



Young Multilingual Children in Maryland

Exploring Parent Perceptions of Children's Language
Development, Family Engagement Practices, and
Decision-Making about Early Care and Education

RESEARCH FINDINGS REPORT FOR THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

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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's resources are used by 40 domestic states, territories and federal agencies, and more than 500 international schools throughout the world.

WIDA Early Years is a unique program that focuses specifically on the language development of multilingual children in early care and education (ECE) settings. WIDA Early Years is a system of products and services that promotes equitable learning opportunities for young multilingual children. 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. The WIDA Early Years Member State network includes Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania.

Report Overview

This report is organized into the following sections: executive summary, introduction, literature review, research methods, findings, recommendations, limitations and recommendations for future research, conclusion, references, and appendices. The executive summary provides a high-level description of the purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, findings, and recommendations. The introduction provides an overview of the state's partnership with WIDA Early Years and presents the focus of the study. The literature review situates the need for this study within the existing research base and identifies the need for such research. The research methods section describes recruitment procedures, participant demographics, data collection instruments, and the analytic approaches used in the study. The findings section discusses overarching themes related to the research questions, along with illustrative participant quotes. Recommendations for policy and practice around engaging families of multilingual children are provided, followed by the study limitations and recommendations for future research, and the conclusion. Finally, the references and appendices can be found at the end of the report.

A Note on Parent Voice

Many of the parents in our study navigate society and make meaning of information without always having translations or interpreters available. Therefore, to honor their resourcefulness and resiliency, we highlight quotes in green speech bubbles throughout the findings section without translations. Spanish quotes presented in the discussion of the findings do have side-by-side translations. The English translations are in italics. In addition, we include data captured in the study to help contextualize the findings. For example, we present quotes where parents describe the

dynamic language practices their children are exposed to across home, community, and ECE environments (e.g., see page 15). We are grateful to the parents who participated in this study. Throughout this report, we honor their voice.

Executive Summary

Purpose

This study explores the perceptions, experiences, and decision-making of parents of young multilingual children, ages birth to five years, with regard to children's language learning and development, family engagement practices, and children's participation in early care and education (ECE) programs.

Research Questions

Three questions guided this study:

1. What goals, aspirations, fears, and concerns do parents have for their children's language learning and development?
2. What are parents' perceptions about family engagement practices used in early care and education programs and the extent to which these support children's language learning and development?
3. What roles, if any, do their goals, aspirations, fears, and concerns about children's language learning and development play in their decision-making about early care and education?

The term **multilingual children** is used to refer to 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 early care and education 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.

Methodology

Data were collected in July and August 2019 from 27 mothers across three ECE sites serving children and families from Montgomery County and Prince George’s County. The primary methods for data collection consisted of individual interviews (INT) or focus groups (FG). Table 1 presents an overview of data collection methods along with some demographic information of the participants.

Table 1: Summary of Data Collection

Site Number	INT or FG	Language Used	Number of participants	Countries of Origin Represented	Native and Home Languages Represented
1	INT	English	1	Senegal	Wolof, French, Creole, Susu
2	FG (2)	English/ Spanish	9	El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Puerto Rico	Amharic, Spanish, Twi
3	FG (2)	English/ Spanish	17	Afghanistan, Algeria, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Myanmar, Peru, Venezuela	Berber, Burmese, Dari, Pashto, Portuguese, Spanish

The first phase of data analysis occurred soon after each interview or focus group and resulted in initial concepts and themes tied to individual sessions (e.g., interview or focus group). The second phase of analysis consisted of re-examining the initial concepts and themes and coding all of the data. This resulted in a list of major themes and patterns that make up the study findings.

Findings

The parents in this study hold strong beliefs and values about language. More specifically, they believe *families’ native language(s) enhance communication and connection with others and that being bilingual/multilingual presents opportunities and benefits*. Driven by these beliefs and values, findings show that all parents aspire for their children to be bilingual or multilingual. Common fears and concerns around children’s language include native language loss, experiencing difficulties understanding others, and the use of evaluation tools and methods that are not linguistically responsive to children. With regard to family engagement, findings indicate that access to ECE staff who speak families’ native language(s) greatly enhances family engagement and communication between parents and staff. Lastly, we found that language plays a role in decision-making around ECE options. In particular, data show that parents seek language learning opportunities and child socialization opportunities that promote and support language development.

Recommendations

This report highlights the critical need for *language-focused family engagement* (Cuéllar, Blair & Mancilla, 2018) and systemic approaches to enhancing family engagement. We invite state leaders to explore ways to offer statewide support for language-focused family engagement across the six key areas depicted in this graphic. In addition, we offer recommendations which are informed by the findings of this study and take into consideration projects and initiatives that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) accomplished, and has underway, in partnership with WIDA Early Years. The recommendations discussed in this report include



- Expanding program options that support young children’s bilingualism/multilingualism
- Investing in professional learning around issues of equity related to language
- Implementing asset-based two-generation programs that are culturally and linguistically responsive
- Creating a communication campaign about ECE program options that taps into the power of word-of-mouth
- Using linguistically responsive assessment and evaluation methods and data interpretation processes

Introduction

A Partnership to Support Maryland’s Young Multilingual Children and Families

Maryland has been a member of the WIDA Consortium since 2011. Beginning in 2019, the MSDE Division of Early Childhood established a partnership with WIDA Early Years to help the state address the needs of the rapidly growing population of young multilingual children ages birth to five. Multilingual children make up 28 percent of children ages birth to 8 in Maryland. Between 2000 and 2015, this population in Maryland grew by 63 percent compared to 24 percent growth in the U.S. overall (Park, O’Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017).

In 2019, as part of Maryland’s Preschool Development Grant Birth–5 strategic planning process, MSDE drafted a vision, mission and 5-year strategic plan that spans pre-natal to age 8.¹ Key state priorities include the following:

¹ See <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/make-your-voice-heard-comment-marylands-strategic-plan-early-childhood> for more information on Maryland’s strategic plan for early childhood.

- Promoting equity and diversity
- Serving children and their families in two-generation programs and approaches
- Addressing the needs of families experiencing adversity
- Supporting multi-language learners
- Improving access and availability across programs and services

The partnership with WIDA Early Years can help MSDE address needs across these key areas. For example, WIDA Early Years is helping the state build local capacity in supporting multilingual children’s language learning and development in ways that promote equity and are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive. In addition, given the critical role families play in children’s language development, the partnership will also help build capacity in the area of *language-focused family engagement*, an approach to family engagement that emphasizes the important role that language plays across the various learning environments that multilingual children navigate, including their home, communities, and early learning settings (Cuéllar, Blair & Mancilla, 2018). Furthermore, as a member of the WIDA Consortium, the partnership with WIDA Early Years can help the state support multilingual children’s transition to K-12 systems.

Developing policy and guidance around supporting multilingual children and families is a critical need for many states (Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, Weisenfeld, Kasmin, DiCrecchio, & Horowitz, 2018). Linguistically and culturally responsive policies enable families of multilingual children to access high-quality childcare (Figueras-Daniel, 2019). In Maryland, state leaders are making strides to address the needs of this diverse population of children and families. The current research study helps to better understand the needs of the growing population of multilingual children and families in Maryland.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions, experiences, and decision-making of parents of young multilingual children, ages birth to 5 years, with regard to children’s language learning and development, family engagement practices, and children’s participation in ECE programs. Three questions guided this study:

1. What goals, aspirations, fears, and concerns do parents have for their children’s language learning and development?
2. What are parents’ perceptions about family engagement practices used in early care and education programs and the extent to which these support children’s language learning and development?
3. What roles, if any, do their goals, aspirations, fears, and concerns about children’s language learning and development play in their decision-making about early care and education?

Audience

The report was written with a wide audience in mind. The audience for this report includes

- State-level leaders who create policies, resources, and/or allocate funding to promote the engagement of parents of multilingual children in ECE programs
- Program administrators who can provide professional development and allocate resources for their staff in order to strengthen family engagement practices in their programs
- ECE educators and practitioners who work in culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Faculty members who teach or mentor pre-service and in-service ECE teachers

Why This Study: Literature Review

As the nation's children grow more linguistically diverse, it becomes vitally important to strengthen relationships with families to better support multilingual children's language development. The academic literature focusing on the engagement of families of multilingual children and youth highlights the importance of family partnerships that are mutually respectful, foster two-way communication, include parent voice in decision-making, and incorporate families' cultural backgrounds and experiences in an ongoing way (e.g., Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). With regard to early childhood specifically, a recent review of research (Barrueco, Smith, & Stephens, 2016) on features of early care and education programs that contribute to high levels of family engagement for multilingual children emphasizes the importance of

- Creating welcoming supportive environments
- Having multilingual and multicultural program staff
- Having professional learning for teachers to increase cultural responsiveness
- Having teachers extend personal invitations to families
- Having opportunities for families from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds to get to know each other
- Partnering with community organizations around family engagement
- Offering supports to meet basic needs as part of engagement activities
- Having two-generation strategies for supporting families and children

Studies about immigrant families' decision-making around children's ECE have shown that families make decisions based on their level of awareness, accessibility of programs, and program responsiveness (e.g., see Barrueco et al., 2016). However, families are often unaware of the types of early childhood programs available and their eligibility requirements (e.g., see Mendez et al., 2018). Moreover, there is often a lack of ECE options in communities with high immigrant populations, and programs may be unresponsive to families' diverse linguistic and cultural needs (Matthews & Jang, 2007). When it comes to engaging families from diverse racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, many institutional policies and practices often present barriers for families, thus making it challenging for families and educators to establish relationships (e.g., see Baquedano-López et al, 2013; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

Given the critical role families play in children’s early learning and development, it is essential for state leaders to promote and support equitable, culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement practices as a component of any high quality ECE program. Promoting family engagement practices responsive to the needs of multilingual children and families is one recommendation highlighted in a recent report published by the Council of Chief State Officers in partnership with the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (Figueras-Daniel, 2019). For instance, in the report, state education agencies are encouraged to establish guidance for implementing evidence-based practices that increase family engagement of multilingual children. Examples of such practices include, but are not limited to, collecting family background information to share with educators prior to the start of school, and developing outreach resources that ECE programs can use to communicate to families that provide positive messaging around including children’s home language and culture in ECE programming (Figueras-Daniel, 2019).

To date, little research focuses on perceptions of engagement or decisions specifically related to language learning and development of families of multilingual children (Sawyer, Manz, & Martin, 2017). The dearth of empirical research in this area should cause concern to state leaders and policymakers, given the continuous growth in the number of linguistically diverse children and families in ECE settings (Park, Zong, & Batalova, 2018). Moreover, understanding and responding to families’ perceptions of language (e.g., beliefs, goals, fears) is vital to supporting young multilingual children’s development of their full linguistic repertoire.

Much can be learned, however, from the limited amount of existing research that examines parent perceptions of multilingual children’s language learning and development. For example, one recent study explored the language development values and goals of parents and teachers of preschool multilingual children, as well as the collaborative relationships between parents and teachers that can support children’s language development (Sawyer, Manz, & Martin, 2017). Findings from the parent participants in the study included that parents value bilingualism, meaning retaining the home language as well as learning English. Parents felt that teachers could facilitate or hinder their children’s language development through the following approaches:

- Willingness to understand children’s cultural practices and how they connect to classroom learning
- Recognition of differences between their own background and families
- Willingness to incorporate families’ personal experiences into their classroom
- Providing resources to support parent-teacher relationships

The research in this present study addresses gaps in the literature by using parent voice as a framework to explore parents' perceptions around language, family engagement, and ECE decision-making. Here we draw from Mancilla (2016) and adapt the definition of *parent voice* for the purposes of this study:

Parent voice is the right and opportunity for multilingual parents and caregivers to express their thinking, beliefs, and understandings about language learning and language use. This includes how their children and family use language at home, how language is used within their community and/or society, and language learning experiences in and out of early care and education (ECE) programs and K-12 environments. Ideally, these understandings and beliefs have weight within children's formal learning environments, and ultimately have a positive influence on children's language education. Parent voice may consist of parents' desires, dreams, goals, and hopes for their children's bi- or multilingualism, concern over the language used for instruction and assessment within ECE programs and K-12 classrooms, and/or fear that their children will lose the home language. Parent voice may also come in the form of frustration, fear, or anger over isolation, exclusion, discrimination, or disrespect within ECE and/or K-12 systems.

Moreover, this study aims to support the state of Maryland in improving the engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse families in ECE programs as well as supporting multilingual children's language learning and development.

Research Methods

Recruitment

The study team used a multistep approach for recruiting parent participants for this study. First, they presented a project overview to state leaders. State leaders then connected the study team with 12 early care and education program sites that serve multilingual children and families to begin recruitment for the study. Following this, the study team connected with program site directors and presented a project overview that included details on the research activities and recruitment. The program site directors, who agreed to participate, then helped the study team identify the best research method for their parent community (focus group or interviews) and strategies for recruiting potential parent participants at their site. Researchers worked with program site directors to schedule times to be on-site for data collection and, if requested, shared multilingual recruitment flyers with sites.

Participants

Twenty-seven mothers of multilingual children participated in the study. The participants represented three ECE sites serving children and families from Montgomery County and Prince George's County. Table 2 presents an overview of demographic information of the participants.

Table 2: Overview of Participant Demographics

	Participant's Country of Origin	Native and Home Languages other than English	Number of Children	Age of Children
Site #1	Senegal	French, Wolof, Susu, Creole	3	17, 8, 5½
Site #2	Ethiopia	Amharic	3	5, 3½, 2
	Ethiopia	Amharic	3	7, 3, 4 months
	Ethiopia	Amharic	4	13, 7, 3, 1
	El Salvador	Spanish	2	almost 4, 10 months
	El Salvador	Spanish	2	8, 3
	El Salvador	Spanish	3	13, 11, 2
	Guatemala	Spanish	2	13, 5
	Puerto Rico	Spanish	1	4
	Not shared	Twi	3	9, [not shared], almost 3
Site #3	México	Spanish	2	2½, 8 months
	Honduras	Spanish	3	20, 14, 3
	Guatemala	Spanish	3	7, almost 2, one on the way
	El Salvador	Spanish	1	2
	Perú	Spanish	2	6½, 21 months
	Honduras	Spanish	3	6, 4, 21 months
	Perú	Spanish	2	6, 2
	Peru	Spanish	2	2, 1
	Myanmar	Burmese	1	2½
	Honduras	Spanish	1	2½
	El Salvador	Spanish, Portuguese	2	12, almost 4
	Afghanistan	Pashto, Dari	2	4, 12 months
	El Salvador	Spanish	3	13, 8, almost 4
	Venezuela	Spanish	2	6½, 2½
	El Salvador	Spanish	2	4, 18 months
	Algeria	Berber	3	4½, 2½, 6 months
	El Salvador	Spanish	1	2

Data Collection

Data were collected in July and August 2019. Two researchers² were present at each site. Researchers conducted one interview at the first site, two focus groups at the second site, and two focus groups at the third site. One researcher served as the facilitator of the interview or focus groups while the other served as the note taker. The only exception was at the third site where each researcher facilitated a focus group and no note taker was present. The focus groups at the third site occurred simultaneously.

All interviews and focus groups lasted about 60 minutes and included questions on a) participants' background; b) goals, aspirations, fears and concerns related to language learning and development; c) family engagement practices in ECE; and d) decision-making about ECE options. The focus group protocols are included as appendices in this report³ (Appendix A and B). Researchers used a note taking template that had the questions in the protocols followed by a blank space to record information such as time codes, what the participants said, and any additional thoughts or notations to indicate relevant quotes. All parents provided verbal consent to participate in the study, as well as permission to audio record the interview or focus group. Recordings were later transcribed and analyzed. Table 3 presents an overview of data collection methods.

Table 3: Summary of Data Collection Methods

Site Number	Number of participants	Method	Language Used
1	1	Interview	English
2	4	Focus Group	English/Spanish
2	5	Focus Group	English/Spanish
3	8	Focus Group	English/Spanish
3	9	Focus Group	English

Data Analysis

The study team inductively analyzed the data collected, meaning that the data was examined to find common patterns and themes in the participant responses that addressed the research questions. Data analysis occurred in two phases. The first phase of analysis took place soon after each session (interview or focus group). During this phase, the researcher serving as the facilitator and the researcher serving as the note taker systematically debriefed by answering the questions in *reflection questions for debrief template* (see Appendix C). The questions were designed to begin the process of identifying emerging concepts, patterns, and significant ideas. For focus groups conducted at the third site, which only had one researcher present as they occurred simultaneously, each researcher independently captured notes and completed the reflection template for their focus group. They then independently reviewed the audio recording of the other focus group and completed the same steps. The researchers then met to discuss their reflections and notes.

² The primary study team in Maryland consisted of Dr. Lorena Mancilla and Dr. Amanda Spalter.

³ The focus group protocol was used for the interview at Site #1 because it was scheduled as a focus group but only one parent arrived, so an interview was conducted instead.

The first phase of analysis resulted in initial themes and patterns tied to each session. During the second phase of analysis, the initial themes and patterns identified during the first phase of analysis were further examined and the transcripts of each session were coded to more clearly identify and define themes in the data. The second phase of analysis resulted in a list of major themes that make up the study findings. Throughout the data analysis process, researchers conducted internal validity checks on emerging concepts and themes from the data they each coded independently.

Findings

Parents Hold Strong Beliefs and Values About Language

The parents in the study shared powerful beliefs and values about language. These beliefs and values provide a frame for parents' hopes and fears about language, their perceptions of family engagement, and their decision-making about ECE options for their children. Parents strongly believe that their families' native language(s) enhance communication and connection, that being bilingual/multilingual presents opportunities, and that families play a key role in sustaining and promoting the native language at home. Thus, parents value opportunities for their children to use and continue to develop families' native language(s) as they learn and develop English.

“...No pueden [comunicarse] con sus primos ni con sus abuelos ni con sus tíos ni con nadie porque no entienden.”

with family members, such as grandparents. Parents also expressed sadness and regret when talking about how they would feel if their children could not visit their home countries and connect with relatives there. For example:

Home Language vs. Native Language

Home language is commonly used in the education field to refer to languages other than English spoken in the home. However, here we use **native language** to honor parent voice. In our research, we noticed that parents distinguished between the two terms in unique ways. For instance, multilingual families, where each parent had a distinct *native language*, often had a common *home language* spoken by all family members that was not necessarily English or their native language.

Families' Native Language(s) Enhance Communication and Connection with Others. A common belief that parents hold is that families' native languages enhance communication and connection with others. For instance, one parent shared, “Language is important... [it] helps [people]... go out and... speak freely and they communicate freely.” If their children are bilingual/multilingual, parents think it will help their children communicate in their home countries and in the U.S. Many parents value maintaining their families' native language(s) because it helps build and sustain relationships

“Pero donde también a veces los niños han tenido, quizás, una dificultad es cuando tienen la oportunidad de ir a nuestros países. Allá ellos no entienden, quedan totalmente fuera de—se sienten fuera de su confort. No pueden [comunicarse] con sus primos ni con sus abuelos ni con sus tíos ni con nadie porque no entienden.”

“But where children also sometimes have difficulty is when they have an opportunity to go to our countries. There, they don’t understand, they are left completely outside of—outside of their comfort zone. They can’t [communicate] with their cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles or anyone because they don’t understand.”

Parents also felt that maintaining their native language(s) and learning other languages would allow their children to be helpful and connect with others at home, school, and in the community. Specifically, they talked about how their children would be able to act as translators to support communication and understanding with others. Parents mentioned various people their children might help, such as family members, classmates, and recent immigrants. For example, the exchange below from a focus group provides an example of three parents who talked about how their children help by translating for them:

[P5:] La niña mía a veces ella me ayuda a traducirme.

[P5:] My daughter sometimes helps translate for me.

[P3:] No, igual a mí.

[P3:] Me too.

[P5:] Ella me ayuda a algún lugar que tal vez yo no entiendo y me dice, “te está diciendo esto.”

[P5:] She helps me when I might not understand something and tells me, ‘they’re saying this to you.’

[P4:] Ay, tan linda.

[P4:] Ah, so cute.

[P5:] Y ajá, porque sabe ella qué dicen en español y en inglés.

[P5:] Yes, uh-huh, because she knows what they are saying in Spanish and in English.

In the quote below, another mother expresses how using their home language allows her children to help others at school. She goes on to mention that by learning English along with her children, it helps her form a connection with her children:

“When new kids come from other countries and don’t speak English, he love help them at the school and teach. And I so happy for that; and I pretend that with my little ones too that they speak. And for connecting too, because we are not from this country and we learn English but maybe never totally like a native English speaker—I want to have very connecting with my kids.”

Being Bilingual/Multilingual Presents Opportunities

and Benefits. Parents often talked about how knowing more than one language provides access to opportunities. In particular, parents recognize Spanish as a valuable language to know because of the large number of Spanish speakers in the country and in the community. Both Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking parents mentioned Spanish as a language that presents opportunities in the U.S. Thus, parents perceive learning Spanish as a valuable opportunity for their children. For example, one parent said:

“Me gustaría que los tres [hijos] hablaran y entendieran el inglés y el español ... hay mucha gente latina, pues igual van a necesitar el inglés y el español.”

“Me gustaría que los tres [hijos] hablaran y entendieran el inglés y el español. Va a ser una ventaja, sobre todo al paso que vamos, pienso que el estado... hay mucha gente latina, pues igual van a necesitar el inglés y el español.”

“I would like all three children to speak and understand English and Spanish. It’s going to be an advantage, especially given how things are going, I think that the state... there are many Latino people so they’re going to need English and Spanish.”

Another parent, from a non-Spanish-speaking family whose daughter was exposed to Spanish and was learning it, said:

“All my three kids have been through this program... I really want them to learn Spanish... the middle one, she started from very young so she can fit where she want to. Kindergarten’s a different school, I’m like, ‘Oh, this girl speaks Spanish so, please help me with that.’”

Parents with children attending a Spanish/English ECE program who were not native Spanish speakers, wanted their children to learn Spanish in addition to their native language(s) and English. They were excited when their children brought Spanish into their home and encouraged its use. One parent said about her daughter, “If she knows something in Spanish, she want to practice more and more. And she watching Spanish movie, and sometimes she speak to me in Spanish [laughter]. ‘Mama, I want leche’ [laughter].”

Parents also shared the belief that being bilingual/multilingual brings access to job opportunities. For example, one parent said, “Yes, in most work, the first thing that they ask today is if they are bilingual. If they are not, it is una desventaja (a *disadvantage*).” Parents feel that being bilingual/multilingual would provide access to more employment options in the U.S., in their home countries, and other countries. Many parents shared that they were eager for their children to be bilingual/multilingual so they could be mobile and find a job in any country.

Parents also expressed that in addition to job opportunities, knowing more than one language presented opportunities to assist others. For instance, parents frequently spoke about how being bilingual or multilingual presented opportunities for their children to be “helpful” and “compassionate.” Parents expressed pride in the fact that their children will be able to help others by knowing more than one language. For example, one parent shared her vision of the opportunities her child will have through language:

“En mi caso siento que la comunicación es bastante importante, el beneficio monetario que pudiera conseguir algún día es también bueno, pero también es importante de que estando él en una posición en la que pueda ayudar a otras personas porque sabe el idioma, ayudaría bastante.”

“In my case, I feel that communication is so important. The monetary benefit that they could have some day is also good, but it’s also important that they’re in a position to help people because they know the language. It would help so much.”

Another parent spoke about how language opens doors and helps create a more perfect world:

“...I believe that children are our future. And if we teach them languages, to me, it opens a lot. Because with language, you’re opening the door to compassion, because you’re kind of, knowing what the people are doing... And if we have a beautiful nature with all this children who are going to be tomorrow’s leaders, are into opening, you know, diversity, understanding of people, speak all the languages, I think that would be the perfect world.”

Foundations in the Native Language Are Built at Home. Parents believe that it is important for families to encourage the use of their native language at home. Parents shared that language is a source of pride for them and is a key part of their own—and their children’s—identities. They believe it is important to start young with promoting their native language at home with their children. Moreover, they recognize that English is everywhere, and they perceive this as a potential threat to sustaining the home language. Therefore, they believe it is crucial for them to build a foundation in the native language at home. For example, one parent said:

“She doesn’t have the chance to speak Amharic. Only in our family. When she go out, she speak English. That’s why when she come home or when she’s with our family, if she speaks like me, I [feel so happy]. Because she’s speaking English or some other language when she go out. Only she speak [Amharic] when she and I communicate.”

Another parent shared how she believes her children will lose their home language if it is not sustained at home:

“Pienso que quizás mantenerlo en el hogar es como una base. Si ellos en la casa lo empiezan a perder, pienso que no hay otro lugar donde lo vayan a poder practicar un poco más y pienso que es en la casa que se mantiene, ya que afuera en la escuela o con los amigos solo en inglés se comunican.”

“I think that perhaps maintaining it in the home is like a foundation. If they start to lose it at home, I don’t think there’s another place where they’ll be able to practice, and I think that it’s in the home that it’s maintained since they only communicate in English at school or with friends.”

Parents shared many practices they do at home to promote and support native language development. For example, they talked about singing lullabies and other songs to their children from a very young age. They also talked about persisting with speaking their native language even if their children do not completely understand or have become accustomed to using English with friends or at school. When their children do speak English at home or bring home books in English, the parents will repeat things or read a story again using their native language. Parents reported their children enjoy this and start to ask for translations of stories in the native language. Parents also spoke about how they playfully allow their children to “teach” them English. For instance, one mother in an adult ESL class, shared that her daughter often corrects her English using the same phrases or statements the mother uses to correct her daughter’s Spanish, such as “No mami, así no se dice, te comiste tal palabra [risas]. (*No mami, that’s not how you say it, you ate the word [laughter]*).” She shared how her daughter says this to her when she mispronounces something in English.

Language Exposure in the Home

Parents provided rich descriptions of the exposure children have to language(s) across multiple settings. We share these quotes to help paint a clearer picture of the dynamic language practices children are growing up hearing and speaking. Here, we present examples of parents' observations of language children are exposed to at home:

"Since they were young, I'm singing lullabies, Spanish one minute; one minute in French... he hears French, English, Spanish, and my native language, which is called Wolof. But what he speaks is Spanish and English. The rest, he kind of understand."

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"Mis hijos en casa solo [hablan] español. Solo cuando están entre ellos, los mayores, hablan inglés. Pero cuando se dirigen al chiquitín, al de dos años, siempre—bueno, le mezcla, inglés y le mezclan español. Pero la mayor parte, quizás un 80% para el niño es español."

"My children only speak Spanish at home. Only when they are with each other, the oldest ones speak English. But when they go to the little one, the two-year-old, always—well, he mixes, English and he mixes Spanish. But for the most part, maybe 80% for the boy is Spanish."

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"Me, I can't really speak Spanish but what I used to do is very good the library, the book that is read in class. We pick English and they pick Spanish, and sometimes it's my kids that really try to help me. Yes, so, as we pick the books [my children are explaining things] 'Mom, this is what my teacher said.' Yes, they're also teaching me."

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"Mi niña con los primitos de la misma edad de ella siempre cuando se juntan hablan solo en inglés, aunque les digamos que en español. Pero en la casa solo español les hablamos y como ella va a la escuela, sabe los dos idiomas. Pero ella sabe, cuando recién anduvieron mis papás por acá, ella les hablaba español a ellos, porque sabe que ellos no hablan inglés."

"My girl with her same-aged cousins always speak only in English when they get together, even if we tell her in Spanish. But in the house we only speak to them in Spanish and since she goes to school, she knows both languages. But she knows, when my parents recently came here, she was speaking to them in Spanish, because she knows that they don't know English."

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"We speak our language at home, Burmese. And my son—he understands and so to me sometimes... he repeat after me... Now he knows in our people, family of Myanmar, he asks about how are you? [It] is our language."

Goals and Aspirations for Children’s Language Development

Parents’ beliefs and values about language drive the goals and aspirations they have for their children’s language development. All parents in the study aspire for their children to be bilingual or multilingual when they grow up. Many parents, Spanish-speaking parents in particular, also highlighted hopes that their children maintain their native language.

Parents hope their children maintain their native language. As described earlier, parents value using their native language to engage in communication and connect with their children. When parents described how they would feel if their children maintained their native language into adulthood, they became noticeably more animated in their body language, gestures, and exclamations of pride and happiness. For example, one parent said:

“That would make my day... Yeah, because right now, they can only say hi, and you know, a few things. But if they could speak it, oooo!”

Some parents shared practices or “rules” they have at home around language use in an attempt to sustain the native language. For example, they will only speak their native language at home or pretend not to understand English. The prevalence of English at school and in the community often motivated their desire to have their home as a clear place to assert their identity through the native language. One parent described her intentional use of her native language at home:

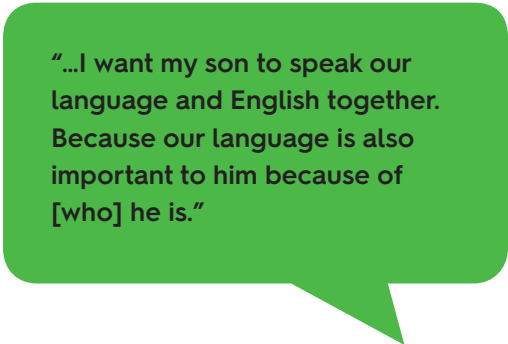
“In my house, we have a rule. Because I have older kids and we have a rule for speak Spanish only in my home. Because they are at the school and maybe they speak only English. My little one don’t learn Spanish. They see TV more in English and that’s why we speak Spanish only. But she know more English than Spanish, and she outside—she’ll speak English with everybody. And she know when somebody speak Spanish, she’ll speak Spanish.”

Another parent shared:

“And when my daughter talks to me in English, I say, ‘I don’t understand you’ [laughter]. And she could throw a fit and I won’t move [laughter] until she says it in Spanish... It’s hard, but you do it.”

Many parents noted that they have been only using their native language at home since their children’s birth. Maintaining the native language has been a way to elevate and preserve an important aspect of their children’s identity. One mother talked about how she does not want her children to lose their native language because it will signify a loss of a part of themselves:

“In our community, our families—children I saw as they came to my home, and I always say they didn’t speak our language anymore... I don’t want it, because I want my son to speak our language and English together. Because our language is also important to him because of [who] he is.”



“...I want my son to speak our language and English together. Because our language is also important to him because of [who] he is.”

Another mother shared that she hopes her child will be able to maintain their native language so that hopefully one day her child can return to her El Salvador, the family's home country, and others will not suspect that her child lived in the U.S.:

“Yo me sentiría súper feliz porque si nosotros vamos al Salvador, en El Salvador no se habla el inglés, y si ella practicaría allá el español, hablaría perfectamente el español, todo el mundo le entendería muy bien, que no pensarían que ella estuvo acá.”

I would feel really happy because if we go to El Salvador, in El Salvador English isn't spoken, and if she'd practice Spanish there, she'd speak Spanish perfectly. Everyone would understand her so well and they wouldn't think she was from here.”

Parents aspire for their children to be bilingual. As discussed earlier, parents feel that knowing their native language and English affords many opportunities. Often, parents distinguished these as opportunities that help make connections with others or opportunities for a brighter future. Frequently, they highlighted their native language for making connections and English for a solid future in the U.S. For example, one parent noted, “For my son, I hope he will speak in both language, in Spanish and English. Because—in Spanish because I want he can connect with our country and then in English for his future.”

Another parent said:

“So, I remember when my old daughter graduate to the elementary to go to middle school. She was [inaudible] and speaking with everybody in Spanish and English, like a translator, but she was able to read in Spanish over there, so I feel proud. So, my dream is to be, like, bilingual—you know—in the future so she can help. Like me.”

Although many parents emphasized multilingualism, the Spanish-speaking parents in particular stressed that they wanted their children to become Spanish/English bilinguals first. Then, some expressed, they would like their children to learn additional languages. The emphasis on achieving bilingualism before multilingualism connects to the parents' value of and belief in their role in building a foundation and maintaining the home language. For example, one parent described her rationale for focusing on Spanish and English before encouraging her children to learn a third language:

“Yo quisiera que mis hijas—bueno, la meta principal es que me hablen y me escriban y me lean el español y el inglés... Entonces, yo sí quiero como que meterla como que a clases para reforzarles bien el español, y ya luego pues que si ellas quieren estudiar un tercer idioma, el que ellas quieran.”

“I would like my daughters—well, the main goal is for them to talk to me and write to me and read to me in Spanish and English... Then I do want them to take classes to really reinforce Spanish, and then if they still want to study a third language, whatever they want.”

A Burmese-speaking parent also spoke about wanting her child to know Burmese and English and then learn more languages:

“I want two language: our language and English. Because I want for her to speak English. And to speak Burmese at home [inaudible] is important, because when I want to come back to my country they need to speak our language, that’s why. Another language that I want to learn him is Chinese, because it is also important for this world.”

Perceptions of K-12 school systems being English-only, or heavily focused on English, motivate many parents to engage in practices that support bilingualism. For example, in the quote below, one mother expressed how having a heavy focus on Spanish in the home helped her daughter learn Spanish and speak it well. The mother feels this is important because she believes the school only teaches English. Thus, since her daughter is learning Spanish at home, she believes this will help her become bilingual:

“Es mejor hablarle en español, porque a mi niña—bueno, ella desde pequeñita empezó a hablar, pero yo solo [le hablaba en] español y español y español. Ella habla bien el español, pero el inglés en la escuela entonces, es lo que vi que lo aprenden... Ahí le enseñan el inglés en la escuela, que si uno no les enseña el español en la escuela, no me voy a preocupar porque aprendan español [en casa].”

“It is better to speak to her in Spanish, because my girl—well, since she was little and started to talk, but I only [talked to her in] Spanish and Spanish and Spanish. She spoke Spanish well, but then English at school is what I saw that they learn... There they teach English at school, that if Spanish isn’t taught in school, I’m not going to worry because they’re learning Spanish [at home].”

A common perception shared by many parents in this study is that public schools are heavily focused on English, therefore, many are not concerned about their children’s English language development. Parents appear confident that their children will learn English at school and/or in the community. Many already notice how some of their children seem to prefer using English. As one mother, who speaks Amharic and English, said, “I want my daughter to speak my language, which is Amharic. I’m not worried about English...I want her to speak Amharic and Spanish.”

Parents want their children to be multilingual. One thing that ties parents’ desire for bilingualism and multilingualism together is a love of and pride in language. This love and pride in languages makes many parents aspire for their children to be multilingual. For example, one parent shared:

“I mean, I have always loved language since I was young. So I just kind of do it with them whenever—since they were a baby. I’m like, ‘We’re not just going to speak one. We’re just going to have much as you can get; we’ll do it.’”

Another parent described how knowing multiple languages would allow her child to follow whatever dreams she has in any country:

“Me encantaría que ella pudiera saber más de otras lenguas, porque no se sabe si ella estaría en este país, Estados Unidos, o fuera en otro lado. Si fueran sus sueños ir a, no sé, me imagino a África, a Italia. Me gustaría que ella aprendiera más de tres o cuatro idiomas.”

“I would love it if she could know more about other languages, because who knows if she will be in this country, the U.S., or elsewhere. If her dream is to go to, I don’t know, I imagine Africa, to Italy. I would like her to learn more than three or four languages.”

Similar to the theme of maintaining the native language, one parent talked about how she creates rules for language use with her children among friends and family to promote multilingualism. She asks people to only speak in a certain language to her children even if her children do not currently know that language at all:

“I know, because at school he will have to speak English. And we’re—most of the time I have like, some Spanish friends that, we always hang out, so I tell them not to speak to my children in English. I want them to speak to them in Spanish. And with my family members, I tell them to speak to my children in French. ‘Even if they don’t understand, speak, and just use your gesture.’”

Multilingualism was often part of family life. Many parents themselves spoke multiple languages. Therefore, using multiple languages was a part of home life and passed down by family members. For example, one parent shared:

“Bueno, mi niña ella dice que quiere aprender francés y chino. Ya se sabe algunas palabras en francés y chino también. Más bien ahora me venía diciendo, y me dice, ‘te voy a decir cómo dice ‘gracias’ en chino’ y ya me dijo como se dice. Porque mi pareja habla varios idiomas entonces, a veces él se pone ahí a estarle diciendo y ella se aprende las palabras.”

“Well, my girl says she wants to learn French and Chinese. Already she knows some words in French and in Chinese too. More like she comes telling me, and she tells me, ‘I’m going to tell you how to say ‘thank you’ in Chinese’ and she tells me how to say it. Because my partner speaks several languages then, sometimes he just starts telling her to do it and she learns the words.”

Parents also frequently talked about the influence older siblings have in younger children's language development. One parent talked about her child wanting to emulate a multilingual older brother:

"En mi caso mi hijo mayor, él vive en Canadá, en Montreal, él habla francés, español e inglés. Entonces, los dos menores tienen esa expectativa, que como su hermano mayor habla los tres idiomas, ellos también. Ahorita el de 14 ya va a entrar a estudiar francés, porque quiere estar al mismo nivel ya de su hermano mayor. En hablar los tres idiomas, y él lo sabe leer y escribir."

"In my case, my oldest son, he lives in Canada, in Montreal, he speaks French, Spanish, and English. Then, the two younger ones have this expectation, that like their older brother they will also speak three languages. Now the fourteen-year-old already is going to study French, because he wants to be at the same level as his older brother. In speaking the three languages, and he knows how to read and write."

An Amharic-speaking parent talked about watching movies at home in Spanish. Many other parents also mentioned that technology supported multilingualism. Many parents mentioned YouTube as a source of multilingual entertainment for their children. These parents marveled at the fact that their children often chose to watch videos and listen to music in languages they did not know or speak at home, school, or in the community. During one focus group exchange, Spanish-speaking parents described their children's interest in Russian YouTube cartoons or videos:

[P1:] Yo en sí me gustaría que mi niño estudie ruso porque a veces—él tiene nada más una vez a la semana sus muñequitos, y yo siempre se los pongo así, en inglés y en español, pero cuando vengo a ver, él está viendo unos muñequitos, pero en ruso. Yo le digo, '¿y por qué te gustarán tanto esos?' Se lo cambio y lo vuelve a poner.

[P1] I would like my child to study Russian, because sometimes—he has his cartoons no more than once a week, and I always put them like this, in English and in Spanish, but when I go to see, he is watching cartoons, but in Russian. I say to him, 'And why do you like these so much?' I change it and put it back.

[P3:] Yo no entiendo. Mi niño también. Sabe mucho de idioma ruso.

[P3] I don't understand. My child too. He knows a lot about the Russian language.

[P6:] A lo mejor es que ellos les va a gustar eso. Por eso es que no quieren aprender el español.

[P6] Maybe it's that they like it. That's why they don't want to learn Spanish.

[P1:] ...sí, yo veo que él como que le atrae ese idioma, no sé. Y me gustaría que lo estudiara.

[P1] ...yes, I see how he's attracted to this language, I don't know. And I would like him to study it.

Fears and Concerns About Children’s Language Development

Children losing their family’s native language. Parents’ goals and aspirations for their children to be bilingual/multilingual and know their native language relate to their fears and concerns. One common concern that emerged was children losing their native language. The idea that their children could lose their native language made many parents feel fear, concern, sadness, and even shame. Native language loss emerged as a theme in comments made by parents who speak languages that are highly prevalent in the U.S., like Spanish, and those that are not as widespread.

Parents shared that they would feel shame or sadness if their children could not speak their native language. Some talked about how seeing family members, friends, or others with a similar background that lost their native language has influenced them to encourage native language use at home. One mom shared:

“Yo conozco personas latinas que sus hijos no hablan español. Ya están grandes, adultos y cuando van a high school eligen quizás francés u otro idioma, pero en español no lo entienden. Entonces, pienso que ese es un punto, [necesitamos hablar español en] la casa.”

“I know Latino people whose children don’t speak Spanish. They are already big, adults, and when they go to high school, they choose maybe French or another language, but they don’t understand Spanish. Then, I think that that is the point,[we need to speak Spanish at] home.”

A Twi-speaking mom said, “I have cousins... they were born here... and whenever they come, ‘Can you teach me? Can you tell me just how you say this?’ That’s one of the reasons I kept on speaking my language to my kids.” Furthermore, another parent shared a feeling of frustration to think that their children wouldn’t speak their native language when they grew up—especially since family members speak the native language and parents try to pass the language on to their children. When asked to share more about this feeling, she said, “Because like we have the opportunity, since they grow.” Another parent said, “Yes, it would be so sad because we try so much.”

Language Exposure in the Community

Parents provided rich descriptions of the exposure children have to language(s) across multiple settings. We share these quotes to help paint a clearer picture of the dynamic language practices children are growing up hearing and speaking. Here, we present examples of parents' observations of language children are exposed to in their community:

"With my family members, I tell them to speak to my children in French. Even if they don't understand, speak, and just use your gesture."

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"La escuela influye pero influye [a los niños] más para inglés, especialmente la escuela pública. Existen programas bilingües. Es bueno porque ellos continúan [el español], pero yo me recuerdo que mi hija, la grande, llegó casi a cuatro años sin hablar ninguna palabra de inglés. Y me daba un poquito—me daba un poquito de lástima, porque a veces cuando iba al parque y los amiguitos le preguntaban por jugar, ella no entendía. Ella, '¿Qué me dijo? Mami, ¿qué me dijo?' Te digo, tan pronto empezó en el programa, dos, tres meses y ya estaba hablando inglés."

"The school influences children more for English, especially public school. There are bilingual programs. It's good because these maintain Spanish, but I remember my child, the oldest, went almost four years without speaking one word of English. And I felt bad because sometimes when we would go to the park, her friends would ask her to play and she wouldn't understand. 'What did they say to me? Mami, what did they say to me?' I tell you, as soon as she started in this program, two, three months and she was already speaking English."

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"My child in playground when he see someone playing he'll speak in English. But then, our community, like church, he'll speak in Spanish. Because of the people there speak Spanish."

•

"She doesn't have the chance to speak Amharic. Only in our family, when she go out, she speak English."

•

"My daughter speak English on the playground. We have relationship only with Spanish people, but I don't know why... Even in the church, too. Yes. My church is in Spanish, and everybody speak Spanish. I teach kids, I'm a teacher in that church and we do the class in Spanish. But they talking in English."

Children experiencing difficulties understanding others. Because parents aspire for their children to be bilingual and/or multilingual, many are heavily focused on maintaining the native language at home. However, they recognize the role of English in society and the need for children to be able to function in English settings. Thus, a tension exists between wanting to maintain the native language at home and protecting children from feeling confused because they do not understand English and schools are perceived to be “all English.” This fear of children experiencing difficulties understanding others in English settings was another common theme that emerged.

For example, one of the Spanish-speaking mothers who promotes the use of Spanish at home with her children and wants them to be bilingual, shared her awareness of the challenges her children could potentially face as Spanish-speakers. She works with other Latinos and some of her co-workers have shared with her their experiences growing up in the U.S. and the challenges they faced when they started school and only spoke Spanish. Here, she recounts what one co-worker told her:

“Pero también—les voy a contar yo otra historia en serio. Yo trabajo con muchos teenagers que son hijos de latinos que han nacido acá, y yo hablaba con un compañero y él me decía, ‘Cuando yo empecé a ir a la escuela,’ me decía, ‘Era frustrante para mí porque yo solo hablaba español.’ Y cuando la maestra le daba instrucciones en inglés, pues no entendía.”

“But also—I’m going to tell you another story seriously. I work with many teenagers that are children of Latinos that were born here, and I was speaking with a friend and he was telling me, ‘When I began to go to school,’ he was telling me, ‘I was frustrated because I could only speak Spanish.’ And when the teacher gave instructions in English, well he couldn’t understand.”

Another parent expressed a similar sentiment, but also expressed her belief that participation in an ECE program prior to entering school or PreK can be beneficial because children are exposed to English and start to learn the language:

“I have a bad experience with my older daughter... When we came to this country, she was four years and she start PreK. All this time, she has had to hear English. And she didn’t—she didn’t go—she didn’t want to go at school, because she said, ‘Mom, I don’t understand nothing.’ And she gets frustrated. It’s for that that I said that it’s important when there—this program for children before the five year, four years.”

Fortunately, though, some parents’ concerns about younger children’s communication were eased thanks to their experiences with older children and ECE programs that were responsive to bilingual/multilingual language development. For example, one parent raising her children in a home where three languages are spoken shared:

“I have experience with my old daughter. She is starting to learn—okay, we speak in three languages with her—in Spanish and English and Portuguese at home. So, when they—she go to the school, she didn’t speak well. So, I was concerned that time because they say maybe it’s because we speak her three languages at the same time, it’s a little bit confused to speak. But they say—the school—that this is not a problem. Because they’re little, so they make me relax. So, with Arianna, she’s going to be four years old. So, we speak three languages. But I saw her she, like—when I speak with her, she waiting—what answer she going to—she going to say, like, in Spanish or English

or Portuguese. This one? Okay. So, like, I want to say it simple. I speak with her, 'Can you go to the bathroom?' Or in Spanish, '¿Puedes ir al baño?' But in Portuguese, 'Okay, en la banheiro?' So, she a little bit—she don't give me the answer fast. She thinking first. [Laughter] What language? It's not concern, because I know with my old daughter. But before, with my old daughter I was concern. But now I'm okay."

Use of evaluation tools and methods that are not responsive to bilingual/multilingual language development. Another major concern revolved around perceived speech delays. More specifically, parents expressed concerns that children were not speaking as much as expected *in the family's native language*. However, when the children were evaluated for speech delays, the methods and tools used were often *in English*. As perceived speech delays were discussed in the focus groups, parents found that the evaluations and assessments used were not responsive to their child's bilingualism/multilingualism because they were in English. While speech delays emerged as a theme across multiple sites, the discussion around the appropriateness of English methods and tools was heavily focused among parents with children in programs where the staff spoke predominantly in English.

For example, one parent described how her child was labeled with not only a speech delay but also a developmental delay. She feels this occurred because the assessments were all in English and caused her child to feel frustrated:

"Las terapistas... le hacen evaluaciones cada mes, y también con el pediatra trabajamos en esto, porque el niño tiene la frustración del sentido en que tiene actitudes de no querer aprender, de no enfocarse en algo porque él piensa que no le van a entender, y me han dicho que tiene retraso al desarrollo, justamente por eso. Porque él no—por ejemplo, del A al B, a decir A, B, C, D, se lo digo en español, él lo sabe, pero ellos para que entre a la escuela tiene que ser en inglés, y él no lo sabe. Entonces, es como si fuera un niño que tiene dos—va a cumplir tres años, pero parece que tuviera un año, porque no dice nada... En español sí [lo sabe], pero ellos no lo toman así, ellos lo toman como en inglés. Exacto entonces, lo tienen como un niño con retraso de desarrollo."

"The therapists... they do evaluations every month, and with the pediatrician we work on this, because my child is frustrated with the sense that he has attitudes that he doesn't want to learn. That he doesn't focus on something because he thinks they won't understand him. And they've told me that he has a developmental delay, just because of this. Because he doesn't—for example, from A to B, to say A, B, C, D, he says it in Spanish. He knows it but it has to be in English to enter school and he doesn't know it. Then it's as if my child was two years old—he's going to be three, but it seems like he's one because he doesn't say anything... In Spanish yes [he knows it], but they don't do it like that, they do it in English. Exactly then, they label him like a child with a developmental delay."

Another parent described a similar experience and, for her, it extended to problems with her child's speech therapy because it was all in English. She shared that she tried to serve as a translator for her child but it was not an ideal solution because it undermined the teacher's authority in the classroom and did not support her child's bilingualism. She said:

"Yo lo tuve [terapia del lenguaje] en "Infants and Toddlers", lo pasé a IEP y lo mismo. Él tiene un retraso en comunicación también, pero solamente quedó que tiene—le dan 45 minutos una vez a la semana. Luego este año, yo lo llevaba a la escuela. Pero el primer día de clases... yo tuve que entrar con él, yo tengo que entrar a las clases con él, y es muy cierto. Se supone que esas clases son para ayudarles a ellos a tener comunicación, pero es en inglés. Y nosotros hablamos en español. Porque yo me quedo en las clases con él obligatoriamente o si no se sale. Entonces, yo estoy en la clase ahí, pero el problema es que como yo estoy ahí, la autoridad para él soy yo, y a la maestra no le hace caso, claramente, a menos que yo lo amenace, "OK mamá se va." Entonces, se queda sentado. Pero él entiende, pero él contesta en español. Y después yo le explico a la maestra en inglés. Pero sí, esos son los problemas de esos programas, que son ayudas para ellos para comunicación, pero la ayuda es en inglés. Entonces se va adaptar con ella en español, y nosotros hablamos español."

"I had speech therapy for him in 'Infants and Toddlers,' it passed to an IEP and the same. He had a communication delay also, but he only had—they gave him 45 minutes one time a week. Then this year I took him to school. But on the first day of class... I had to go in with him, I had to enter the class with him, it's very true. I suppose these classes are to help with communication but it's in English. And we speak in Spanish. Because I have to stay in the classes with him or he won't go. Then I am in the class there, but the problem is that because I'm there, I have the authority, and the teacher ignores him, clearly, unless I threaten him, 'OK mom will go.' Then he stays seated. But he understands, but he answers in Spanish. And after I explain it to the teacher in English. But yes, these are the problems with these programs, that they help with communication but the help in English. So, then he's not going to adapt to her in Spanish and we speak Spanish.

Another mother expressed her desire for bilingual evaluation tools and methods because these would help paint a clearer picture of the child's full capabilities in *both* languages:

"Otra cosa que yo pienso es acerca de las evaluaciones en inglés, que puedan ser bilingües para poder ver de las dos formas al niño, porque de una forma de español puede tener más oportunidad, más desarrollo que en inglés. So, teniendo las dos formas pueden ellos ver de las dos maneras, y en qué punto ayudarlo mejor. Creo yo que así se va a poder ver mejor las evaluaciones..."

"Another thing I think about is related to English evaluations—can they be bilingual so we can see both sides of the child? Because in one way, in Spanish, the child can have more opportunities, more progress than in English. So, having both forms can help others see both sides and how to best help the child. I think that that will improve the evaluations..."

Lastly, it is important to note that during the course of the discussion about the need for bilingual and Spanish assessment methods and tools, one mother leaned in to the recorder and raised her voice to emphasize how critical it is for these concerns to be addressed:

“Pónganlo así como que esa sea una de las mayores prioridades, porque creo que eso nos preocupa a todas.”

“Put it down as one of the major priorities because I think this is concerning for all of us.”

Perceptions of Family Engagement

Parents appreciate bilingual staff and opportunities to participate in their native language.

Parents reported that they appreciated when an ECE program had bilingual staff members who could speak their native language. According to parents, bilingual staff seem to be more available and willing to engage with them and their children. One mother shared the positive feeling she had when she learned her child’s ECE program had Spanish-speaking staff she could speak with:

“Tenemos la libertad y confianza de podernos acercar al director en nuestro idioma que él nos va a ayudar.”

“I think when we go into a place, we don’t know if they [speak Spanish] and we don’t know the language. Like, I don’t speak English, so I go in asking—I don’t how—I don’t know how to ask... So, I feel good when, like, they have a language person there. Because you can be able to ask in Spanish.”

Another mother described her appreciation for her oldest daughter’s school. The principal there speaks Spanish, which helps her engage more freely:

“Eso es algo que me gusta mucho de esa escuela donde está porque hay mucha gente que habla español y como que los niños tienen ayuda de—de los dos idiomas, tanto para los niños como que para los papás también, porque nosotros ya tenemos la libertad y confianza de podernos acercar al director en nuestro idioma que él nos va a ayudar.”

“That is something that I really like about that school because there are many people that speak Spanish and children have help in—in both languages, both for children and parents too, because we have the freedom and confidence to approach the principal in our language and that he’s going to help us.”

The parents at one site felt that the ECE staff there try to reach all families. They noted in particular that the Amharic-speaking community has grown. With this growth, parents notice there has been an increase in efforts to reach those families. The site has recently hired a teacher who speaks Amharic. One of the Spanish-speaking mothers who is also a teacher in the ECE program said, “We sing songs in Amharic as well, we try to incorporate all families. At least our three main languages [Spanish, Amharic, and English] are spoken here.”

Another mother described how wonderful it was for her to see Amharic incorporated into a lesson and how she thinks it supports developing cultural identity through language. She also thought this exposure was good for the children in the class who do not speak Amharic:

“We recently read a story called ‘Lala Salama’ and we had one teacher who read it in Amharic, and it was wonderful. Like, children were all paying attention, listening quietly to what they were saying.

So, I think even though we think they don’t understand, if you come and speak in your language to them, sing to them in their language, it’s a good way to incorporate your culture in your language.”

“...if you come and speak in your language to them, sing to them in their language, it’s a good way to incorporate your culture in your language.”

Some mothers, however, expressed that having bilingual staff available wasn’t necessarily enough to support family engagement. For example, a few parents shared a desire for more meetings in their native language. In one focus group, mothers said that although their ECE program holds meetings for parents with translators, the dialogue can be hard to follow because it feels like there are two conversations happening. They wished there was an option to have separate meetings for parents who speak Spanish. Specifically, one parent said,

“Cuando hay reuniones a veces los latinos no vamos porque hablan inglés. Estamos sentados ahí y hay una persona aquí hablando, pero estaba escuchando [la traducción], son dos conversaciones que estamos escuchando, y tendemos a estarnos confundiendo. Porque quizás entendemos un poco de lo que están hablando en inglés, pero igual nos están hablando en español acá. Entonces, uno como que está en dos cosas a la vez.”

“When there are meetings sometimes we Latinos don’t go because they are in English. We are sitting there and there is a person talking, but I was listening [to the translation]. There are two conversations that we are listening to and it tends to be confusing. Because maybe we understand a little bit of what they are talking about in English. But at the same time, they are talking to us in Spanish over here. It’s like you are in two things at once.”

Bilingual staff help welcome and establish relationships with families. Parents described how they are made to feel welcome by staff and the ECE program. In particular, parents noted how their interactions with staff in families' home languages made them feel welcome. Thus, opportunities to communicate with bilingual staff helped to establish relationships with families. At one site, they noted that there are welcome signs as well as signs acknowledging various holidays throughout the year in multiple languages. Beyond the signs, the parents also described how teachers welcomed them and other parents through daily greetings, eye contact, and knowing their names. Teachers also encouraged them to visit classrooms. For example, one mother shared:

"También las maestras les dicen a los papás que son bienvenidos. Cualquiera día que ellos quieran participar en las clases, son bienvenidos, tíos, abuelas, papás, hermanos".

"Also, teachers tell parents that they are welcome. Any day they want to participate in class, they are welcome, aunts, uncles, grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters."

Another mother noted that one of the reasons she likes the ECE setting is because she feels free to communicate with the teachers at any time. Staff welcome interactions with families. She said:

"A mí me gusta lo que es el centro porque uno se puede comunicar con la maestra en todo momento. Ya no hay ese—como en otros lugares que le dicen, "No, a tal fecha puede venir a tales horas." Aquí no. Aquí uno en el momento que uno quiere hacer una pregunta, lo puede hacer. Bien cuando viene dejar al niño o cuando lo recoge en la tarde, o si quiere mandarle un texto a la maestra, igual ella cuando puede le contesta a uno."

"I like the center because you can communicate with the teacher at all times. There isn't that—like in other places that say, 'No, on such a date you can come in at such times.' Here no. Here at any moment that you want to ask a question you can do it. Well when you drop off your child or pick them up in the afternoon, or if you want to send a text to the teacher, when she can she will answer you."

At another site, three of the participants were also teachers. Two of these mothers were hired after their children were enrolled at the site. One mother described how she was hired after engaging more and more in her child's class. This site is bilingual, Spanish and English, so she was able to engage fully in her native language or English,

"In my case, I have experience because I come to [the center] as parent, and then later I start working here. I trust the teacher and they're welcoming, they invite me to come to the classroom, they share information about the school. Then my daughter's teacher invite me to apply. 'Why you don't come here?'"

Language Exposure in the ECE Program

Parents provided rich descriptions of the exposure children have to language(s) across multiple settings. We share these quotes to help paint a clearer picture of the dynamic language practices children are growing up hearing and speaking. Here, we present examples of parents' observations of language children are exposed to in their ECE programs:

"Cuando se celebra a veces el día de las madres, se ponen rótulos como digamos, Feliz Día de la Madre, 'Happy Mother's Day' and the same to Amharic."

"Sometimes, when Mother's Day is celebrated there are signs like we say, Feliz Día de la Madre 'Happy Mother's Day' and the same to Amharic."

•

Facilitator: "Does the preschool help your child develop English?"

Participant: "Yes"

Facilitator: "Yes. So how do they do that?"

Participant: "I guess everything is in English."

•

"Creo que... la mayoría... como los salones proveen maestros en los tres idiomas, si es posible, en los tres idiomas, pero español, inglés siempre hay en los salones."

"I think that... the majority... that the classrooms provide teachers in three languages, if it's possible, but Spanish, English are always in the classrooms."

•

"We talk about our different cultures and where we come from at the beginning of the year. And then children talk about where they come from, their culture, what language they speak."

•

"It's fun when you see the switch, like, all morning [the class is] in English... then you tell them something in Spanish and they would go do it, like they switch, immediately."

•

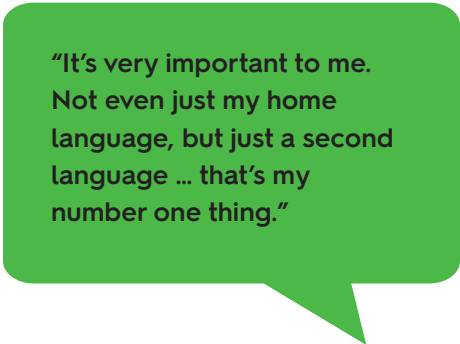
"Yeah. It's difficult. Yeah... it's difficult for me because she—now she learns English here [in the ECE program] and in the house [it's Spanish]. But she understands, yeah."

Language Plays a Role in Decision-Making Around ECE Options

Parents shared a variety of factors they considered as they made decisions around their children's ECE options. Like many families, these parents considered factors such as cost, proximity of program site, safety, schedules (e.g., program hours, work schedules), and how comfortable they or their child felt with the program. However, consistent with parents' reported beliefs and values about language (see the Findings section on page 14), our analysis revealed that language does indeed play a role in parents' decision-making around ECE options—especially among parents with some knowledge of K-12 programs for English learners (ELs) and/or prior experience with ECE programs (e.g., experiences of older children in ECE programs). Two themes emerged that show parents seek programs that offer language learning opportunities and child socialization opportunities that promote and support children's language development.

Parents seek programs that offer language learning opportunities.

Repeatedly, parents expressed that it was important for ECE programs to offer children opportunities to learn languages other than English. Thus, they look for programs that promote and support bilingualism and/or multilingualism. For example, one mother said, "It's very important to me. Not even just my home language, but just a second language... that's my number one thing." This mother is raising her children in a multilingual household where French is the home language. The mother speaks three languages: Wolof (native language), French and English. Her husband speaks four languages: Susu (native language), Creole, French and English. Their children speak English (native language) and French. However, the children are learning Spanish through exposure to the language in their community, ECE program and school. Learning Spanish, and other languages, is something this family wants for their children and they even relocated to ensure their children have such opportunities, "...your home school, it's pretty... how do you say it? It's not that diverse. So actually, I had to move to where I used to live, in order for us to get in a neighborhood that I could expose them to more diversity."



"It's very important to me. Not even just my home language, but just a second language ... that's my number one thing."

Another mother, who speaks Amharic (native language) and English, echoed the importance of such opportunities for her children. She transferred her child from an English-only program to a Spanish/English ECE program. Her child is now learning Spanish as an additional language:

"I would say it's very important... my kids... used to go to [another program], which is, you know, they never speak in Spanish, they only teach them in English. Not even Amharic or in Spanish. So, they come here and they get... to learn Spanish. You know, they can even sing in Spanish or they can count in Spanish, you know?"

One Spanish-speaking mother, with her child enrolled in a Spanish/English ECE program, shared that she believes ECE programs that help children learn different languages will help expand their options for school in the future:

“Creo que es importante porque ellos aprenden varios idiomas a la vez... así ellos aprenden varios idiomas, y creo que ya cuando van a la escuela, ya los padres pueden escoger qué escuela pueden ir ellos porque pueden entender otros idiomas en la escuela también.”

“I think it is important because they learn several languages at the same time... so they learn several languages, and I think that when they go to school, parents can then choose which school they can go to because they can understand other languages at school too.”

Many Spanish-speaking mothers expressed that they desire and look for Spanish/English bilingual ECE programs for their children. These mothers see bilingual programs as beneficial to their children. As one mother said, “...that would be a good thing, that’s their language.” Some were fortunate and had access to a bilingual program, but others only had access to programs where the staff spoke English. One bilingual mother (Spanish/English) chose a bilingual ECE program because her daughter’s first language was

“Porque aquí hay niños, digamos, de otros países y como acá [el español] es uno de los [idiomas] principales—es el español y el inglés, entonces, les daría la oportunidad a ellos también, de aprender otro idioma más.”

Spanish and it was important to her that her daughter be able to communicate with others in Spanish:

“For me it was really important because when I came here, my daughter only spoke Spanish, she spoke no English at all. So, having the opportunity for her to express herself, say what she wanted, communicate with her teacher was really important.”

Other Spanish-speaking mothers spoke about their awareness of how coveted Spanish/English bilingual programs are by non-Spanish-speakers. In particular, mothers shared and discussed how much money non-Spanish-speaking families were willing to pay to have their children in bilingual programs to learn Spanish. During these discussions, it was evident that mothers recognize Spanish as an asset (e.g., they can pass it on to their children without having to pay as other families do). The quote below from one bilingual (Spanish/English) mother reflects this:

“I recommend any childcare provide bilingual immersion, because I know some friends who are in childcare... they told me that parents that speak English pay a lot of money for daycare and stay in the [bilingual program]. Especially Spanish... they want the little ones to start learning other language. And we have opportunity, we can teach free. [Laughter] Yes, she said it’s expensive, a daycare for teaching foreign languages. And I said oh wow... as they say, pay me!”

In one exchange among four Spanish-speaking mothers, they discussed how bilingual programs, such as dual language programs⁴, benefit all children, including those that do not speak Spanish at home:

[P3:] Justamente es lo que comentaron, que las clases sean dual en español e inglés.

[P3:] It is precisely what they said, that the classes be dual in Spanish and English.

[P2:] Para todas las escuelas.

[P2:] For all of the schools.

[P3:] Sí, muy importante.

[P3:] Yes, that's very important.

[P8:] ...a mí me encantaría, pero como hay también muchos niños que hablan chino, francés y otros [idiomas], o por lo menos que les dieran la oportunidad de escoger... una clase o dos clases que pudieran recibir en su idioma materno, para que ellos como que reforzaran [ese idioma].

[P8:] ...I would love that, but as there are also many children who speak Chinese, French, and other [languages], or at least give them the opportunity to choose... a class or two classes in their native language so that can reinforce [that language].

[P1:] Yo pienso que el ser dual les da la oportunidad a todos, porque—

[P1:] I think that offering dual gives everyone an opportunity because—

[P2:] Sí, totalmente.

[P2:] Yes, totally.

[P1:] Porque aquí hay niños, digamos, de otros países y como acá [el español] es uno de los [idiomas] principales—es el español y el inglés, entonces, les daría la oportunidad a ellos también, de aprender otro idioma más.

[P1:] Because there are children, let's say, from other countries and here, Spanish is one of the primary languages—it's Spanish and English, so it would give them an opportunity, too, to learn another language.

[P3:] Es porque yo conozco a americanos que son de papás de aquí que hablan muy bien el español y muy bien el inglés... y los dos porque los han aprendido en la escuela, o en las universidades, y lo hablan como uno.

[P3:] It's because I know Americans whose parents are from here that speak Spanish very well and speak English very well... and both because they learned them in school, or in universities, and they speak it like us.

4 One mother in this focus group had older children and knowledge of dual language bilingual programs in K-12 systems. She shared her knowledge with the group, where many mothers were not familiar with such programs, and this fueled the conversation around offering such programs for children of all ages, including those in ECE programs.

Lastly, for the mothers from Site 3, access to opportunities to take English language classes for adults was a primary decision-making factor for enrolling their child in the site's ECE program. These mothers wanted to learn English for a variety of reasons. For example, some mothers wanted the opportunity to complete their education. The quote below is from one mother that was not able to finish her education in her home country, so here she wanted to take classes in English:

"But, when I came to this country I say to me, I want to go to school to learn English and improve, and I reached my goals."

"I want to share... in my country, I didn't finish my school because it was, like—it was taking long way to walk to reach my school and plus later I had to work, like—walk two hours. So, that's why I didn't finish. But, when I came to this country I say to me, I want to go to school to learn English and improve, and I reached my goals."

Another mother wanted to learn English so she could complete her college degree, which she began in her home country:

"In my country, I can't finish the university. I studied psychology but when I come to this country it was so hard, the language, and I don't have time for studying and I start to work to support my family... I am so happy because I start and I'm learning English and I improve my English. And last year, I continue my education. I took some courses [at a local college]... I think I can continue my education for in the future I can work with education and other families."

"...para mí este programa... nos está dando la oportunidad [de aprender inglés] a mí y al niño. Los dos estamos aprendiendo..."

Despite the personal benefits of the adult ESL classes, the mothers also recognized and commented on the benefits of Site 3's ECE program to their children. The quotes below from two different mothers offer examples of such comments.

The first quote is from a mother from Afghanistan whose native language is Pashto and has a daughter enrolled in the ECE program:

"When I come here, I didn't speak English. I can't speak English. It was really hard for us... in my country, I didn't finish school... This is my first time and it is really nice program and I am happy. And my child, she does speak English. And she understand. I am so happy here, because my child and I—we can speak English and we understand. And get through it."

The second quote is from a Spanish-speaking mother from El Salvador who enrolled her only son in the ECE program:

“...para mí fue una gran felicidad porque aparte de que él fuera a involucrarse acá con los demás niños, yo también iba a aprender inglés... para mí este programa es un excelente programa, porque nos está dando la oportunidad [de aprender inglés] a mí y al niño. Los dos estamos aprendiendo...”

“...for me, it made me feel very happy because apart from him engaging with other children, I was also going to learn English... for me, this program is an excellent program because it gives me and my son the opportunity [to learn English]. We are both learning...”

Parents seek child socialization opportunities that promote and support language development. This second theme emerged from the comments made by Spanish-speaking mothers in three of the focus groups across two sites. Since several mothers, in particular Spanish-speaking mothers, expressed fears or concerns about their children’s language that revolved around perceived speech delays (see page 37), this theme is significant because it shows that mothers actively sought opportunities for their children to socialize and communicate with others—especially when they observed that their children were not speaking as much as expected. Mothers believed that socialization opportunities would promote and support children’s language development. For example, in the quote below, one mother shared her concern that her only daughter was not speaking. She enrolled her daughter in an ECE program and began to notice a significant improvement in her daughter’s language development:

“Pero mi preocupación era que ella no hablaba. Entonces, cuando la traje [al programa], yo lloré porque dejándola a ella... nunca se interactuó con más niños, porque solo era... ella en la casa... pero cuando la dejé acá me impresionó, porque como que era... lo que necesitaba—explorar, hablar... Fue como que era lo que ella necesitaba.”

“But my concern was that she did not speak. So, when I brought her [to the program], I cried because I was leaving her... she never interacted with other children because it was just her in the house... but when I left her here, I was impressed because it was like... what she needed—to explore, talk... It was like what she needed.”

Similarly, the quote below reflects another mother’s experience looking for a program that would help her daughter socialize and communicate with other children. In this case, the child spoke Spanish but would not speak around the English-speaking specialist that would visit the home:

“Something similar happened to me... I was looking for a place because my daughter... had a language problem. She was able to speak, but when the specialist come to my house, she never speak anything... but I knew that she speak. But then she recommended to find a place where the childcare talk too much [and the children] have the experience to share.”

In the quote below, one mother expressed her concern about the fact that there were no other children in the family nearby for her son to interact with. Thus, she needed to find other options and this led her to enroll him in the ECE program:

“...quiero que mi niño se relacione porque como no tengo familia ni nada, el niño no se me relacionaba con ningún niño y eso para mí era bien preocupante. Entonces, gracias a Dios me dieron la oportunidad de estar acá.”

“I want my child to interact because I don’t have family or anything, my son doesn’t interact with other children and that, for me, causes a lot of concern. So, thank God they gave me the opportunity to be here.”

Lastly, in the quote below, one mother describes a decline in her daughter’s social and communication skills, which she attributes to having pulled her daughter out of an ECE program. This motivated her to re-enroll her daughter and she immediately noticed gains:

“Cuando salí esos seis meses que volví a casa con el niño que tengo ahora, a ella le afectó porque empezó como a estar—cuando veía a otros niños después como que ya no quería [interactuar]. Incluso, cuando volvimos a regresar aquí como que no se quería quedar porque ya no venía. Pero después ahora ya se acostumbró y ahora siento que está ella mejorando bastante—como socializar, hablar, todo bastante... Afecta bastante el cambio porque le digo, mi niña, yo vi que ella sí bajó bastante.”

“When I left for six months, to stay home with the child I have now, it affected her because she started to be—when she would see other children after that, it was like she didn’t want to [interact]. Even when we returned here, it was like she didn’t want to stay because she wasn’t used to coming. But now, she’s used to it and now I feel like she’s improving a lot—how to socializes, talk, she does a lot of it... That change really affected her, because like I said, my daughter, I noticed a big decline in her.”

The ECE Decision-Making Experiences of Immigrant Mothers

Some of the mothers in the study were immigrants and recent arrivals to the country. For many, this was their first experience enrolling a child in an ECE program, so for them, it was a very emotional and difficult decision to make. For example, many were first-time mothers and did not have close or immediate family nearby to help or guide them. Some even opened up and shared that they experienced depression as new mothers. Many reported they experienced language and cultural barriers and were unfamiliar or unaware of programs and services available to them and their children. A few mothers even reported they were afraid of seeking information or assistance from ECE programs and community agencies. In some cases, this sense of fear was fueled or passed on by members of their social networks (e.g., relatives, neighbors, friends) that would tell them not to allow anyone in their home or not to accept help from community agencies. Lastly, for some mothers, enrolling a child in an ECE program required that they overcome feelings of guilt or shame because this was not something traditionally done in their home countries. Thus, the decision-making experiences of these immigrant mothers is complex and goes beyond consideration of common factors such as cost, schedules, proximity, etc. Below is a quote that illustrates the experience of one such mother who struggled with wanting to go back to work and take adult ESL classes to better support her family, which required placing her children in an ECE program versus staying home to care for her children:

“Creo que todas hemos pasado por lo mismo, ¿no? Es el dolor ... yo igual tenía, a mis tres hijos—los he cuidado desde que nacieron, y conmigo toda la vida, y cuando los dejé ahí era frustrante, era el dolor de dejarlos llorando, pero también era pensar que es la oportunidad que tienes ... desde que he llegado acá nunca he trabajado. Y justo en ese momento se me había presentado la oportunidad de empezar a trabajar ... Fue difícil tomar la decisión porque era empezar a hacer algo por mí, un desarrollo para mí y era estar entre tomar una decisión o la otra. Al final, a mi esposo le dije, ‘no, necesito estudiar, necesito ser útil, necesito algo más, necesito que mis hijos también tengan otro contacto porque si no, estoy yo ahí en casa, encerrada, es bien difícil que ellos tengan mayor contacto y que yo pueda hacer algo más por [ellos].”

“I think we’ve all been through something similar, no? It’s the pain... I also had my three children—I took care of them since they were born, and they were with me all their life, and when I dropped them off it was frustrating. It was the pain of leaving them crying, but also thinking of the opportunity I had ... since arriving here, I never worked and at that moment, I was presented with an opportunity to start working ... It was a difficult decision to make because it involved doing something for myself, an opportunity for my own growth and it was having to decide between one thing or another. In the end, I told my husband, ‘no, I need to study, I need to be useful, I need something more, I need my children to have contact with others too because if not, I’m locked away at home and it’s very difficult for [my children] to have lots of contact [with others] and for me to do something more for [my children].”

Recommendations

This report highlights the critical need for *language-focused family engagement*, an approach to family engagement that keeps the unique needs and experiences of multilingual children and their families at the center of every home and early care and education setting interaction (Cuéllar, Blair & Mancilla, 2018). We invite state leaders to explore ways to offer statewide support for language-focused family engagement across six key areas⁵ (see Figure 1). Doing so promotes a systemic approach to enhancing family engagement.

Below we offer guiding questions that can be used to initiate dialogue among state leaders and key stakeholders invested in supporting families of multilingual children.

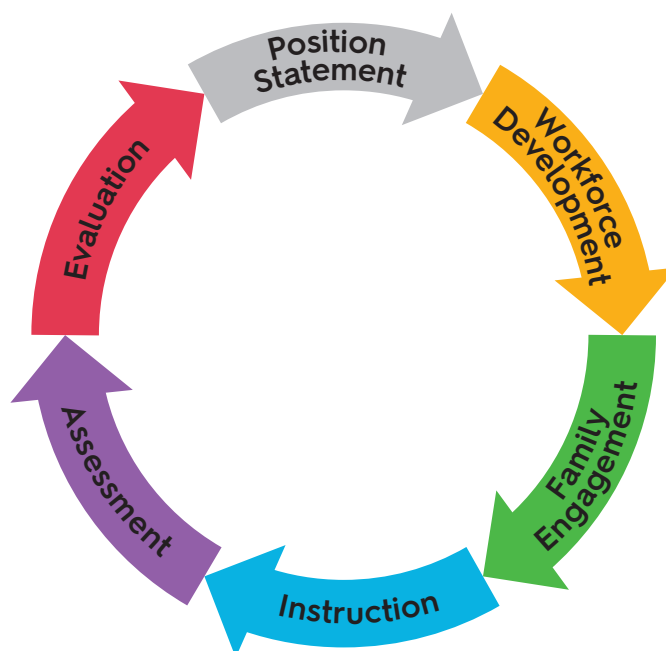


Figure 1: Six Key Areas for Statewide Support

- **Position Statement**—What do we believe language-focused family engagement affords children, families and ECE professionals in our state? Do our policies, guidance and practice reflect our beliefs?
- **Workforce Development**—What knowledge and skills do ECE professionals need in order to implement language-focused family engagement approaches? How can we address these needs?
- **Family Engagement**—How can we integrate language-focused family engagement messaging in our existing statewide family engagement resources and offerings?
- **Instruction**—What messages do we communicate about goal setting with families to support children’s language learning and development? Are these messages consistent with our beliefs about language-focused family engagement?
- **Assessment**—What messages do we communicate about the role of families as sources of information on children’s language development? Are these messages consistent with our beliefs about language-focused family engagement?
- **Evaluation**—How do our current quality measures reflect language-focused family engagement? How responsive are our current quality measures to the needs and experiences of multilingual children and families?

⁵ The six key areas are adapted from the *2019 Practical Guide for State Education Agencies to Promote Success of English Learners Pre-K-Grade 3* written by Alexandra Figueras-Daniel, Ph.D., for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO).

In addition, we offer the recommendations below, and additional guiding questions for reflection and dialogue among stakeholders to help enhance policy and practice for engaging with families of multilingual children in ECE programs. These recommendations are informed by the findings of this study and take into consideration projects and initiatives that MSDE accomplished, and has underway, in partnership with WIDA Early Years. We invite MSDE staff to explore ways these recommendations can help advance the state's five-year strategic plan.⁶

Expand program options that support young children's bilingualism/multilingualism.

The findings make it clear that the families in this study want access to programs that will support children's bilingualism and/or multilingualism. All parents in this study aspire for their children to know more than one language. Parents with children enrolled in a Spanish/English bilingual ECE program, including those that are not native Spanish-speakers, spoke highly about the program because it provides children opportunities to learn language outside of the home. For Spanish-speaking mothers, bilingual program options support the work they do at home to maintain the native language. For non-Spanish-speaking mothers, the program exposed their children to a language they see as valuable given the prominence of Spanish in their community and across the nation. All children can benefit from exposure to and opportunities to learn additional languages. Thus, this recommendation can also benefit monolingual English-speaking families seeking bilingual program options for their children. Moreover, expanding bilingual/multilingual programs implies an increase in bilingual/multilingual staff. The findings presented indicate there are many benefits to having staff that speak languages other than English, such as stronger home-school relationships, more welcoming environments and opportunities for families to engage on-site using their native language. Addressing this recommendation, however, will require innovative thinking around policy, funding, and practice given that the literature base on bilingual education and English learner program models heavily focuses on K-12 school systems.

The Maryland Seal of Biliteracy was adopted by MSDE in 2016. What can be done to increase awareness of the opportunity to earn a Biliteracy Seal among ECE communities, and in particular, among families of multilingual children? How can we bridge efforts to promote and support bilingualism and multilingualism in ECE environments to those in K-12 systems?

For more information on the Maryland's Seal of Biliteracy, visit sealofbiliteracy.org/state/md

Invest in professional learning around issues of equity related to language. Enacting change from a social justice and equity lens calls for a commitment from all staff. Unchecked bias, racism, linguisticism and other forms of discrimination, can negatively inform policy and practice, resulting in inequitable opportunities and barriers for some children and families. We recommend that MSDE continue to invest resources in providing meaningful, ongoing professional learning on equity and diversity to state and local leaders that includes consideration of individual and systemic discrimination based on language, and that challenges common myths about bilingualism/multilingualism in young children.

⁶ See <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/make-your-voice-heard-comment-marylands-strategic-plan-early-childhood> for more information on Maryland's strategic plan for early childhood.

Leaders should then identify the professional learning needs of staff and develop local professional learning plans for their programs or sites. Professional learning opportunities should equip leaders and staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to model mindsets and behaviors that affirm linguistic diversity, promote asset-based perspectives, and challenge institutional systems that create inequitable opportunities for multilingual children and families. Below we highlight one quote from a Spanish-speaking mother where she shared how she looks for ECE options that do not discriminate against others. One cannot help but wonder what this mother has experienced in the past that now leads her to consider discriminatory practices when she is looking for an ECE program for her child:

“Yo creo que una de las partes más importantes... me imagino que debo de saber, donde yo puedo poner a mi hija, es de que no le van a hacer discriminación. De que en el centro, ya sea escuela o guardería, es un lugar que no tienen discriminación, que puedan aceptar niños de diferentes capacidades, diferentes discapacidades... diferentes [países].”

Implement asset-based, two-generation programs that are culturally and linguistically responsive. Parents in a two-generation program in this study advocated for a greater variety of classes for parents. For example, in addition to expanding programs that offer adult ESL classes, parents suggested programs where adults can obtain their GED, attend college classes, or learn a trade while their children engage in free ECE programming. Providing classes to help parents support and advocate for their children’s language development would also help connect to parents’ value of bilingualism/

Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education (NAEYC, 2019) offers the following as a recommendation for everyone:

“View your commitment to cultural responsiveness as an ongoing process.

It is not a one-time matter of mastering knowledge of customs and practices, but an enduring responsibility to learn and reflect based on direct experiences with children, their families, and others (p. 6).”

What resources are needed to provide ongoing professional learning around equity and diversity?

“I think that one of the most important parts... I imagine that I should know, where I can put my daughter, is that she’s not going to be discriminated against. That in the center, whether it’s a school or a daycare, is that it’s a place that doesn’t have discrimination, that can accept children of different abilities, different disabilities... different [countries].”

What steps can be taken to collect input from multilingual families around their needs and interests to help inform new class offerings?

How can two-generation programs help build parent leadership skills so that parents could help offer classes to other parents as this may help increase bilingual and multilingual offerings?

multilingualism and maintaining their native language(s). The mothers involved in two-generation programs also expressed gratitude for the parent classes and information provided to them around supporting their children's overall growth and development. However, a few comments captured in the focus groups show that some parents may be internalizing deficit-based perspectives about their parenting practices as a result of participating in parenting classes. Such classes can stem from deficit perspectives that see some parents or families, who are often from historically marginalized populations, as being in need of repair (e.g., see Baquedano-López et al, 2013). We strongly advocate that two-generation programs designed to support multilingual children and families be rooted in asset-based perspectives that value cultural and linguistic diversity, and differences in parenting styles, and help advance families' language goals and aspirations. For example, here is what one mother shared about information she received on supporting children at home:

“This program support us too—they encourage us. We teach our language at home... They said we can speak in our language, in English too if we want, but most important they said we speak in Spanish at home. I think this age is important because when they start school, they don't want [to speak their native language].”

Create a communication campaign about ECE program options that taps into the power of word-of-mouth. State and local agencies could provide opportunities for parents in existing ECE programs to share about their experiences both with other parents in the program and with others in their community. These parents understand the complexities that families of multilingual children might face when considering ECE options. They could help provide context to other families and answer questions. State and local agencies might use neighborhood organizations/locations to provide opportunities for parents to share informally and formally. Given the diversity among educational backgrounds of multilingual families, one cannot assume that translated written materials (e.g., brochures, web pages) will help reach families. While translations are definitely beneficial and help address communication barriers, the reality is that many translations may be problematic because of terms or concepts that lose meaning in translation or because families may not have the literacy skills needed to read a translated document. The data captured in this study showed that the most effective method for outreach with families was through word-of-mouth. Parents relied on trusted family members, neighbors, friends, etc., for information on programs and services available to them. Many parents said they would be happy to share information with other families. See page 45 for examples of quotes that show how parents use word-of-mouth to share information and help inform other families of options available to them.

Use linguistically responsive assessment and evaluation methods and data interpretation processes.

Young children’s language development is commonly assessed and evaluated. For multilingual children, it is important to ensure that tools or instruments used to assess or evaluate children’s language development are linguistically appropriate and responsive to their dynamic language practices. This also includes ensuring that data is interpreted in ways that recognizes the bilingual or multilingual environments children are learning and developing language in. Thus, tools or instruments normed on monolingual children may not necessarily be appropriate for young children growing up with more than one language. Children may mix languages, and their language preferences and language use may change depending on the context or those they are interacting with. These are common language practices in bilingual/multilingual communities. The findings presented here show that a common fear or concern among parents revolves around evaluating and assessing children’s language development in English when their children are developing English as an additional language. Many parents in this study shared that their children were labeled as “speech delayed” but called into question that label because the evaluation was done in English. State and local leaders might encourage staff to speak with families about their children’s exposure to language across various settings to better understand families’ language practices. Finding out as much as possible about home and community contexts, and how language is used within those contexts, are important to understand children’s language development. Below is one quote from a mother that felt children were labeled with perceived delays too quickly based on assessments done in English:

[P3:] “...Los etiquetan rápido. Que no pueden y pum, les ponen una etiqueta, ‘Tiene retraso de tal.’ pero como tú dices, porque no han evaluado al niño en todas sus áreas de desarrollo, de todo su entorno como es.”

[P3:] “...They are labeled quickly. That they can’t and boom, they put a label on them, ‘They have some delay.’ But as you say, it’s because they haven’t evaluated the child in all their areas of development, in their whole environment as it is.”

The Power of Word-of-Mouth in Helping Parents Learn About ECE Options

A majority of the parents learned about ECE options through word-of-mouth from trusted family members, friends, neighbors, and/or service providers (e.g., child specialists, therapists). Moreover, parents reported they share, or would be happy to share, their ECE program knowledge and experience with other families. This willingness to share information was demonstrated in the focus groups. For instance, participants would ask each other questions about their personal experiences with ECE programs and services. Here, we offer a few quotes highlighting the power of word-of-mouth in parents' social networks:

"We had, like, a frisbee day at the park. I was like, 'Hey, come on, come with your children!'... the [program] does a really good job of telling parents."

•

"Yes, I used to have a friend who has—her friend goes here and she told me about it. She told me that they taught them Spanish and English... I live close by here, it's seven minutes away, and then I pay so much money for a daycare over there. So, I said, 'you know what? Let me try it...' and then I come here."

•

"I have about three families, my neighbor, my friend... they just told me. [They] said, 'this is where my kids go, this is where they've been, if you like, I can show you the place.'"

•

"I was just telling my friend if she want to come here... don't worry, just go ahead... It's safe and is helpful."

"I work... next to here, and we have many, many clients that [are] Hispanic and we have from—I think they are from Bangladesh or something like that, but we always say, 'Why you [don't] bring your child to [program]?'... with every person that I met, I tell about [the program]."

•

"Mi esposo hacía Uber y vino a dejar a alguien acá y le dijo que había... y él me dijo..."

"My husband drives for Uber and came to drop someone off here and they told him what this was... and he told me..."

•

"...my friends, they help me. They showed me school and they help us."

•

"...I also would introduce the center to my friends. But the sad thing is that they didn't live [in this county]."

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

When making sense of the study findings, the following study limitations should be considered:

- **Program site locations:** Data were collected from three sites serving neighboring counties. We recommend that future research includes a wider geographical area. This could include additional sites in urban and suburban locations and expansion to programs in rural areas.
- **Program types:** Data were collected from center-based programs. We recommend that future research include families with children in home care programs.
- **Additional languages:** Although the study team included bilingual members fluent in English and Spanish, and the research design included a process for hiring interpreters for participants who speak an additional language, we recognize that the linguistic diversity in the state is not fully captured in the study. We recommend that future research include participants from additional language backgrounds.
- **Additional points of contact:** The research design called for one point of contact with parents through an interview or focus group. Having additional points of contact with participants can positively impact rapport building, decrease parent's reluctance to share their opinions, and increase the overall quality and validity of the data collected. We recommend that future research allow participants and research teams to come into contact at multiple points.
- **Participation from additional family members:** Data were collected from twenty-seven mothers. We recommend that future research include a diverse range of caregivers in a child's life (e.g., fathers, grandparents) to gain a fuller picture of a family's language practices.
- **Flexible timeline:** This study was funded using federal Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 funds; therefore, the timeline for this work was limited to ensure alignment with the timeline for the initial year of the grant. Future research with families should allow a more flexible timeline to help increase the number of participants.

Conclusions

“Sigam haciendo estudios para ver lo importante que es lo bilingüe en este país. Que todo sea bilingüe para nuestros hijos y para nosotros.”

“Keep doing studies to see how important being bilingual is in this country. So that everything is bilingual for our children and for us.”

The parents who participated in this study all aspire for their children to be bilingual and/or multilingual. They see value in knowing more than one language and actively take steps toward maintaining the family’s native language. These parents also hold fears and concerns around their children’s language development, such as native language loss and perceived speech delays. Access to ECE staff that speak families’ native language(s) greatly enhance family engagement and communication between parents and staff. It is imperative that state leaders and ECE program staff answer the call to understand the complexities around Maryland’s growing population of multilingual children and families. This will enable the state to take action and further strengthen policies and practices impacting multilingual families.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Protocol (English)

Introduction

Thank you for being here. My name is XXXX. This is my colleague and her name is XXXX. We're from the University of Wisconsin. We would like to have a conversation with you about your child's education and languages development.

We'll be asking for your feedback on these areas through a group dialogue. This dialogue will take no more than 90 minutes. We'll show you our list of questions and begin by asking you to respond to the first one. Everyone will have a chance to answer each question. You can choose to pass if you want. Your responses will guide the group dialogue. We may move through the questions one-by-one or skip around a little depending on how the conversation goes.

Now I am going to read a letter to share with you more information, and if it's okay with you, to also obtain your verbal approval to be part of this focus group. I am going to start recording now.

START RECORDING



READ ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT

SHARE A COPY OF THE CONSENT SCRIPT WITH EACH PARTICIPANT

Okay, we are ready to get started. Remember, there are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

We also ask that you share your thoughts one at a time. When we listen to the recording later to make sure we caught all of your insights, it can be very difficult to understand what is being said if several people are talking at the same time.

We will be on a first name basis tonight, and we won't use any names in our reports. So let's get started by having each of you introduce yourself. Just your first name is fine. [PAUSE HERE TO ALLOW EACH PARTICIPANT TO SHARE HIS/HER FIRST NAME.]

Now, we would like to get to know a little about each of you and your family.

Background questions:

1. Tell me about your family. How many children do you have? How old are your children?
2. Tell me about your extended family members. Where is your extended family from? Do you see your extended family often? If so, what are typical activities that you do with them?

3. Let's talk about school. Did you attend school? If so, where did you go to school?
4. Are you currently employed? If so, what do you do for work?
5. How many of your children are five years old or younger? Where does he/she/they go to school or daycare? Is his/her school or daycare at a Head Start center? At an elementary school? At another place in the community?

In the rest of the questions I'm going to ask, I'd like you to think about your child or children who is/are 5 years old or younger

Goals, aspirations, fears and concerns questions

1. What language or languages does your child hear and speak throughout the day with you and the people in your family? How about in your community—for example, at school, at the playground, in your neighborhood?
2. Tell me about your hopes and dreams for the language or languages that you would like your child to use as he/she grows up? Why is that important to you? What activities, services or supports could help your child in meeting these goals?
3. As your child grows up and enters elementary school, what languages do you imagine he/she will use? Why do you think so? What do you think will influence which languages your child will use as he/she grows up?
4. Think about how your child communicates with you and others—his/her ability to speak and listen. Is there anything right now that concerns you about his/her language use? If so, what concerns you? Why?
5. Is your home language—or the language other than English that your child speaks or understands—used in your child's school or daycare? If so, is there anything that concerns you about how your home language is used in the school or daycare? What concerns you? Why?
6. Let's go back to imagining your child as a grown-up. How would you feel if your child could speak your home language as an adult? How would you feel if he/she could no longer speak or communicate in your home language?

Family engagement in early care and education questions

1. How does your child's school or daycare involve you and your family in his/her learning? Can you share some examples? Are these activities helpful to you? Why?
2. Based on what you know about your child's school or daycare, does the school or daycare help your child develop your home language(s)? For those of you who said yes, how does the school or daycare do so? Do you think it is good that the school or daycare helps your child develop your home language? Why do you think so? Does the school or teacher in your child's class or room ever invite you or other adults to participate in activities in your home language(s) with children in the classroom? Can you share some examples?

3. Based on what you know about your child's school or daycare, does the school or daycare help your child develop English? For those of you who said yes, how does the school or daycare do so? Do you think it is good that the school or daycare helps your child develop English? Why do you think so? Does the school or teacher in your child's class or room ever invite you or other adults to participate in activities in English with children in the classroom? Can you share some examples?
4. How else might parents and/or family members work with teachers to help children's language learning and development?

Decision-making about early care and education questions

1. How important is it to you that your child attends a school or daycare where he/she will have opportunities to hear and speak your home language? English? Both?
2. When you were enrolling your child in the school or daycare, did you know if the teachers spoke your home language? How did you know?
3. What factors did you consider when you were deciding where to enroll your children in school or daycare?
4. Earlier you mentioned hopes and dreams you have for your child's languages. For example, some of you mentioned [GIVE EXAMPLES]. Did these hopes and dreams play any role in your decision to enroll your child in the school or daycare? What role did they play? For example, did your hopes and dreams for your child's language(s) help you make a decision about enrollment? Did it make you ask questions about the school or teachers?
5. We also spoke about concerns you have about your child's languages. For example, some of you mentioned [GIVE EXAMPLES]. Did these concerns play any role in your decision to enroll your child in the school or daycare? What role did these concerns play? For example, did your concerns help you make a decision about enrollment? Did it make you ask questions about the school or teachers?
6. What type of information do you think parents need when it comes time to making decisions about choosing a preschool or daycare program? Where do parents that you know get information about preschool or daycare options? What are other ways that parents can be supported when deciding whether and where to enroll their child in preschool or daycare?

Closing

1. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to share or any questions about what we discussed?

Thank you for sharing your perspectives with us and for your time.

Appendix B: Focus Group Protocol (Spanish)

Introducción

Gracias por estar aquí. Mi nombre es XXXX. Ella es mi colega, XXXX. Somos de la Universidad de Wisconsin. Nos gustaría tener una conversación con ustedes sobre la educación y el desarrollo del lenguaje de sus hijos.

Haremos preguntas para saber su opinión sobre estas áreas mediante una conversación grupal. No tomará más de 90 minutos. Mostraremos nuestra lista de preguntas y comenzaremos por pedirles que respondan a la primera. Todos tendrán la oportunidad de responder cada pregunta. Pueden elegir no responder, si lo desean. Sus respuestas guiarán la conversación grupal. Podemos avanzar pregunta por pregunta o podemos saltar algunas en función de cómo se desarrolle la conversación.

Ahora, voy a leer una carta para compartir más información, y si están de acuerdo, para obtener la aprobación verbal de formar parte de este grupo de enfoque. Comenzaremos a grabar ahora mismo.

COMENZAR GRABACIÓN



LEER EL GUION DE CONSENTIMIENTO ORAL COMPARTIR UNA COPIA DEL TEXTO DEL GUION CON CADA PARTICIPANTE

Bien, estamos listos para comenzar. Recuerden, no hay respuestas incorrectas, solo puntos de vista diferentes. Siéntanse libres de compartir sus puntos de vista, incluso si difieren de lo que otros han dicho. Tengan en cuenta que estamos interesados tanto en los comentarios negativos como en los positivos, y, a veces, los comentarios negativos son los más útiles.

También, les pedimos que cuando compartan sus opiniones, lo hagan de a uno a la vez. Puede resultar difícil entender lo que se está diciendo si hay varias personas hablando al mismo tiempo.

Los llamaremos por su nombre esta noche, y no utilizaremos ningún nombre en nuestros reportes. Comenzamos por pedirles que se presenten. Solo digan su primer nombre. [HACER UNA PAUSA EN ESTE MOMENTO PARA QUE CADA PARTICIPANTE DIGA SU NOMBRE].

Ahora, nos gustaría conocer un poco más sobre cada uno de ustedes y sus familias.

Preguntas generales

1. Cuéntenme acerca de sus familias. ¿Cuántos hijos tienen? ¿Cuántos años tienen sus hijos?
2. Cuéntenme acerca de los miembros en su familia extendida. ¿De qué lugar es su familia extendida? ¿Se ven con regularidad? ¿Cuáles son las actividades típicas que realizan?

3. Hablemos sobre la escuela. ¿Asistieron a la escuela? ¿A qué escuela asistieron?
4. ¿Tienen trabajo actualmente? ¿A qué se dedican?
5. ¿Cuántos de sus hijos tienen cinco años o menos? ¿La escuela o la guardería está en el centro Head Start? ¿En una escuela primaria? ¿En otro lugar de la comunidad?

En el resto de las preguntas que voy a hacer, me gustaría hablar sobre sus hijos de cinco años o menores.

Preguntas sobre objetivos, aspiraciones, temores y preocupaciones

1. ¿Qué idiomas escuchan y hablan sus hijos durante el día con ustedes y con familiares? ¿Qué idiomas escuchan en la comunidad? Por ejemplo, en el programa preescolar, en el área de juegos, en el vecindario.
2. Cuéntenme sobre sus expectativas y sueños con respecto a los idiomas que les gustaría que sus hijos hablen mientras crecen. ¿Por qué es importante? ¿Qué actividades, servicios o apoyo podrían ayudar para que sus hijos alcancen estos objetivos?
3. Cuando sus hijos crezcan y comiencen la escuela primaria, ¿qué idiomas creen que hablarán? ¿Por qué piensan eso? ¿Qué factores creen que influirán en que idiomas usarán sus hijos a medida que crezcan?
4. Piensen sobre cómo sus hijos se comunican con ustedes o con otras personas, y sus capacidades para hablar y escuchar. ¿Hay algo que les preocupe sobre el uso de sus idiomas? ¿Qué les preocupa? ¿Por qué?
5. En el programa preescolar o guardería, ¿se habla la lengua materna u otro idioma diferente al inglés que sus hijos hablan o comprenden? ¿Hay algo que les preocupe sobre cómo se utiliza la lengua materna en estas instituciones? ¿Qué les preocupa? ¿Por qué?
6. Vamos a imaginar a sus hijos como adultos. ¿Cómo se sentirían si sus hijos pudieran hablar su lengua materna cuando crezcan? ¿Cómo se sentirían si sus hijos ya no pudieran hablar o comunicarse en su lengua materna?

Preguntas sobre la participación familiar en el cuidado infantil y la educación temprana

1. ¿Cómo los involucra la escuela o la guardería a ustedes y a sus familias en el aprendizaje de sus hijos? ¿Pueden compartir algunos ejemplos? ¿Son útiles estas actividades? ¿Por qué?
2. En función de lo que conocen sobre la escuela o la guardería, ¿piensan que la escuela o la guardería ayuda a sus hijos a aprender su lengua materna? Para aquellos que han dicho que sí, ¿cómo lo hacen? ¿Piensan que es bueno el hecho de que la escuela o la guardería ayude a sus hijos a aprender su lengua materna? ¿Por qué piensan eso? ¿La escuela o el maestro de la clase los ha invitado a ustedes o a otros adultos a participar en actividades habladas en la lengua materna con niños en el salón de clase? ¿Pueden compartir algunos ejemplos?

3. En función de lo que conocen sobre la escuela o la guardería, ¿piensan que ayudan a sus hijos a aprender el idioma inglés? Para aquellos que han dicho que sí, ¿cómo lo hacen? ¿Piensan que es bueno el hecho de que la escuela o la guardería ayude a sus hijos a aprender este idioma? ¿Por qué piensan eso? ¿La escuela o el maestro de la clase de sus hijos los ha invitado a ustedes o a otros adultos a participar en actividades habladas en inglés con niños en el salón de clase? ¿Pueden compartir algunos ejemplos?
4. ¿De qué otras maneras podrían los padres o los familiares trabajar con los maestros para ayudar en el aprendizaje y el desarrollo del lenguaje de sus hijos?

Preguntas sobre la toma de decisiones con respecto al cuidado infantil y la educación temprana

1. ¿Qué tan importante es que sus hijos asistan a una escuela o guardería donde tengan la oportunidad de escuchar y hablar su lengua materna? ¿Inglés? ¿Ambos?
2. Cuando inscribieron a sus hijos en la escuela o en la guardería, ¿sabían si los maestros hablaban su lengua materna? ¿Cómo lo supieron?
3. ¿Qué factores consideraron cuando decidían en qué institución inscribir a sus hijos?
4. Mencionaron anteriormente las expectativas y los sueños que tienen acerca de los idiomas. Por ejemplo, algunos dijeron [DAR EJEMPLOS]. ¿Estos sueños y expectativas tuvieron alguna importancia en la decisión de inscribir a sus hijos en la escuela o la guardería? ¿Qué importancia tuvieron? Por ejemplo, estos sueños y expectativas, ¿influyeron en la decisión de la inscripción? ¿Les hizo cuestionar o dudar sobre el programa o los maestros?
5. También hablamos sobre las preocupaciones que tienen sobre los idiomas de sus hijos. Por ejemplo, algunos dijeron [DAR EJEMPLOS]. ¿Estas preocupaciones tuvieron alguna importancia en la decisión de inscribir a sus hijos en la escuela o la guardería? ¿Qué importancia tuvieron? Por ejemplo, ¿ayudaron estas preocupaciones a la hora de decidir sobre la inscripción? ¿Les hizo cuestionar o dudar sobre el programa o los maestros?
6. ¿Qué tipo de información piensan que los padres necesitan al momento de tomar decisiones sobre la elección de un programa de preescolar o guardería? Los padres que conocen, ¿dónde consiguen la información sobre las opciones de programas de preescolar o guardería? ¿De qué otras maneras se puede ayudar a los padres a decidir si deben inscribir a sus hijos en preescolar o en una guardería?

Para terminar

1. ¿Tienen comentarios adicionales que les gustaría compartir, u otras preguntas sobre lo que hemos discutido?

Gracias por compartir sus opiniones y por el tiempo que nos han dedicado.

Appendix C: Reflection Questions for Debrief Template

Broad/Introductory Debrief

1. What are some insights that you learned or “aha” moments that you experienced?

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

2. Were there any surprises? (i.e., unexpected responses, tangential comments, outliers, body language)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Debrief Specific to Research Questions

Research Question 1: What goals, aspirations, fears, and concerns do parents have for their children’s language learning and development?

Goals and aspirations: Patterns (i.e., themes/ideas/comments that come up more than once; for example, we repeatedly notice something like, “would like to see use of home language in ECE setting,” “hesitancy about identifying specific language goals,” saying “I don’t know”)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Goals and aspirations: Comments that are particularly descriptive/illustrative (i.e., any notable quotes or ideas related to patterns that emerge during the interviews/focus groups)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Research Question 1: What goals, aspirations, fears, and concerns do parents have for their children’s language learning and development?

Goals and aspirations: Other significant ideas (i.e., ideas that are not referenced multiple times but significant to the research questions)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Fears and concerns: Patterns (i.e., themes/ideas/comments that come up more than once; for example, we repeatedly notice something like, “would like to see use of home language in ECE setting,” “hesitancy about identifying specific language goals,” saying “I don’t know”)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Research Question 1: What goals, aspirations, fears, and concerns do parents have for their children’s language learning and development?

Fears and concerns: Comments that are particularly descriptive/illustrative (i.e., any notable quotes or ideas related to patterns that emerge during the interviews/focus groups)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Fears and concerns: Other significant ideas (i.e., ideas that are not referenced multiple times but significant to the research questions)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Research Question 2: What are parents’ perceptions about family engagement practices used in early care and education programs and the extent to which these support children’s language learning and development?

Parents’ perceptions about family engagement practices: Patterns (i.e., themes/ideas/comments that come up more than once; for example, we repeatedly notice something like, “would like to see use of home language in ECE setting,” “hesitancy about identifying specific language goals,” saying “I don’t know”)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Parents’ perceptions about family engagement practices: Comments that are particularly descriptive/illustrative (i.e., any notable quotes or ideas related to patterns that emerge during the interviews/focus groups)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Research Question 2: What are parents’ perceptions about family engagement practices used in early care and education programs and the extent to which these support children’s language learning and development?

Parents’ perceptions about family engagement practices: Other significant ideas (i.e., ideas that are not referenced multiple times but significant to the research questions)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

How do early care and education programs support children’s language learning and development?: Patterns (i.e., themes/ideas/comments that come up more than once; for example, we repeatedly notice something like, “would like to see use of home language in ECE setting,” “hesitancy about identifying specific language goals,” saying “I don’t know”)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Research Question 2: What are parents' perceptions about family engagement practices used in early care and education programs and the extent to which these support children's language learning and development?

How do early care and education programs support children's language learning and development?: Comments that are particularly descriptive/illustrative (i.e., any notable quotes or ideas related to patterns that emerge during the interviews/focus groups)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

How do early care and education programs support children's language learning and development?: Other significant ideas (i.e., ideas that are not referenced multiple times but significant to the research questions)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Research Question 3: What roles, if any, do their goals, aspirations, fears and concerns about children’s language learning and development play in their decision-making about early care and education?

Patterns (i.e., themes/ideas/comments that come up more than once; for example, we repeatedly notice something like, “would like to see use of home language in ECE setting,” “hesitancy about identifying specific language goals,” saying “I don’t know”)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Comments that are particularly descriptive/illustrative (i.e., any notable quotes or ideas related to patterns that emerge during the interviews/focus groups)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas

Research Question 3: What roles, if any, do their goals, aspirations, fears and concerns about children’s language learning and development play in their decision-making about early care and education?

Other significant ideas (i.e., ideas that are not referenced multiple times but significant to the research questions)

Note-Taker	Facilitator	Other Shared Ideas



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