the classroom for her child, and we also reflected on best practices for supporting bilingual families. We also discussed the advantages of being bilingual at an early age (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013). Let's take a closer look at what that can look like.

REFLECTING ON BEST PRACTICES

The [Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care](#) (BAS-2) and the [Program Administration Scale](#) (PAS-3) both highlight the importance of soliciting information about the child's developmental history and the family's beliefs, culture, and childrearing practices during the intake process (Talan & Bloom, 2018; Talan et al., 2022).

Building Trusting Relationships

Supporting bilingual families begins well before a child enters the classroom. For families, it starts with the search for your program, reading reviews online, and perhaps taking a tour of the facility. From there, engagement continues through enrollment and the initial stages of the child's experience in your program. It is crucial to create a welcoming environment from the start. Below are some actionable tips for welcoming and supporting bilingual families:

- **Respect Culture, Language, and Community**
 - Learn a few words or phrases in the child's primary language to help them feel more comfortable.
 - Use technology to assist in language learning if an interpreter is unavailable.
 - Add questions to enrollment forms to learn more about the family and community context.
- **Create a Culture of Family Engagement**
 - Utilize a Home Language Survey to learn about the language(s) spoken at home.
 - Maintain daily two-way communication with families in their preferred language, documenting notes and updates about the child's day.
 - Encourage families to share insights about their children, fostering a deeper understanding of their needs and background.
- **Build a Welcoming Environment**
 - Display pictures and posters in the classroom that reflect the diversity of the children and their families.

- Use color-coded labels to represent different languages and make the space more inclusive.

Transformative Thinking for Bilingual Communities

As educators, we must reflect on our practices and take responsibility for how we partner with bilingual families. Consider the following questions to help you assess and improve your approach:

- How do you build trust with bilingual families who may be reluctant to disclose personal information to protect their identity?
- Do you have clear policies to protect bilingual families' linguistic preferences?
- Do you analyze the impact of your work on bilingual families and children?

Though creating change is challenging, it begins with small steps. By understanding your community profile and tailoring intake questions and language surveys to gather more meaningful information, you build trust and authentic relationships with families.

Being bilingual is a unique experience requiring constant learning and growth. We all face challenges in the pursuit of our goals. However, with intentional action, strong partnerships, and a commitment to cultural humility, we can transform the experience of bilingual families and children in our programs.

Want to learn more about the PAS, BAS, or any of our family engagement professional development opportunities? Contact us at pas.bas@nl.edu

REFERENCES

- Byers-Heinlein, K., Lew-Williams, C. (2013). Bilingualism in the early years: What the science says. *Learn Landsc.*, 7(1), 95-112. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6168212/pdf/nihms940156.pdf>
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