



THE DIALOG

A Journal for Inclusive
Early Childhood Professionals

From the Guest Editor: Introduction to the Special Issue

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I am pleased to introduce you to this special issue of *The Dialog* focused on **Supporting Multilingual Children and Families in Early Childhood Spaces**; the FIRST issue of the NEW Dialog!

Across the US, one third of children under the age of five are multilingual. In certain states, such as California, Texas, and New Jersey, the proportion of students who speak multiple languages is closer to 50% of the population (Nhi Giang & Park, 2023). Besides English, there are between 350 to 430 other languages spoken in our country with Spanish is the most dominant. Indeed, other languages like Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Arabic have millions of speakers across our nation (Monssen & Gregory, 2023). Each of these languages brings unique nuances, cultures, value and purpose to families, children, and the educational context. Early childhood educators and researchers must utilize respectful and equitable approaches to partner with multilingual communities in meaningful ways.

This Dialog Special Issue, **Supporting Multilingual Children and Families in Early Childhood Spaces**, invited manuscripts that addressed the strengths and needs of multilingual children and families through research, policy, preparation, or other initiatives. The Dialog is pleased to support an issue that highlights, celebrates, and encourages multilingual learning, especially in today's political climate. This issue aims to highlight a handful of wonderful initiatives across the country to reach multilingual learners in the early years. Indeed, I know you will find many practical and actionable steps for early childhood educators and other professionals who seek to support multilingual children and families in early childhood spaces.

The idea for this special issue came about as I heard about different initiatives to support multilingual learners and their families, such as that which Hamel and colleagues highlight in the first article, **Situating Literacy-Rich Engagements for Emergent Bilinguals**. In their manuscript, the authors provide an overview of Camp Sunshine, a summer literacy program for emergent bilingual children ages 4-8 that positions bilingualism as an asset. Further practical application derived from their work is presented in their research to practice summary **Creating Inclusive Multilingual Spaces: A Literature-Based Framework for Supporting Young Emergent Bilinguals**.

Next, in **Transition to Kindergarten for Preschoolers with Multilingual Abilities: Do Parents and Professionals See Eye to Eye?**, Macy and colleagues report the results of their mixed method study which sought to understand parental and professional assessment collaboration during transition to kindergarten for preschoolers who are learning multiple languages. Their work examined the congruency between teachers and families of children who speak Spanish at home who are transitioning from rural Head Start preschool into kindergarten and results highlight both similar views and meaningful discrepancies between parents and professionals. The authors discuss implications for creating positive and supportive transitions for preschoolers using an authentic and collaborative assessment approach with prioritizing individualized strategies for children, their families, and professionals during the move to kindergarten. In their research to practice summary accompanying the research article, Edokhamhen leads the team in providing research to practice connections by looking at several key challenges in assessing children during kindergarten transition, specific strategies for implementing authentic

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INTRODUCTION

assessment with multilingual learners, and recommendations for program implementation. (See Using Parent and Teacher Authentic Assessment Results to Guide Preschool to Kindergarten Transition for Multilingual Learners).

Finally, Sudduth and colleagues' contribution, *Nurturing Home Languages to Engage and Empower Multilingual Families in Early Childhood Education Settings*, aims to integrate the concepts of empowerment, funds of identity, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and translanguaging into practical strategies for educators to establish and nurture engaging partnerships with multilingual children and families. They assert that establishing partnerships with families through linguistically appropriate family engagement efforts allows children to maintain their home languages while learning a new language, helps educators teach each child effectively, and allows families to support their child's education in the classroom, home, and community. To compliment their article, the research to practice summary led by Flannery, *Embracing Multicultural and Multilingual Families: Transforming Education, Empowering Communities*, draws from the frameworks detailed in their primary article to explore practices for cultivating inclusive learning environments through reflexive practices, culturally responsive literature circles, authentic cultural celebrations, and family engagement initiatives.

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