THE
DIALOG

A Journal for Inclusive
Early Childhood Professionals

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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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 (Monsen & 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

assessment with multilingual learners, and recommen-dations 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 en-gagement efforts allows children to maintain their home languages while learning a new language, helps educa-tors teach each child effectively, and allows families to support their child's education in the classroom, home, and community. To compliment their article, the re-search 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 litera-ture circles, authentic cultural celebrations, and family engagement initiatives.

"Early childhood educators and researchers must utilize respectful and equitable approaches to partner with multilingual communities in meaningful ways."

Situating Literacy-Rich Engagements for Emergent Bilinguals

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ABSTRACT

Camp Sunshine, a summer literacy program for emergent bilingual children ages 4-8, positions bilingualism as an asset. In Camp Sunshine, we strive to create inclusive multilingual spaces that honor children's cultural identities and lived experiences while supporting literacy development. The camp implements a three-pronged approach to literacy engagement: beginning with whole-group interactive read-alouds of carefully selected multicultural picturebooks, followed by small-group re-engagement with key concepts, and culminating in hands-on explorations through art or play-based activities. Through Camp Sunshine, children freely use their full linguistic repertoires, navigating literacy as they engage in translanguaging. This descriptive article presents key insights including strategies to support literacy development like using culturally relevant literature as windows into children's experiences, incorporating sensory-rich experiences, and fostering collaborative relationships between educators. The framework which offers practical applications for educators seeking to create culturally responsive learning environments for emergent bilingual learners.

KEYWORDS
Translanguaging, emergent bilinguals, picturebooks, culturally response literacy, asset-based perspective

Camp Sunshine (all names are pseudonyms), a summer literacy camp for young emergent bilingual children, provides a space for children to freely engage in literacy-rich activities in a joyful and creative atmosphere. We, university researchers and faculty, intentionally designed the camp to position bilingualism as an asset for learning and growth, rather than a deficit. Located on the campus of a university early childhood laboratory school in the southeast, the camp operates for eight, half-day sessions, offering campers

time in large group gatherings and age-defined classes (kindergarten and first grade in one group, second and third grade in another group). Throughout the day, campers, ages four to eight years old, engage in read alouds, art activities, music, dance, center activities, snack time and outdoor play. Within these spaces, campers use whichever language or languages they feel most comfortable within a given context, sometimes engaging in translanguaging as they mix languages seamlessly (García et al., 2017). The dynamic environment at *Camp Sunshine* is busy, noisy, exuberant, and celebrates linguistic diversity.

Camp Sunshine has been serving children and families since 2018. In this descriptive article, we describe the curriculum at large, followed by the specific three-pronged multiliteracy approach implemented in summer 2023. During that year, camp staff included four teachers (two fluent in Spanish and English) and three researchers (university faculty, one bilingual in Spanish and English). Additionally, six bilingual high-school and middle school-aged peer mentors assisted the camp by engaging/playing with the campers and helping to set up and organize classroom spaces. While the summer camp welcomes children ages four through eight years old, this descriptive article will share examples of culturally and linguistically relevant practices with the K-1 group (four through six-year-olds). These practices offer possibilities for educators and caregivers to be used in or beyond classroom contexts that aim to engage and support emergent bilingual learners.

Camp Curriculum

Since 2018, the curriculum of Camp Sunshine has focused on themes of identity that aim to reflect the lived experiences of the campers. Recognizing that language and identity are inextricably intertwined, we designed curriculum around themes like Who Am I? and My Family and My Community. These themes provided opportunities for the children to explore their cultural identities and for us to learn about them, their families, and their cultural and linguistic practices and experiences.

Selecting Children's Books

Anchoring the curricular themes are carefully selected children's books. These books are the heart of the curriculum. Throughout the years, we have selected books that were 1) published in both Spanish and English versions (translated), 2) written in Spanish and English in the same book (bilingual books), or 3) written in English with Spanish words (translanguage books). Botelho and Marion (2023) recommend the term translanguage books as it draws from the theoretical framework of translanguaging. This variety was intentional to showcase the diverse ways in which people use language. Reyes et al. (2022) discuss the importance of selecting literature that is relevant to the reader's experiences and home culture to encourage their engagement. Therefore, we wanted books to be relevant, culturally responsive, connected to the theme, an appropriate length for a read-aloud for our campers, and high-quality literature that uses rich language and noteworthy illustrations to present complex ideas with which children can grapple. Additionally, we carefully selected books by authors and illustrators with experiences within the community they write about. See Figure 1 for the invaluable resources we have used to find wonderful literature. See Figure 1.

Over time, the camp curriculum has expanded to more fully explore the relationship between languages and identities. For example, in earlier years, books in English and/or Spanish served as means to inquire about self and community. In 2023, the books selected took a deeper dive to look closely at the linguistic experiences of the characters. Books like Gibberish (Vo, 2022) and Drawn Together (Lê, 2018) portrayed struggles common in the lives of emergent bilingual children, like being misunderstood by peers and teachers or not being able to communicate and connect with a grandparent. While these challenges are real, they only offer a partial (or one) perspective of the complex experience of being bilingual, which is also shaped by joy and love. As such, we also selected stories that explore a comprehensive view of language, and a range of experiences relevant to many emergent bilinguals across contexts. For example, we read Yo! Yes? Yes? (Raschka, 1993) to think about the role of non-verbal communication, particularly when meeting someone for the first time. We shared Luli and the Language of Tea (Wang & Yum, 2022)

FIGURE 1: Children's Literature Resources

World of Words: Center for Global Literacies and Literatures, out of the University of Arizona, includes: WOW Currents (updated news regarding children's and adolescent literature), WOW Reviews (current book reviews), WOW Stories (vignettes from PK-12 classrooms) and WOW Libros (reviews of Spanish-language books).

Outstanding International Books (OIB) List, sponsored by the United States Board of Books for Young People, includes approximately 40 international books that help children understand the world around them. The OIB website showcases the book covers, links to annotated bibliographies, and links to Teaching Books entries for each book that suggests how to use books in classrooms.

Book awards like Charlotte Huck Award, Pura Belpré Award, Coretta Scott King Award, Asian/Pacific American Award for Children's Literature, American Indian Youth Literature Award, Schneider Family Book Award, John Newbery Medal, and the Caldecott Medal.

about a group of young linguistically and culturally diverse children who rely on play and tea as means for communication, as languages. In addition, we read A Song of Frutas (Engle & Palacios, 2021) and Little Treasures: Terms of Endearments from Around the World (Ogborn, 2012), which focus on meaningful relationships in bilingual communities. See Figure 2 for the complete list of anchor texts from each Camp Sunshine theme across the years. See Appendix A for the complete list of anchor texts from each Camp Sunshine theme across the years.

Three-Pronged Approach

In 2023, as we designed the curriculum, we were intentional about a three-pronged approach to engage with a specific picture book. First, we introduced the picture book with a whole group interactive read-aloud. Then we moved into smaller groups in different classrooms, where we re-engaged the children with the book. Finally, children explored the experiences in the picture books through art- or play-based engagements.

Introductory Read Aloud

When conducting the whole group read aloud, two teachers took the lead on each book. We scanned the images to display on a Promethean Board so that all children could see the illustrations. Each teacher also had a copy of the book so they could read. Depending on the book, teachers used a variety of strategies to engage the children in the read aloud: use varying voices, alter speed and volume based on what is happening in the story, pause for questions, connections, and other responses, and invite the readers to join in the reading (Kiefer et al., 2023).

At times, the teachers took turns reading by pages and other times they assumed the role of a character, like in Yo! Yes! (Rachka, 2007). Other times, the teachers asked questions, creating opportunities for the children to make connections between the books and their lives and to discuss the text with their peers. When sharing books like Drawn Together (Lê, 2018) and Gibberish (Vo, 2022), they also paused on specific illustrations to give children the time to take in the details, prompt children's thinking by asking targeted questions, and wondering why the illustrator might have selected this design. During the read aloud of Little Treasures: Endearments from Around the World (Ongburn, 2012), a global book written in multiple languages, the teachers read aloud in all the languages, and asked questions in either Spanish and English, or sometimes in both languages.

For the teachers and researchers, these introductory read aloud sessions provided crucial context for informing our next steps. As we watched and listened, we asked ourselves:

1. Do the children seem to be enjoying th book?
2. Do they understand the story?
3. What role are multiple languages playing in their experiences with the text?
4. Are they making personal connections?
5. What role are the illustrations playing in their experiences with the text?
6. What kinds of questions are the teachers asking that deepen their understanding and connections to the book?

These guiding questions shaped our understanding of their initial interactions with the story. After

we finished the read-aloud, the whole group split into two smaller groups (according to age), in different classrooms, where children enjoyed a snack before moving into the re-engagement.

Culturally Relevant Re-engagement

In smaller groups, teachers revisited the picture book to re-engage the children with the story and concepts explored in the book. These re-engagements lasted approximately 10-15 minutes and were especially important because they made texts/concepts more accessible to children as we explored and built upon connections between the read aloud and the children's wealth of knowledge, previous educational experiences, conceptual understanding, and language development (Chang et al., 2016). For example, Drawn Together (Lê, 2018) uses minimal text to tell the story of a boy who is dropped off for the day at his grandfather's house. They do not share the same spoken language and the illustrations depict their differences and a slight tension as they try to eat together or watch tv. It is only when the boy brings out his art supplies that they begin to connect, as the grandfather is also an artist. With very different styles and materials, they parallel draw until their illustrations begin to interact and morph into something new.

We knew that we needed to spend time unpacking the storyline. When we got back to the small group, one teacher revisited the art in the story, moving fluidly between Spanish and English, while wondering aloud. She asked questions like: 1) How did they know who was drawing? 2) What if the boy and the grandfather couldn't understand each other? and 3) I wonder how they decided what to draw? The teacher turned to a different page and said "Look at all the colors. What do you see here?" as she slowly moved the book around the small group to give each child the opportunity to study the illustration. On another page, she asked the children how the grandfather and grandson looked like they were feeling? When they responded with "happy," the teacher prompted them to think about why they were now happy.

This re-engagement focused on the art, communication, and emotions, as we provided children with "multiple opportunities to hear and use language, emphasizing academic language use and discipline-specific terminology and discourse patterns," (Ortiz et al., 2023, p. 2) which made the picture book accessible to these young readers. These re-engagements also integrated additional strategies, beyond those mentioned in the Introductory Read Aloud, that encouraged children's engagement, attention, and motivation such as exploring artifacts, engaging with sensory materials, and responding through movement.

Exploration

After children re-engaged with the picture books, they moved into the exploration phase of the literacy experience that were intentionally designed to extend experiences and understanding of the stories. Chang, et. al (2016) noted that opportunities for collaboration benefits bilingual learners as they "use language to construct meaning, show content understanding, and develop language" (p.16). Literature-based exploration builds critical knowledge and understanding, provides opportunities for inquiry that is relative and interesting, and meets the diverse needs of readers, including bilingual learners, as they engage in meaningful ways with texts (Kiefer et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2016; Pappas et al., 2006).

We designed a variety of engagements, arts-based or play-based, to further the children's experiences with the picture book. For example, after reading Yo! Yes? (Raschka, 2007), children worked together to brainstorm ideas, movements, and body postures that they could or have used to greet people for the first time. The teachers photographed the children's actions for further discussion around the power of non-verbal communication. After re-engaging with Drawn Together (Lé, 2018), children partnered together to paint a picture without using words, like the characters did in the book. Teachers then asked them follow up questions similar to those discussed in the relevant re-engagement. How did you decide what to draw? How did you communicate with each other? Similarly, once the children discussed Luli and the Language of Tea (Yang, 2022), they played in pairs without using verbal languages to relate to the experience presented in the story.

As part of the camp experience, it has been important for us to share the children's experiences with their families. Therefore, each year, the children's artistic or multimodal responses to the anchor text are connected to a larger documentation

piece centered around a theme. This piece is sent home with the child on the last day of camp. One year, children created a life-size cultural x-ray (Short, 2009) that reflected the daily art-based engagements around prompts like "What do you like to play? What do you know a lot about? Describe your favorite outfit. What is your dream? What questions do you have?" (see Figure 2). In 2023, all explorations contributed to the creation of a portrait wall inspired by Mariana and Her Familia (Mancillas, 2022) capturing children's responses to prompts such as "Draw a self-portrait. Create a picture of your family. How can you say hi to someone for the first time?" (see Figure3).

FIGURE 2
Emilio's Self-Portrait

Note. *Artifact created in summer 2022.*

FIGURE 3
Carmen's Portrait Wall

Note. *Artifacts created during her time at Camp Sunshine in 2023.*

We believe that this three-pronged approach created rich opportunities for children to interact with texts and illustrations, deepening their understanding of and appreciation for literature.

Insights from the Three-Pronged Approach in the K-1 Classroom

Our summer camp focused on creating spaces for emergent bilinguals that serve as windows (Sims Bishop, 1990) into the children' family experiences and funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, et al., 2005), particularly those around their linguistic repertoires. These spaces also supported young emergent bilingual children in making sense of the complex picture books we explored during our time together. As educators of young children, we understand the importance and benefits of an interactive read aloud. Last year we were quite comfortable with the Introduction prong of the curriculum. However, we found ourselves digging deeper into the re-engagements and explorations with books, which is the focus of this section. The following strategies allowed teachers and researchers to collaborate and engage children in interpreting and understanding the experiences depicted in the literature. We share insights for creating spaces and opportunities that maximize the linguistic experiences and growth for emergent bilingual children.

Reaching All Children
Teachers demonstrate proficiency in adapting instruction for emergent bilinguals when they ensure that the content is inclusive and comprehensive for all children (Whitacre et al., 2021). At Camp Sunshine, teachers and researchers worked together to ensure children had access to the books by identifying conceptual ideas from the stories that the children could relate to or engage with particularly given the limited time available within the summer camp structure. Much of the negotiation of these ideas developed after the whole camp introductory read aloud, as teachers carefully observed the young campers' engagement. For example, during the read aloud of Little Treasures: Endearments from Around the World (Ogburn, 2011), we noticed that the children had a hard time engaging with the story, possibly because the title is a concept book that offers no storyline. During

our re-engagement with the book, we decided to pay closer attention to Raschka's illustrations and invited the children to mix watercolors to create self-portraits. Excited by the process of comparing their skin tones and mixing paint, the children were also more interested in sharing the names their families called them: mi amor, peque, coranzoncito, hija, and name diminutives like Carlitos (after Carlos), or Carmensita (after Carmen). See Figures 4 and 5.

FIGURE 4
Children Painting

Note. *Campers creating the tone that will best match their skin.*

FIGURE 5
Sheila's Self-Portrait

Note. *Camper's self-portrait using paint that had been mixed to match skin tone.*

During the re-engagement of Drawn Together (Lê & Santat, 2018) and Luli and the Language of Tea (Wang & Yum, 2022), we conducted a partial picture walk to co-retell the stories with the children. We focused on the emotions of the characters at the beginning and end of the story, the role of drawing and tea as individual but also collective experiences; as languages, and the characters' ability to communicate without speech. For both stories we encouraged the children to "play a game" that consisted of inviting a peer to play without relying on verbal communication. We carefully framed the experience as a game because we wanted to stay away from the loaded implications of silence in an early childhood classroom. As the children played, they naturally communicated with gestures, eye contact, postures, facial expression, and sound effects like "um", "um-huh" or "uh-uh" that allowed them to negotiate their rules and expectations of the play turns. We quickly realized that highlighting non-verbal communication and play as language reached all children because for a few minutes we placed the constant high expectations for expressive language on hold. This game encouraged children to rely on the multimodal nature of play to actively engage in communication and meaning making even with the absence of much oral language (Wohlwend et al., 2022).

Key Words as Windows into Children's Experiences

Camp Sunshine was designed to support emergent bilinguals in English and Spanish. One way teachers assisted children was by highlighting important vocabulary from the stories. These words served as windows into children's linguistic and cultural experiences. Sometimes the book published in English included words in Spanish. For example, while reading Paletero Man (Diaz, 2021), Ms. Rosie asked, "does anybody know what the word vecindad means?". Other times, the book published in English offered opportunities to highlight cognates, as in Luli and the Language of Tea (Wang, 2022) when the teacher explained, "hot water, they're going to make tea, té". Similarly, while revisiting Mariana and Her Familia (Mencillas, 2022), published in English, the teacher asked in Spanish: ¿Quién tiene primos o primas? When 4-year old Valentina responded "I got three primas, and that's what they're called, because in Spanish primas", her translingual response showed that she can distinguish and understand both languages and she is also deeply aware of her bilingual and bicultural identities, and the pragmatics of languages as she explains why her primas are called (or must

be called) primas instead of cousins. During this same interaction we learned that her abuelita Celia lives in Mexico and as she stated, "I come from Mexico".

However, in 2023, Camp Sunshine welcomed Alice, a young emergent bilingual fluent in English and Mandarin, the latter being a language unfamiliar to teachers, researchers, and the rest of the children. Therefore, we highlighted words in English, Spanish and Mandarin. Since only Alice knew Mandarin, we integrated questions about Mandarin in broader conversations about other languages and countries to avoid unintentionally signaling her as a token for her home language or her Chinese cultural background. For example, while discussing Luli and the Language of Tea (Wang, 2022), the teachers made several comments related to multilingualism and asked several questions about countries of origin. One of the comments informally prompted Alice for confirmation, "I asked Alice's parents how they say hello in their language and they said n h o ", to which she quickly responded "right!". In a similar interaction, the children had identified a bridge in the illustrations of Drawn Together (Lê, 2018). At that moment, the teacher provided the Spanish translation puente, and asked the group, "Do we know how to call this (while signaling the bridge) in Mandarin?" Alice responded, Qiáo .

We comfortably supported emergent bilinguals in English and Spanish. However, when working with Alice, we appreciated statements reassuring that "Monolingual teachers are just as able as bilingual or multilingual teachers to enact a translanguaging pedagogy" (Brown, 2021, p. 143). In the future, as we welcome emergent bilinguals in languages other than Spanish, we will integrate additional strategies like translating the title of the book; learning key words of phrases that can facilitate transitions or daily routines; conducting the introductory read aloud in English, followed by the re-engagement in Spanish; inviting family members to read or sing in their home language; creating labels in the various summer camp spaces to signal key materials and areas; and, using technology such as Google Translate or artificial intelligence like ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2022) to understand the children but also for them to create meaning. Even though our camp is short, we can still be co-learn-

ers with the children and provide time and space for them to engage in translanguage spaces (Brown, 2021).

Finally, while many of our interactions with children were initiated in English, except with a few children who showed preference for Spanish, the camp itself started each morning with Hola, ¿qué tal? (Super Simple Español, 2018), a Spanish children's song that integrates body movements such as aplaudir, zapaterar, estirar, agachar, dar la vuelta y saludar. Similarly, camp ended with Adiós, adiós (Super Simple Español, 2018). This shorter Spanish song emphasized aplaudir and zapatear as part of its contagious lyrics. Our hope with the strategies presented in this section was to create humanizing spaces that validate children's bilingual and bicultural identities as they build incidentally upon their linguistic repertoires.

Sensory-Based Experiences

Sensory- rich play is known to support children's brain development and memory (Gascoyne, 2011). Experiences with sensory materials can bring learning to life. The unstructured quality of sensory-rich play, where there's no set right or wrong approach, offers an inclusive learning environment ripe for fostering problem-solving, exploration, and creativity. Sometimes we integrated sensory-based experiences as means to create windows into children's family stories. For example, while revisiting Mariana and Her Familia (Mancillas, 2022) we invited the children to use their hands to mimic movements made when flattening Mexican tortillas.

Other times the sensory materials allowed us to plan multimodal experiences to create meaningful entry points to connect with the story. While listening to A Song of Frutas (Engle, 2021), we noticed the younger campers' excitement for sharing stories about grandparents living in Mexico, El Salvador and the U.S., as well as fruits that they enjoyed eating or sharing with family. Following our observations, during the re-engagement with the story, we invited children to share about their favorite fruits and explored these words in Spanish, English, and Mandarin. Aware of the importance of offering multiple means for engagement and expression (Whitacre et al., 2021) we also incorporated Play-Doh to encourage children to create the

fruits we explored to foster attention, conceptual understanding, and fine motor skills.

Similarly, while reengaging with *Luli and the Language of Tea* (Wang, 2022) children and teachers recreated the tea party scene from the book and built a structure with magnetic tiles using nonverbal communication to share similar experiences as the characters in the book. The different materials allowed children to reenter the story world with artifacts that were relevant to their previous experiences and supportive of their cognitive and physical development.

Educators and Researchers as Co-Teachers

Establishing respectful and collaborative relationships among adults in a classroom is crucial for creating supportive learning environments for children. At Camp Sunshine, teachers and researchers collaborated as partners, appreciating and building upon each other's expertise. Following Juuti et al., (2021)'s recommendation, we made an effort to ensure that everyone felt confident that their ideas and concerns would be listened to, and that feedback would be helpful.

As expected, we started each day with a lesson plan. However, as each day unfolded, we observed, listened, and revised our lessons to support the children's experiences with the texts. Central to this revising process was the collaboration between teachers and researchers. Sometimes, researchers observed aspects during the introductory read-aloud (led by teachers) and shared their findings with the teachers; together they negotiated revisions for the re-engagement plans. For example, after observing the children during the read aloud of Gibberish (Vo, 2020), teachers and researchers noticed that one key experience from the book to highlight during the re-engagement could be the practice of building vocabulary through images (pictures) and repetition as depicted in the excerpt where Dat and Julie rely on drawings to help Dat learn words in English. To mediate this learning experience Ms. Rivera recommended artifacts based on her vast knowledge of preschool classrooms, young children's interests, and Spanish/English cognates that could support emergent bilinguals. Some of the items named in English, Spanish, and Mandarin included: a toy crocodile (cocodrilo), a rubber school bus, plastic cup of rice, a rose (rosa), among others. After this collective engagement,

each child selected an item from the classroom to draw and label in different languages. See Figures 6 and 7.

FIGURE 6
Antonio's Butterfly

FIGURE 7
Alice's Apple

Once again, after careful observation of the children during the introductory read aloud of Mariana and Her Familia (Mancillas & Meza, 2022), teachers and researchers decided to highlight the role of family pictures across places like home, school, or on a phone, as illustrated in the grandmother's wall of family pictures. With this idea in mind, Ms. Rivera invited the children to explore the wall of pictures of children and their families who attended that classroom during the academic year. This reference helped children notice that children and families can belong to many spaces, while creating a space for them to become familiar with a space that was new to everyone exc-

cept Ms. Rivera. This process of revising and re-thinking together allowed us to engage in flexible thinking as we capitalized on one another's per-spectives and expertise.

Over the Camp Sunshine years, teachers and researchers have also exchanged general impres-sions regarding children's responses to the overall structure of the summer camp. These observa-tions have prompted significant discussions about scheduling and the intentions behind each rou-tine. For example, in previous years, snack time (scheduled between the introductory read aloud and the re-engagement with the text) was utilized as a space where teachers and researchers contin-ued conversations about the story. After noticing children actively changing the topic of conversa-tion or remaining quiet to the prompts, the adults decided to rethink how we structured this time. In 2023, rather than asking reading comprehension questions during snack, the children ate, talked, and laughed in child-led interactions. The first day, we worried that the break would result in campers disconnecting from the story. Instead, we found the opposite. This time provided children with the space and time to process what they had heard and seen in the Introduction. In fact, we found that this transition provided a necessary disruption from the more intense focused thought required during the read aloud and the subsequent re-engagement with the story; a time to slow down and honor the flexible nature of summer camps.

Conclusion

Focusing on ways to create engaging literacy experiences for emergent bilingual children, that are anchored by high quality children's literature, we believe the three-pronged approach described here is critical. When all three prongs of the ap-proach are employed, bilingual children are pro-vided multiple opportunities to connect with the text and engage in playful meaning making. Addi-tionally, finding ways to reach all children, high-lighting words that helped us learn a little bit more about the children, incorporating sensory-based play experiences, and engaging in collaborative and respectful relationships between teachers and researchers, were also pivotal to the camp experi-ence. We argue that these tenets are valuable for ALL learning environments for ALL children. Our hope is that more children will benefit from the experiences we have so fortunately shared and the lessons we have learned at Camp Sunshine.

"This time provided children with the space and time to process what they had heard and seen."

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Creating Inclusive Multilingual Spaces: A Literature-Based Framework for Supporting Young Emergent Bilinguals

A Research to Practice Summary

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ABSTRACT

This research to practice manuscript describes a summer literacy program designed to support emergent bilingual children ages 4 through 8 through a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse practices. Children engaged in literature-based activities, including read-alouds, art, music, and play, within an inclusive environment that celebrated bilingualism as an asset. The program used high-quality picturebooks to implement a three-pronged approach: interactive read-alouds, culturally relevant small-group re-engagements, and hands-on explorations. Findings underscore the importance of sensory-rich, play-based experiences, intentional collaboration among educators, and the strategic use of bilingual and translanguage picturebooks to foster meaningful connections and language development.

KEYWORDS

translanguaging, biliteracy, asset-based, picturebooks, strategies

This study explored Camp Sunshine (pseudonym), a summer literacy program designed for emergent bilingual children ages 4-8. The camp celebrates linguistic diversity and positions bilingualism as an asset, emphasizing the value of children's home languages. Over the course of eight half-day sessions, children participated in a variety of literature-based activities, including read-alouds, art, music, dance, and center-based learning, as well as snack time and outdoor play. Mixed-age groups were organized with kindergartners and first graders together, and second and third graders in another cohort. Within these spaces, campers use whichever language or languages with which they feel most comfortable within a given context, sometimes engaging in translanguaging as they navigate their linguistic repertoire (García et al., 2017). The program was staffed by bilingual teachers, researchers, and peer mentors, offering a rich, collaborative space for linguistic and cultural exploration

in an inclusive and supportive environment.

This article begins with a summary of the literature that serves as the foundation for our work. Next, we describe our three-pronged approach, designed to create relevant experiences with picturebooks, that supports children in capitalizing on and utilizing biliteracy to make meaning. Finally, we share insights for early childhood teachers who want to support children in utilizing their bi/multilingualism to make meaning of texts.

Summary of the Literature

The body of literature described below provides the theoretical foundation to our approach to supporting emergency bilingual children through culturally responsive literature-based experiences. Specifically, we explore an asset-based perspective of bi/multilingualism (persons speaking two or more languages), instructional practices that support bi/multilingual language development, and intentional literature selection to support literacy growth for young bi/multilingual learners.

Bi/multilingualism as an Asset

Our work is built upon the belief that we must recognize bi/multilingualism as an asset in educational settings. Traditionally, bi/multilingualism has been viewed through a deficit lens, emphasizing challenges rather than advantages. However, recent studies advocate for a shift towards recognizing the strengths and benefits of bilingualism (Soto-Boykin et al.2021). This shift is crucial for ensuring that bilingual learners receive the support they need to thrive academically. Furthermore, the role of families and educators in supporting bilingual learners is critical. Research shows that when teachers and parents view bilingualism as a strength, it positively impacts children's language development (Zhang & Jiang, 2024). Teachers who engage with families and leverage their linguistic resources can foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This approach not only benefits language acquisition but also supports the development of a positive academic identity among young bilingual learners.

When young bi/multilingual learners are placed in classrooms that view their languages from an asset perspective, educators in those classrooms embrace translanguaging. Garcia et al. (2017) describe the concept of translanguaging, the practice of naturally and meaningfully moving between languages. In translanguaging, children's language development is strengthened through their flexible use of language as they seamlessly navigate multiple languages, showing command of linguistic features. Noting that language is inextricably bound with identify (Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee, 2017; Kim, 2003), we also draw from González et al.'s (2005) research on funds of knowledge, which describes how connecting to childrens' cultural identities (including language) and family experiences support academic learning and positive identity development.

Instructional Practices

Research emphasizes the importance of providing ample opportunities for children to interact with language, develop academic language skills, and engage with content-specific vocabulary in multiple languages (Chang et al., 2016; Gascoyne, 2011; Whitacre et al., 2021). Some examples of instruction using best practices for emergent bilingual learners include collaborative learning and building upon children's prior knowledge and lived experiences. Additionally, when teachers consider how to enhance both language development and content knowledge, they ensure that children have opportunities to interact with language in both contexts (Ortiz et al., 2023). We also drew from Gascoyne's (2011) research that sensory-based learning supports brain development and memory formation in young children, especially for emergent bilingual children developing their linguistic skills in multiple languages. Therefore, planning for unstructured sensory experiences to create inclusive learning environments supports creativity and problem-solving. Overall, research indicates that successful instruction for emergent bilinguals must intentionally create spaces that value and support multiple languages, while providing rich opportunities for language development in all languages.

Literature Selection

Intentional literature selection is vital when working with emergent bilingual children. Children need to have access to literature that connects to their lived experiences and home cultures (Botelho

& Marion, 2023; Reyes et al., 2022; Sims Bishop, 1990). When children are able to make connections to literature, to "see" themselves, they have deeper and richer experiences with the literature. As we considered what literature to use in Camp Sunshine, we drew from three different types of books: 1) *translated books* published in both languages as separate translations; 2) *bilingual books* that include both languages in the same text; and 3) *translanguage books* that naturally integrate words from another language into the text. Drawing from these types of books honors children's linguistic capabilities and provides access to texts through multiple languages.

A Three-Pronged Approach for Literacy Engagement

Daily, Camp Sunshine implemented a three-pronged approach for literacy engagement. First, a picturebook was introduced in a whole group interactive read-aloud. Then, a small group participated in re-engagement focused on content or story elements. Finally, the third prong incorporated hands-on explorations of the text through art and/or play-based activities.

The First Prong: Read-Aloud

Beginning with a whole-group interactive read aloud, teachers used strategies to engage bilingual learners with the text and develop comprehension. By projecting the book on a large TV screen, students viewed the illustrations as teachers used a range of read-aloud skills like varied voices, speeds, and volumes (Kiefer et al., 2023). Additionally, teachers used strategies like pausing for questions, encouraging children's interactions with the text, through shared connections or responses, or getting in the role of a character to enhance the read-aloud experience.

The Second Prong: Culturally Relevant Re-engagement

After the whole group read-aloud, campers gathered into age-based small groups and took a break for snack and informal conversation. Then teachers revisited key aspects of the story, or themes or concepts, that further developed campers engagement with and comprehension of the story.

These reengagements incorporated both Spanish and English, integrated movement, and used sensory materials to deepen children's understanding. They also included questions about the illustrations and/or text, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of the picturebook. Our focus during this time was to make the texts/concepts more accessible to the children by drawing upon their experiences and linguistic resources to support meaningful connections to the book.

The Third Prong: Exploration

Once children re-engaged with the picturebook, they moved into a space where they explored the story's concepts through curated art or play-based activities. These literature-based explorations provided relative and interesting opportunities for inquiry, built on knowledge and understanding, and met diverse needs of bilingual readers as they meaningfully explored picturebooks (Chang et al., 2016; Kiefer et al., 2023; Pappas et al., 2006). For example, children painted together, created collages using items found on a nature walk, or reenacted parts of the story. Through hands-on exploration, children used multiple modes of expression to demonstrate their understanding through a variety of experiences.

Insights

Our summer camp focused on creating spaces for emergent bilinguals that reflected the children's linguistic identities and family experiences. We supported the young learners in making sense of complex picturebooks using the three-pronged approach and through our work, we learned important lessons. In the following sections, we share insights for creating spaces and opportunities that maximize supportive linguistic experiences for emergent bilingual children.

Embracing Bilingualism

A key component of Camp Sunshine was an inclusive environment that welcomed, respected, and utilized multiple languages in the classroom. Labels and materials were in Spanish and English. We selected books, songs, and activities that honored cultural and linguistic differences. Children were encouraged to use their preferred language(s)

& throughout the day in ways that felt authentic and natural to them.

Selecting Picturebooks and Strategies for Meaning-Making

As we prepared for Camp, we intentionally selected bilingual, translated, and translanguage picturebooks so that children interacted with multiple languages throughout their literacy experiences. These books often told culturally relevant stories to which children could make text-to-self or text-to-world connections. Additionally, we selected books with outstanding illustrations that aided comprehension, lengths that were appropriate for the ages, and authors and/or illustrators who are members of the communities about which they write about. These considerations were important to us to ensure that children engaged with the picturebooks.

In addition to carefully curated picturebooks, teachers utilized strategies to aid comprehension in multiple languages. Some strategies included gesturing, questioning in both Spanish and English, highlighting key vocabulary, incorporating music and movement, and providing wait time for students to process questions and form responses. By varying their approach to foster language development, teachers created meaningful and playful ways for children to flexibly interact with the language.

Sensory-Based Experiences

Our time in Camp Sunshine illuminated the importance of utilizing sensory-rich experiences in supporting emergent bilingual learners. We intentionally implemented art and play-based activities that enabled children to connect to stories in unique and meaningful ways. Movement and dramatization activities often reinforced concepts. Dramatic play and manipulatives helped children engage with concepts in concrete ways that support both language development and content understanding.

"Camp Sunshine illuminated the importance of utilizing sensory-rich experiences in supporting emergent bilingual learners."

Teachers as Collaborators

The final finding from Camp Sunshine is the importance of collaboration between colleagues, which increases student learning (Juuti et al., 2021). Our approach built on respecting each other's expertise and ensuring all voices were heard when providing feedback. While we started with planned lessons, we maintained flexibility through an iterative process where we frequently observed children's responses, discussed observations together, and made collaborative revisions to better support children's learning experiences. Overall, we leveraged one another's perspectives and expertise to plan and implement a supportive learning environment for the camp's emergent bilingual learners.

Suggestions for Practice

As you are considering how best to implement some of these culturally responsive practices that support emergent bi/multilingual students in learning environments, we encourage you to start small, create meaningful experiences, and support language.

Start Small

What is manageable for you in this particular setting at this particular time? Maybe it is finding one or two high-quality bilingual books or finding songs in the home languages of your students. Maybe it's implementing the three-pronged approach with one of your favorite picturebooks that you regularly read in your classroom. Maybe it's adding multiple languages to labels around your classroom. Take that first step.

Create Meaningful Experiences

What will be meaningful and valuable for your students? Do they like to move their bodies? Perhaps engage them in activities that allow them to move their bodies to create meaning of the text. Do they like art? Then create art experiences that support them in making sense of the story. Do they enjoy hands-on activities? Are they particularly interested in interacting with their peers? Use their passions to guide your decision-making in which strategies to use to help them fall more deeply into and connect with picturebooks. Additionally, study

your daily schedule and capitalize on opportunities to provide for natural conversations in multiple languages. Slow things down as much as possible. How might you incorporate providing more time for children to process and respond within a very demanding schedule?

Position Bi/Multilingualism as Assets

Valuing children's bilingualism is imperative to expanding their linguistic repertoires. What does this look like in your educational setting? Might you learn key words in children's home languages or partner with families to learn important phrases? How might technology tools like translation apps help you? What visuals might you create for common routines that might support bi/multilingual learners? Most importantly, how might you create spaces where bi/multilingual children feel confident and safe to explore language and communicate freely?

Small steps in incorporating effective strategies make a big difference in supporting emergent bilingual children's learning and development. Start with what feels right and manageable. Then, step-by-step, expand your multilingual and culturally responsive practices.

Transition to Kindergarten for Preschoolers with Multilingual Abilities: Do Parents and Professionals See Eye to Eye?

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ABSTRACT

Many traditional assessment approaches lack specific strategies for supporting preschoolers who are multilingual learners during their transition to kindergarten. Our mixed method study sought to understand parental and professional assessment collaboration during transition to kindergarten for preschoolers who are learning multiple languages. Specifically, we examined the congruency between teachers and families of children who speak Spanish at home who are enrolled in rural Head Start preschool and transitioning into kindergarten. Overall, parents and professionals had similar views on child development for adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, literacy, and social emotional domains. However, there were meaningful discrepancies between parent and teacher ratings for math and social communication domains. Results of this reliability study have 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.

KEYWORDS
Authentic assessment, multilingual, Head Start, kindergarten, rural

Children who speak multiple languages may have special needs during transitions from preschool to kindergarten. Assessment could be one of the needs they have that requires thoughtful consideration. Gathering information to understand each child's abilities and determining what is necessary from their early childhood education program for children to thrive are some of the purposes of assessment for transition to kindergarten (Bagnato et al., 2024; D'Amico et al., 2024; Zyskind & Macy, 2024). Traditional assessments can be problematic because they can lack specific attention for supporting the child, their family, and professional(s) during educational and

environmental transitions (Beasley et al., 2023; Daley et al., 2011; Murphy et al., 2013; Nakajima et al., 2019; Sheridan et al., 2020).

There is added complexity for children who are multilingual and their families to access linguistically valid assessment services (Carotta et al., 2023; Macy et al., 2019b; Smith & Clegg, 2021). For example, rural areas may not have as many services compared to metropolitan areas that have more density in population and services. There could also be a lack of assessment practices that foster collaboration between professionals and families. Young children from rural areas, and their families, whose home language is not English might have distinct needs from the assessment system (Carotta et al., 2023; Smith & Clegg, 2021; Teleki & Buck-Gomez, 2002).

This transitional period is an important time for children and parents when they are particularly vulnerable to the limitations of the assessment system (Early et al., 2001; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Careful planning can help a child and their family transition from preschool to kindergarten, however challenges exist (Bassok et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2015; La Paro et al., 2000; Miller & Goldsmith, 2017; Sands et al., 2024). Transition practices may lack individualization for children and their families (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Cook, & Coley, 2017; Sands et al., 2024; Shaul & Schwartz, 2014). Many transition practices focus on groups rather than individuals (Macy et al., 2022). Another problem with some transition practices is that they are not started early enough to make a difference (Curby et al., 2015; Denham et al., 2014; Pianta, Cox, & Snow, 2007).

There is frequently a lack of collaborative transition services where the family and professionals are working together as a team. Oftentimes assessment is fragmented and not connected to other parts of a service delivery system. For example, a professional team conducts traditional assessments, however, the assessment results may not be used to create developmental and/or academic goals for children, inform the curriculum, and/or used for instruction (Macy et al., 2005). Authentic assessment should have treatment validity and lead to instruction or interventions (Bagnato et al., 2011; Snyder et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2022)

Authentic assessment involves the practice of assessing children under naturalistic conditions and settings, like with their familiar caregivers and their peers (Bagnato & Macy, 2010, forthcoming; de Sam Lazaro, 2017; Washington-Nortey et al., 2022). An assessment that is authentic happens in places that are familiar to the child and doing the things they would typically do (e.g., play, routines, etc.). Parents and teachers support children when they collaborate during the authentic assessment process (Bagnato & Macy, forthcoming; Crane et al., 2011; Harvey & Wennerstrom, 2023). Professional organizations in early childhood education have determined that inclusive practices provide children with the right to: (a) access, (b) participation, and (c) supports (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). Authentic assessment can support all three of these organizing principles for inclusion of children and their families in preschool and kindergarten. While lots of professionals would agree that authentic assessment is a favorable way to collect meaningful information about children's growth and learning, conventional testing is still the typical process for assessing children (Bagnato et al., 2024; Bagnato & Macy, in press).

The current study examined an authentic assessment process that incorporated input from both parents and professionals who were working together for the transition of children, who are multilingual, from rural Head Start program to kindergarten. Head Start is a preschool program in the United States that started in the 1960s and serves children and their families who are eligible based on an economic need, and/or the child has a delay/disability (Zigler & Styfco,1993, 2000). A component of Head Start programs, assessment is typically initiated by teachers and staff that may also include parents in the process. Head Start has a comprehensive curriculum that focuses on the academic and developmental outcomes of the child, as well as a strong family component (Zigler & Styfco,1993, 2000). Our primary research question was: What is the agreement between professionals and parents on children's skills across 8 domains (math, literacy, adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, social emotional, and social communication) when the home language of preschoolers is Spanish?

Method

To address the research question, we chose to use a mixed method design with both quantitative and qualitative features. The reason we chose this design had to do with capturing observations from parents and professionals with both numbers and words from their comments about children's skills. Our study incorporated correlations between parent and professional ratings of child development across 8 areas/domains. We designed the study to explore parent and professional assessment of preschoolers who are Spanish speakers in rural Head Start programs who were in the process of transitioning to kindergarten settings.

The current study was part of a bigger study that took place in the spring of 2022 with the first cohort of children, parents, and teachers (Macy, Reid, & Macy, 2023), and then the second cohort of children and adults in the spring of 2023. The current study examined children who were multilingual from both cohorts (2022 and 2023). Our study took place in a rural and midwestern area of the United States. There are about 27% (approximately 529,000) of the population in this state who are from rural communities (U.S. Census, 2020). Participants, procedures, instruments, and data analysis are discussed next.

Participants

The participants in this study were comprised of nine Head Start teachers and nine parents of preschoolers who spoke Spanish at home. Teachers in this study work in rural Head Start settings. Families had a preschool student at the time of the study (i.e., spring 2022 and spring 2023) that would be transitioning to kindergarten in the fall of the same year.

Teachers. A demographic form was completed by the teachers in this study. All participants identified as female and worked in rural Head Start programs. Teachers averaged approximately 16.9 years working with young children and their families (range was 1 to 30 years). Teacher experience with Head Start averaged 8.7 years (range was 0 to 24 years with Head Start).

Of the teachers included in this study, their level of education included 5 teachers holding a bachelor's degree, 2 teachers holding an associate degree, and 2 teachers having some college or CDA. The teachers majored in the following areas: Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, Family Studies, Organizational Communication, Criminal Justice and Family Studies, and Graphic Design. Both teachers with degrees in Elementary Education had a minor or endorsement in Early Childhood Education. Of the nine teachers, seven indicated that most of their coursework or training was related to working with preschool. The remaining two teachers indicated that half of their coursework or training was related to working in preschool settings. Selected demographic data for teacher participants are reported in Table 1.

Family and children. A total of 9 families were identified from the past two year's group of participants that spoke Spanish at home that were enrolled in a rural Head Start program. All the parent participants identified as female (n = 9), and family participants were mothers and/or grandmothers of the preschoolers in the study. The reported family income for families ranged from below $10,000 to $50,000-$100,000 with over half of the families being in the below $10,000 to $10,000-$50,000 range or declining to answer.

This study focused on preschool children in rural Head Start settings that speak Spanish at home. Children ranged in age from 55 to 68 months, and the average age was 62.7 months old. Most of the children in this study did not have a history or diagnosis of a developmental delay (n = 77.8%). However, two of the children in this study had a history or diagnosis of a developmental delay or disability (n = 22.2%). This percentage of children (i.e., 22%) that fit the criteria to be included in this study is well over the requirement that at least 10% of placements for children who are eligible due to a disability in Head Start programs. The two children that were identified as having a delay or disability did receive special services.

Written materials for this study were available in both Spanish and English. The home language of children was Spanish, and there was 66.7% of the families who spoke solely Spanish and there were 33.3% of the families who spoke both English and Spanish at home. The materials (i.e., consent form and demographic form) were translated into Spanish by the Head Start program. The assessment materials we used in this study with families was pub-

TABLE 1

Overall Agreement (mean) Between Parents and Professionals Ratings for the 9 Spanish Speaking Children

Factor	Year 1 n=7	Y1 %	Year 2 n=2	Y2 %
Ethnicity				
African American	-	-	-	-
Asian/Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-
Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)	7	100	2	100
Latino or Hispanic	-	-	-	-
Native American/Aleut	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Age				
20-30	-	-	-	-
30-40	3	42.9	1	50
40-50	2	28.6	1	50
Over 50	2	28.6	-	-
Did not answer	-	-	-	-
Educational Background				
High School	-	-	-	-
Some college/CDA	2	29	-	-
AA degree	1	14	1	50
Bachelor's degree	4	57	1	50
Graduate degree and above	-	-	-	-
Skill level with assessment				
Very low	-	-	-	-
Low	1	14	-	-
High	2	29	2	100
Very high	4	57	-	-
Did not answer	-	-	-	-

-lished into Spanish by the publisher of the assessment. The ethnicity composition for the students in this study was 88.9% Latino and 11.1% both Caucasian and Latino. Table 2 shows the demographic data for the children and their families.

TABLE 2
Children and their Family Demographics

Factor	Year 1 *n*=5	Y1 %	Year 2 *n*=4	Y2 %
Ethnicity (children)				
African American	-	-	-	-
Asian/Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-
Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)	-	-	-	-
Latino or Hispanic	4	80	4	100
Native American/Aleut	-	-	-	-
More than 1	1	20	-	-
Did not answer	-	-	-	-
Gender				
Female	1	20	3	75
Male	4	80	1	25
Developmental Status				
No history or indication of developmental delay	3	60	4	100
Suspected developmental delay or disability	-	-	-	-
Identified delay or disability	2	40	-	-
Did not answer	-	-	-	-
Receives special services				
Yes	2	40	-	-
No	3	60	4	100
Did not answer	-	-	-	-
If yes, what type?	Language, IEP/ Therapy	-	-	-
Family Income				
Below $10K	2	40	-	-
$10-50K	2	40	1	25
$50-100K	-	-	1	25
Did not answer	1	20	2	50

Procedures

Recruitment. Approval of this study was granted by the University Institutional Review Board. The researchers contacted directors/principals of Head Start to invite them to participate in the study. The study purpose and procedures were explained, and permission was requested to recruit from their program classrooms. Teachers that were interested in participating were contacted by the researchers and those that were eligible (i.e., have preschool-age children who were scheduled to enter kindergarten next year in their classes) were given a consent form to review and sign. Research-ers provided teachers with consent forms to be sent home to parents of eligible children. Parents that agreed to participate, signed the letter of informed consent, and returned it to the researchers. Teach-ers were recruited through the community action network for Head Start in a rural community in the Midwestern part of the United States. Parents were recruited from the Head Start teachers that sent let-ters home to families about the study. Participation was voluntary for all participants (i.e., teachers and parents/grandparents).

Training. Teachers participated in a 2-hour

training on the use of the *AESP-3 Ready-Set* and parental use of the *AESP-3 Family Assessment of Child Skills (FACS)*. Training was focused on teachers; however parents/grandparents did not receive the 2-hour training. Training consisted of presentation of assessment content, case study discussions, and role play. A $25 gift card was given to the Head Start program teachers that participated in the training.

Data collection. This study utilized an authentic and curriculum-based assessment called the *Assessment, Evaluation, & Programming System* (AEPS-3; Bricker et al., 2022). Teachers were provided with a hard copy and digital copy of all the materials of the *AEPS-3 Ready Set* protocol for completing the assessment, and a parent packet that included the *AEPS-3 FACS* protocol and demographic form for families. Teachers completed the *AEPS-3 Ready Set* and collected the parent packet from families. All protocols and packets were picked up from the Head Start office by the researcher(s). Teachers received a $20 gift card for each *AEPS-3 Ready Set* protocol they completed. Parents received a $15 gift card for each *AEPS-3 FACS* completed.

Assessment Tools/Instruments

The *AEPS* is an evidence-based measure (Grisham et al., 2021; Macy et al., 2015) and is currently in its third edition. *AEPS* started in the 1970s and several studies have been done on the *AEPS* that the reader can review summary at Macy, Chen, and Macy (2019). The *AEPS* measures child development via natural observations in familiar settings across eight areas including: adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, social, social communication, math (new in the third edition), and literacy (new in the third edition).

The *AEPS* uses graduated scoring where a three-point rating scale contains 2, 1, and 0 ratings. These scores translate into 2 representing a mastery of that skill, a 1 indicating an emerging skill, and a 0 means that the skill has not yet emerged. *AEPS* can be used as an initial assessment, and/or can be an evaluation over time. The third edition of the *AEPS* has two components that were examined in this study to include: *AEPS-3 Ready Set* and the *AEPS-3 Family Assessment of Child Skills* (FACS)

that are described next.

AEPS-3 Ready Set. One of the new components in the third edition includes the *AEPS-3 Ready Set* tool that was used in this study. The Ready Set focuses on assessing kindergarten readiness skill of preschoolers who have a developmental age of four to six years. This teacher-completed assessment tool is comprised of 40 items that have been extracted from the *AEPS-3* in the following areas: two items in fine motor (5%), three items in gross motor (8%), two items in adaptive (5%), eight items in social emotional (20%), three items in social communication (7%), six items in cognitive (15%), ten items in literacy (25%), and six items in math (15%). The areas of social emotional, cognitive, literacy and math have more items and make up 75% of the Ready Set tool because they address many of the skills that children will encounter in kindergarten.

These items were selected and reviewed by a panel of experts who specialize in child development and early childhood assessments, based on the readiness skills children should possess when entering kindergarten. The *AEPS-3 Ready Set* uses a graduated scoring system to show where children are at in mastering a skill (i.e., skill is mastered gets a 2, skill that is emerging gets a 1, and a skill that has not yet started gets a 0). An emerging skill (i.e., score of 1) can be further explained by using an "A" or "I" that stand for assistance or incomplete, respectively. At the end of the assessment the raw score is totaled and converted into a percentage by dividing the raw score by 40 to show a child's progress in kindergarten readiness across the eight domains.

AEPS-3 FACS. The other component added to the third edition of the *AEPS* is the *Family Assessment of Child Skills (FACS)* of *Ready Set*. If filled out by a family member, parent, or guardian of the child, the *AEPS-3 FACS* allows them to provide input for the assessment of their child's skills. The *AEPS-3 FACS* includes a demographic form that obtains basic information (i.e., name and address, contact information, language is spoken at home) from the family. There is a page that explains the purpose of the *AEPS-3 FACS* and provides instructions for scoring. The *AEPS-3 FACS* items measure

a child's skills, and there is a section for recording family concerns and priorities for instruction/intervention.

Families and professionals may use the *AEPS-3 FACS* to identify skills and needs of children, set goals, and monitor progress. The *AEPS-3 FACS* has 30 items that correspond to the items on the *AEPS-3 Ready Set.* The items on the *AEPS-3 FACS* are written in family friendly language as compared to the technical language on the *AEPS-3 Ready Set* that is meant for teachers. For example, on the *Ready Set* one of the items in the social emotional domain is written "segments CVC words into individual sounds," whereas the corresponding item on the *AEPS-3 FACS* is written "Does your child break words into its individual sounds? For example, your child says 'c-a-t' when you ask what all the sounds are in cat."

In the *AEPS-3 FACS,* each area begins with a brief definition of the domain, followed by the items. Some items contain an illustration to accompany the skill. A 3-point rating scale is used for each item (Yes, Sometimes, and Not Yet) that a family member scores based on their observations of the child. If they are not able to observe the skill that they are assessing, they can select "Cannot Observe."

The *AEPS-3 Ready Set* assessment and *AEPS-3 FACS* can be used together or separately. For example, *AEPS-3 Ready Set* and *AEPS-3 FACS* can be used together to facilitate parent teacher conferences where each person completes their assessment of the child's skills and then meets to discuss the child's abilities and possible areas of need/supports.

AEPS-3 FACS has an open-ended section after each area/domain that asks parents what they would like their child to learn. At the end of the *AEPS-3 FACS* there is a section after all domains have been completed labeled "intervention priorities" where the family member can list what skills they would like their child to learn overall. These are reported in the results section.

Demographic information forms. Teacher and parent participants completed separate demographic forms. Teachers provided information about gender and age, years of experience, educational attainment, coursework, and assessment skill level. Families were asked to share information about their child's gender, ethnicity/race, developmental status, special services received, as well as family income and marital status. All participants could skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering.

Data Analysis

The three instruments used in this study were the *AEPS-3 Ready Set, AEPS-3 FACS,* and demographic information forms. Two independent observations were completed (i.e. families and professionals) to assess a child's skill level across eight areas/domains (i.e. adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, social emotional, social communication, reading, and math). Inter-rater reliability between professionals and families was measured by examining the development of the nine children in this study with Spanish as their home language. Agreements across average raw score and developmental areas/domains were calculated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Results

Parents of children who speak Spanish and their Head Start teachers observed 9 children using two versions of the *AEPS-3:* (a) *Ready Set,* and (b) *FACS.* Reported results are presented for the dyads showing their assessments. Next, we will share correlations and overall agreement between parents of Spanish speaking children and their teachers, and then by domains. (Figure 1).
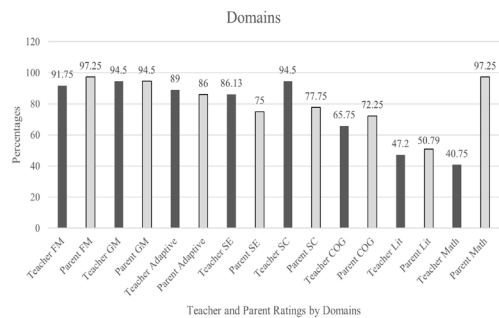
FIGURE 1

Overall Agreement (mean) Between Parents and Professionals Ratings for the 9 Spanish
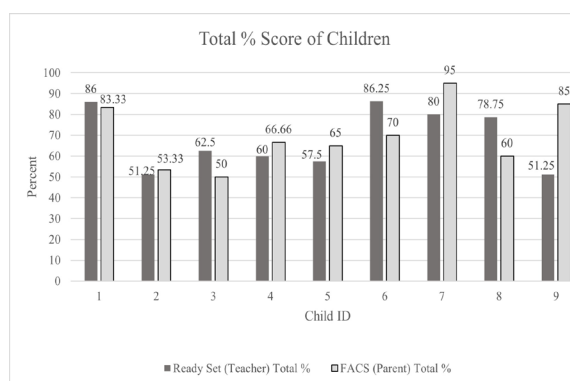
Basic Agreements Between Parents and Professionals by Domains

Here are data (Figure 2) reported for children's development by domains when both parents and professionals rated children's skills. The biggest discrepancy (56.5% difference) seen between parents and teachers across all eight domains was in math. Parents were rating their children significantly higher than teachers. This domain discrepancy was distantly followed by the social communication domain in which teachers were scoring children higher than parents (16.75% difference).

Next, children's skills rated by both parents and professionals are reported for the following 8 domains: adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, social emotional, social communication, literacy, and math.

Adaptive. Means for items from the adaptive areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were 1.78 and 1.72 respectively (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a strong positive, statistically significant correlation between adaptive items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set (teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (parents), $r = 0.81$, $p = 0.008$. This suggests that as scores increased for one AEPS-3 measure, they also increased for the other measure. See Table 3.

FIGURE 2

Mean Scores of Teachers and Parents' Agreement on 8 Child Developmental

TABLE 3

Adaptive Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	1.78	.36	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.72	.51	.81	---

Cognitive. Means for items from the cognitive areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were 1.31 and 1.51 respectively (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a weak positive, statistically insignificant correlation between cognitive items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS when scored by teachers and parents, r = 0.10, p = 0.794. This suggests that there is not enough evidence to conclude that scores on one AEPS-3 measure increase as scores on the other measure increase.

TABLE 4
Cognitive Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	1.31	.30	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.51	.49	.10	---

Fine motor. Means for items from the fine motor areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were 1.83 and 1.94 respectively (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a weak negative, statistically insignificant correlation between fine motor items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS when scored by teachers and parents, r = -0.25, p = 0.516. This suggests that there is not enough evidence to conclude that as scores increase for one AEPS-3 measure, they decrease for the other measure.

TABLE 5
Fine Motor Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	1.83	.25	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.94	.17	-.25	---

Gross motor. Means for items from the gross motor areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were both 1.89 (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a strong positive, statistically significant correlation between gross motor items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS when scored by teachers and parents r = 0.81, p = 0.008. This suggests that as scores increased for one AEPS-3 measure, they increased for the other measure.

TABLE 6
Gross Motor Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	1.89	.24	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.89	.24	.81	---

Social emotional. Means for items from the social emotional areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were both 1.73 and 1.60 respectively (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a moderate positive, statistically insignificant correlation between social emotional items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS when scored by teachers and parents r = 0.51, p = 0.159. This suggests that there is not enough evidence to conclude that scores on one AEPS-3 measure increase as scores on the other measure increase.

TABLE 7
Social Emotional Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	1.73	.23	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.60	.46	.51	---

Social communication. Means for items from the social communication areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were both 1.89 and 1.56 respectively (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a weak positive, statistically insignificant correlation between social communication items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS when scored by teachers and parents r = 0.28, p = 0.458. This suggests that there is not enough evidence to conclude that as scores increase for one AEPS-3 measure, they also increase for the other measure.

TABLE 8
Social Communication Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	1.89	.24	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.56	.46	.28	---

Literacy. Means for items from the literacy areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were both 0.94 and 1.03 respectively (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a weak positive, statistically insignificant correlation between literacy items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS when scored by teachers and parents r = 0.43, p = 0.244. This suggests that there is not enough evidence to suggest that scores on one AEPS-3 measure increase as scores on the other measure increase.

TABLE 9
Literacy Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	.94	.49	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.03	.56	.43	---

Math. Means for items from the math areas of the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS were both 0.81 and 1.01 respectively (based on the AEPS-3 rating scale of 0-2.00). There was a moderate positive, statistically significant correlation between math items on the AEPS-3 Ready Set and AEPS-3 FACS when scored by teachers and parents r = 0.67, p = 0.048. This suggests that as scores increased for one AEPS-3 measure, they also increased for the other measure.

TABLE 10
Math Skills Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation for AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers) and AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. AEPS-3 Ready Set (Teachers)	.81	.71	---	
2. AEPS-3 FACS (Parents)	1.01	.64	.67	---

Parental Responses to Open-ended Questions

Parental wishes for their child matter. Transition assessments can help teachers and parents create meaning from the results that might include: identify child strengths, identify needs of the child, design learning goals for the child, and more. The *AEPS-3 FACS* incorporates the opportunity for parents to provide information in each domain about what skills they want their child to learn. The final page of the *FACS* is called, Intervention Priorities. Here is where parents can give more information about overall skills they would like their child to develop. The qualitative responses from these open-ended prompts and parental hopes for their children are described next.

Parental wishes for adaptive skills. The A*EPS-3 FACS* defines this domain as, "Adaptive skills are those that involve being able to care for yourself. These skills include eating, drinking, preparing and serving food, using the toilet independently, dressing, and undressing./ Las habilidades adaptativas son aquellas que incluyen el poder cuidar de si mismo/a. Estas habilidades incluyen comer, beber, preparer y server alimentos, usar el baño de manera independiente, vestirse y desvestirse" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 3). One of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the adaptive skills domain. They wished to see their child, "be less social, she's quite the little butterfly and loves to talk. It often concerns me when she is out with me how easy it is to talk to strangers even though we have had that talk."

Parental wishes for cognitive skills. The *AEPS-3 FACS* defines this domain as, "Cognitive skills are those that involve the mental processes and reasoning. These skills include imitating, recalling, categorizing, problem solving, and making observations and predictions. / Las habilidades cognitivas son aquellas que comprenden los procesos mentales y el razonamiento. Estas habilidades incluyen el limitar, recorder, clasificar, resolver problemas y hacer observaciones y predicciones" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 6). Two of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the cognitive skills domain. One parent indicated they wished for their child, "to do more

experiments to help widen and expand her ideas and mind." Another parent wrote that they wished their child would be able to "reconocer las letras del A, B, C y los numeros" (recognize the letters A, B, C and numbers).

Parental wishes for fine motor skills. The *AEPS-3 FACS* defines this domain as, "Fine motor skills are those that involve the movement and use of the hands. These skills include grasping and releasing, using the index finger and thumb, using scissors and writing implements, drawing shapes, and printing letters. / Las habilidades de motricidad fina son aquellas que implican el movimiento y uso de las manos. Estas habilidades incluyen el agarrar y soltar, usar el dedo índice y el pulgar, usar las tijeras y herramientas de escritura, dibujar figuras y escribir letras" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 1). Two of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the fine motor skills domain. One parent responded that they wanted their child to, "write or draw with both hands." Another parent wrote, "escribir los numeros y letras" (write the numbers and letter).

Parental wishes for gross motor skills. The AEPS-3 FACS defines this domain as, "Gross motor skills involve moving and getting around in your surroundings. These skills include rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, and riding a bike. / Las habilidades de la motricidad gruesa comprenden el poder moverse y desplazarse alrededor de todo aquello que nos rodeo. Estas habilidades incluyen poder rodar/voltearse, gatear, caminar, corer, saltar, saltar en un solo pie y andar en bicicleta" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 2). Two of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the gross motor skills domain. One parent wanted their child, "to learn to jump rope." Another parent wished to see their child, "omolar en bicicleta" (ride on bicycle).

Parental wishes for social emotional skills. The AEPS-3 FACS defines this domain as, "Social skills are those that involve interacting and participating with others. These skills include showing affection, playing with others, choosing activities, sharing, managing conflict, identifying emotions, and knowing personal information.

/ Las habilidades sociales son aquellas que implican el poder interactuar y participar con otras personas. Estas habilidades incluyen el demostrar afecto, jugar con otros, escoger actividades, compartir, resolver conflictos o problemas, identificar emociones y tener conocimiento de información personal (de sí mismo/a)" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 4). Two of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the social emotional skills domain. One parent indicated her child knew her full name, but she would like her child to, "work on her address, phone number, and city." The other parent wanted their child to learn their "direcion, numero de telefono (address, telephone number).

Parental wishes for social communication skills. The *AEPS-3 FACS* defines this domain as, "Social communication skills are those that involve communicating with others. These skills include listening, speaking, and understanding conversational rules and the use of grammar. / Las habilidades de la comunicación social son aquellas que implican el comunicarse con otros. Estas habilidades incluyen escuchar, hablar y entender las reglas que se siguen en uan conversación y el uso de la gramática" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 5). One of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the social communication skills domain. The parent wished to see their child, "be more precise and exact."

Parental wishes for literacy skills. The *AEPS-3 FACS* defines this domain as, "Literacy skills are those that involve prereading and reading skills. These skills include page and book orientation, matching sounds with letters, recognizing letters and words, and writing letters and words. / Las habilidades de lectoescritura son aquellas que implican las habilidades prelectoras y lectoras. Estas habilidades incluyen la orientación de la página y el libro, el asignar a cada letra el sonido que le corresponde y el reconocer y escribir letras y palabras" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 7). Two of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the social emotional skills domain. One parent wrote that she would, "like her to continue to break down words & continue to practice reading." Another parent would like to see

their child, "escribir y dibyar los letras y numeros" (write and draw letters and numbers).

Parental wishes for math skills. The *AEPS-3 FACS* defines this domain as, "Math skills are those that address numbers and number manipulation. These skills include counting, comparing numbers of items, and recognizing and writing numbers. / Las habilidades en matemáticas son aquellas que abordan los números y la manipulacion de los mismos. Estas habilidades incluyen el contar, comparer el numeró de cosas o articulos y el reconocer y escribir los número" (Bricker et al., 2022, p. 8). Two of the nine parents in this study provided a written response in the open-ended section of the social emotional skills domain. One parent wished for their child to, "work on learning bigger numbers." Another parent wished for their child to learn to, "contor y reconocer los numeros" (count and recognize numbers).

Overall Intervention Priorities Parents Want for their Child

A total of three of the nine parents in this study completed the overall 'Intervention Priorities' section of the *AEPS-3 FACS.* This was an open-ended section with the direction stating: "Please list the next skills you would like your child to learn." Parental comments from the three participating parents are displayed in Table 11.

Conclusion

Special linguistic and cultural considerations are needed to effectively serve children and families (Brown et al., 2023; Crowe et al., 2021; Li, 2019; Steed et al., 2023). Access, participation, and supports are principles that can be applied in the authentic assessment of children who are multilingual (DEC/NAEYC, 2009; Xu & Kuti, 2024; Zyskind & Macy, 2024). In addition to child and family support considerations, early childhood professionals benefit from supportive assessment practices that foster smooth transitions from preschool to kin-

"*Access, participation, and supports are principles that can be applied in the authentic assessment of children who are multilingual.*"

TABLE 11	
Parent	Response
1	1. To learn more Spanish 2. To learn to write her last name 3. Clearly enunciate with her vocabulary & not my words 4. To write out all letters and numbers 5. To put sounds together to be able to read 6. To learn bigger numbers 7. Continue with science 8. Make more art and mix colors 9. Better colorings/more inside the lines 10. Cut in straight lines 11. Pick out her own clothes & get dressed by herself 12. Clean & organize on her own by sorting.
19	Counting, language, and writing.
23	1. Escribir y reconocer los numeros (Write and recognize numbers) 2. Escribir y reconocer las letras (Write and recognize letters) 3. Aprenda a socializar mas con sus cmpaneritos y maestras (Learn to socialize more with your class-mates and teachers).

Parents and professionals contribute to understanding child development (Hardin et al., 2009; McFarland & Laird, 2018; Xu, 2020). Research on the AEPS tools for transition (i.e., Ready Set and FACS) are underway to learn more about parental and professional collaboration during assessment. In 2019, Stevenson examined kindergarten teachers' experiences related to authentic assessment and the use of the AEPS for transition (Stevenson, 2019). Another study explored preschool teachers from Montessori programs in Florida and Idaho and their collaborative assessment experiences with parents using AEPS transition measures (Macy et al., 2022). Head Start educators and parents in rural part of America were part of a study using AEPS for transition to kindergarten (Macy et al., 2023), and this current study is an extension of that initial exploration with children who are multilingual and enrolled in Head Start program.

The small sample size of participants is a limitation of the study that needs to be considered when generalizing findings. Future directions for this research could examine training for early childhood professionals to facilitate smooth transitions for inclusion. Preschoolers from rural areas may have unique assessment needs that warrant future research (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2023; Grisham-Brown & McCormick, 2013; Hawkins-Lear & Grisham-Brown, 2019; Prusinski et al., 2023). Use of online assessment tools during transitions from preschool to kindergarten could help better understand children and families' needs (Rahn et al., 2024). It would be helpful to study outcomes from collaborative authentic assessments for multilingual learners compared to their monolingual peers with the parental/professional assessment approach (Bagnato & Macy, forthcoming).

Aldous Huxley wrote, "Words form the thread on which we string our experiences." This line from The Olive Tree punctuates the importance of words that can serve as a way to think about professional and parental engagement when children are multi-language learners. Words and experiences matter during times of transition.

Acknowledgements

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Using Parent and Teacher Authentic Assessment Results to Guide Preschool to Kindergarten Transition for Multilingual Learners

A Research to Practice Summary

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ABSTRACT

Most traditional assessment tools often have shortcomings supporting children who are multilingual during their transition from preschool to kindergarten. Teachers' and family's active collaboration during assessments supports children during the transition process. The results from a study conducted with Head Start teachers and families highlighted possible areas in which transition practices could be strengthened through individualized child assessment by parents and teachers. The implication of the similarities and differences of scores across domains highlighted potential needs in assessments and transition practices. This paper shares research to practice connections by looking at several key challenges in assessing children during kindergarten transition, and specific strategies for implementing authentic assessment with multilingual learners. The paper also shares specific recommendations for program implementation that emerged from current research.

KEYWORDS
Transition to kindergarten, bilingual, authentic assessment, parents, practitioners, practices

Transitioning from preschool to kindergarten is a remarkable period in young children's life. The transition becomes more complex when it involves children who speak languages other than English at home, as they switch between different contexts, languages, and/or cultures (Carotta et al., 2023; Cook & Coley, 2017; Fan et al., 2024; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015; Suskind et al., 2015). High quality transition practices can have an impact on children's learning (Sands & Meadan, 2022; Sheridan et al., 2020; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2019). The transition from preschool to kindergarten has received a lot of attention over the years, with particular attention to the need to cater to the whole child using individualized assessments. Translating research to practice is important for practitioners in supporting evidence-based transition assessment with children and their

families. This research to practice paper will share some ideas for preschool to kindergarten transition.

Transition

The use of authentic assessment tools in assessing preschoolers' transition to kindergarten has been increasingly recognized (Bagnato et al., 2024; de Sam Lazaro, 2017; Zyskind & Macy, 2024). Authentic assessment involves the practice of assessing children in their familiar environments and settings, like with their familiar caregivers and their peers (Bagnato & Macy, 2010; de Sam Lazaro, 2017; Washington-Nortey et al., 2022). This definition underpins the need to observe and evaluate children in their natural environments, which aligns with recommended practices for early childhood assessment (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Challenges exist in assessing children, especially with consideration to linguistic awareness and resources. With the increase in the number of children who speak languages other than English at home, the need for Head Start programs to adapt their assessment practices has become imperative (Harvey & Wennerstrom, 2023; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015; Pianta et al., 2007; Xu et al., 2022). This adaptation has become particularly necessary, especially during the transition from Head Start to kindergarten (Cook & Coley, 2021). Next, we will share an overview of a study we conducted on individualized assessment practices that support children with collaboration from educators and families during transitions from preschool to kindergarten.

Overview of the Study

Our study (Macy, Edokhamhen, & Burke, 2025) examined the relationship between how parents whose children speak Spanish, and their Head Start teachers viewed the development of their children during the kindergarten transition period. Two components of the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (AEPS-3; Bricker et al., 2022a) were used. The A*EPS-3 Family Assessment of Child Skills (FACS)* (Bricker et al., 2022b) was used by the parents, while the teachers used the *AEPS-3 Ready Set* (Bricker et al., 2022c).

The study included nine Head Start teachers and nine families of children who speak Spanish at home, who are enrolled in rural Head Start preschool and transitioning into kindergarten. The children were assessed across eight developmental domains (adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, social emotional, social communication, literacy, and math skills). Congruency between parent and teacher perceptions was explored.

Findings from the study revealed that there were significant agreements between teachers and parents in skills like adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, literacy, and social emotional. However, there were discrepancies between parent and teacher ratings in the areas of math and social communication skills. Parents in our study tended to rate their children higher in math skills than teachers. Teachers tended to rate children higher in social communication skills compared to parents. These differences between parents and teachers' ratings highlight the need for a collaborative assessment approach to reconcile and address potential gaps. Parents' responses to open-ended questions on these skills revealed diverse aspirations for their children. Parents expressed a desire for personalized learning goals for their children that reflect family values and cultural contexts.

Research to Practice Connections

The need for authentic assessment tools in assessing preschoolers' transition to kindergarten has been receiving some attention (Bagnato et al., 2024; D'Amico et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2024; Shaul & Schwartz, 2014). Recent research has identified some key challenges in assessing multilingual learners during transition and specific strategies for implementing authentic assessment with multilingual learners (Crowe et al., 2021; Harvey & Wennerstrom, 2023). We will share research to practice connections related to: (a) access, (b) collaboration, (c) assessment, and (d) individualization.

Access to Linguistically Appropriate Assessment Services

Access to linguistically appropriate assessment services remains a persistent barrier, particularly in rural areas where resources may be limited (Shapiro & Derrington, 2004; Williams et al., 2013; Zys-

kind & Macy, 2024). According to Smith and Clegg (2021), many communities are faced with a shortage of professionals who can conduct assessments in children's home languages, which can potentially lead to inaccurate evaluations of children's abilities. This limitation affects children whose primary language is not English, as they may struggle to fully participate in the assessment process when services are not available in their preferred language.

By providing access to linguistically appropriate assessment tools, professionals need to understand and value the need for bilingual development. Skills should be assessed in both English and home language. For example, Carotta et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of assessing skills in both the home language and English to understand children's full linguistic inventory. Bilingual assessment tools should be made available while incorporating cultural contexts which can affect children's communication styles and behavior. When such tools are not readily available, qualified interpreters should be utilized to interpret and convey children's responses and behavior.

Collaboration Between Professionals and Families

The collaboration between professionals and families represents another critical area of concern. Macy et al. (2019b) suggested that traditional assessment approaches often fail to meaningfully incorporate family perspectives and knowledge. When families who speak languages other than English attempt to engage with early childhood programs, they often encounter systems that may not be designed to facilitate their full participation. This can discourage parental participation and then result in missed opportunities to gather valuable information about children's development.

It is worthy to note that parents are vital observers of their own children's development. It is useful to build or establish a strong relationship with families (Barnard-Brak et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2022; Sheridan et al., 2020; Xu, 2020). There should be regular opportunities for a two-way dialogue between professionals and families. Family members should be included as equal partners in assessment decisions. This should be done in the family's preferred language to ease communication barriers.

Crane et al. (2011) emphasizes that consistent communication in families' preferred language breeds successful collaboration.

Assessment Practices That Do Not Account for Cultural Differences

Another key challenge in assessing multilingual learners during transition is lack of cultural responsiveness in assessment practices. Beasley et al. (2023) demonstrated how assessment tools and procedures that do not account for cultural differences may lead to inaccurate results and misinterpretation of children's abilities. Traditional standardized assessments often reflect mainstream cultural expectations and may not account for children from other cultural backgrounds.

Assessment tools should be developed and selected for practitioner use with cultural considerations in mind. Some cultural undertones may make some of these tests biased when not accounted for. The use of culturally appropriate materials should be considered when administering these tests. Lee et al. (2015) suggests that children demonstrate knowledge and skills more effectively when culturally familiar materials and activities are used during assessment. Family routines and practices should also be considered during the development and administration of these assessments.

"*Assessment tools should be developed and selected for practitioner use with cultural considerations in mind.*"

Individualization in Transition Planning

The individualization of the transition process is another significant challenge identified in recent research. According to Sands et al. (2024), many transition practices follow a one-size-fits-all approach that may fail to address the unique needs of multilingual learners and their families. This approach can be problematic when children are navigating between different linguistic environments.

Effective individualized transition should begin early before the actual transition occurs. Mickelson et al. (2022) recommend that the transition process should begin at least six months before the transition. This transition process should be tailored to meet the individual child's needs. Studies show that individualized transition practices lead to better outcomes for children and families (Mickelson et al., 2022; Sands & Meadan, 2022). Next, we will share ideas for implementing recommendations.

Recommendations for Implementation

To serve children in optimal ways, it is important to use effective assessment practices for children who have multiple languages. The implementation requires both immediate actions and long-term planning. During children's transition to kindergarten, programs need to take specific steps towards the implementation of effective assessment practices for multilingual children and their families. Now, let us look at specific recommendations for program implementation that emerged from current research related to: (a) assessment tools, and (b) program planning.

Assessment Tools

Programs need to recognize that some traditional assessments may fall short in providing adequate support for multilingual learners. It is recommended that programs should review their current assessment practices for cultural responsiveness. Programs need to examine their assessment tools and processes for assessing children who are multilingual and collecting information (Bagnato & Macy, forthcoming). By such examinations, programs can identify where they are and what improvements or changes that are needed to better serve multilingual children and their families.

The next immediate action is for programs to identify and obtain relevant or appropriate assessment tools. Without the right tools, it will be difficult for programs to effectively assess multilingual children. According to Macy et al. (2019b), many programs may lack assessment tools that have been validated for use with children who speak multiple languages.

Family input represents another crucial component that programs should address immediately. Programs can encourage family engagement when they include parents in the assessment process. This form of engagement will enable the program to gather meaningful input about children's development. Such inputs can be vital when deciding the right form of assessment for multilingual children.

Long-term Planning

In supporting multilingual learners, programs should provide professional development on authentic assessment for staff. According to Sheridan et al. (2009), many programs provide very few professional development experiences, which proves insufficient for building lasting capacity. Programs should provide on-going training opportunities for professionals to develop relevant cultural competence in bilingual assessment.

Programs need to partner with qualified experts in the areas of authentic assessment. To create a pipeline of bilingual professionals, Dionne et al. (2021) suggests that programs should establish partnerships with local universities and colleges. This will ensure there are long-term strategies put in place to build capacities to conduct assessment in other languages other than English.

A system for ongoing family engagement should be developed by programs. Macy and Bagnato (2023) assert that many programs struggle to maintain consistent family engagement over time. There should be a structure set in place by programs that support family engagement and participation in the assessment process. These can be in the form of a family advisory committee, or the establishment of regular communication channels between the parents and the program.

Additionally, programs should regularly evaluate and if need be, adjust their practices. Bagnato et al. (2024) demonstrated that despite the recognized importance of authentic assessment, many programs often fail to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of their assessment practices. There should be a system for the collection of data that evaluates the effectiveness of assessment and its impact on children and families (Bagnato et al., 2024; Bagnato & Macy, 2010; Beasley et al., 2023).

The implementation of the above recommendations requires ongoing commitment from program

leadership and practitioner advocacy. Research has shown that investing in these areas leads to better outcomes for children with multiple languages and their families during the transition to kindergarten (Bagnato et al., 2024; DEC/NAEYC, 2009; McWilliam, 2005). The implementation of culturally relevant assessment practices for multilingual learners poses both a challenge and an opportunity for the advancement of the field of early childhood education. Although the process requires huge commitment and allocation of resources, the end product is beneficial for children, families, and programs.

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Nurturing Home Languages to Engage and Empower Multilingual Families in Early Childhood Education Settings

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ABSTRACT

A pressing matter for early childhood educators is the need for strategies to engage families of Emergent Bilingual/Multilingual (EB/EM) children in their classroom. Research shows that EB/EM children experience negative academic and social outcomes when their home languages are not supported in the classroom and positive outcomes when their home languages are supported. The family is the greatest source of home language support for EB/EM children and their educators. 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. This article 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.

KEYWORDS
Emergent multilingual learners; early childhood education; Head Start programs; family engagement

Parents are a child's first teachers. This familiar saying is frequently heard and repeated by educators, but how often is its deeper meaning truly considered? The parents, family members, and caregivers raising a child are not only the child's first teachers, but also their lifelong teachers. Long before the child enters our classroom, their families have introduced them to their home languages and instilled skills to prepare them for school and life. After children leave our classroom the teachings and influences of their families continue.

As educators, we must recognize that all children come to our classroom with funds of identity- the rich interconnection of cultural practices, knowledge, and language that shape their sense of self. These funds of identity are deeply tied to their families, communities, and lived experiences, and serve as valuable assets for learning. Our responsibility is to support and nurture these identities of cultural and linguistic strengths. In this article, the term Emergent Bilingual/Emergent Multilingual (EB/EM) will be used to honor the home languages of children who speak a language(s) other than the dominant classroom language (Garcia et al., 2008).

By intentionally partnering with families, particularly historically underrepresented groups like marginalized families of Emergent Bilingual/Emergent Multilingual (EB/EM) students, educators can create trusting and mutually beneficial relationships. These partnerships help educators to integrate the funds of identity that EB/EM children bring to the classroom, fostering their confidence and enhancing their engagement in learning both inside and outside the classroom. This article outlines practical strategies for engaging families of multilingual learners, with a focus on Latine families while also addressing families from diverse backgrounds.

Theory to Practice

The following frameworks guide this article: Family Empowerment and Enablement, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, Funds of Identity, and Translanguaging. These theories inform this article by providing a foundation for implementing strengths-based classroom practices and family engagement strategies to honor cultural and linguistic diversity.

Family Empowerment and Enablement

Historically, many efforts targeted toward families have operated using a deficit-based approach (Compton-Lilly et al., 2019; Dunst & Trivette, 2009). Even some current strength-based programs operate in neodeficit ideologies that continue to treat families and their languages as deficient (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). In contrast, family empowerment and enablement focus on the family's strengths, resources, and goals, as well as enhancing the family's competencies. The concepts of enablement and empowerment come from the Family Systems Assessment and Intervention Model, which

was originally created for use in Early Intervention programs but can be applied to any program with the goal of recognizing and growing the strengths of families (Dunst et al., 1988). Enablement refers to help-givers "creating opportunities for all family members to display and acquire competencies that strengthen family functions" (Dunst et al., 1988, p. x). Empowerment is "a family's ability to meet needs and achieve aspirations in a way that promotes a clear sense of intrafamily mastery and control over important aspects of family functioning" (Dunst et al., 1988, p. x). The educator's role is enablement, creating opportunities for families to display and develop competencies to strengthen the family and their connection to the early childhood education program (Dunst & Trivette 2009; Dunst et al., 1994).

Viewed through the lens of empowerment, families are seen as competent, resourceful, and capable. Educators serve as facilitators, creating authentic opportunities for families to utilize their existing strengths and resources while also supporting the development of new skills. Enablement can include activities arranged by the educator that provide families opportunities to support their child's learning and foster the home-to-school relationship. In addition to the examples shared in this article, these might include celebrating children's culture through guest reading, family engagement workshops, cooking nights, and family game nights (Koralek et al., 2019).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) requires a "critical, emancipatory vision of schooling that reframes the object of critique from our children to oppressive systems" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 3). CSP is an approach that "sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p.1). This pedagogy encourages teaching practices that foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism with the overall goal of educational transformation.

Funds of Identity

The term funds of identity, inspired by the funds of knowledge, refers to valuing the wealth of knowledge held by each child's cultural heritage, native language, knowledge of their home country, personal life experiences, and well-being (Este-

ban-Guitart et al., 2014; Gonzalez et al. 2005; Moll et al., 1992). The typical educator-child relationship is often shaped by the child's performance during specific, isolated classroom activities. However, it is critical for educators to take the child's funds of identity and their world outside of the classroom into account (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2014; Moll et al., 1992). Artifacts for including the child's heritage can include family photographs, cultural videos, drawings, maps, and objects that bridge the gap between in-school and out-of-school cultures. Every child brings unique experiences, knowledge, and assets to a classroom and when recognized, these children have the potential to engage in culturally and linguistically inclusive learning environments (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Translanguaging

In addition to being inclusive of each child's funds of identity, it is critical to value and affirm their home languages. Translanguaging is the practice of using one's entire linguistic knowledge. When learners engage in translanguaging, they flexibly draw upon all the features of their linguistic repertoire (Otheguy et al., 2015). The child's home languages and the dominant language, which in U.S. schools is most often English, are used for communicating to gain and share information. Among multilingual children, translanguaging is a common practice at home, school, and in their communities. When applied to the classroom, translanguaging supports multilingual children in using multiple languages to enhance their comprehension as they learn alongside their monolingual peers. By adopting and promoting translanguaging in the classroom, educators encourage multilingual children to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire, using all their languages to support their learning. This framework recognizes and celebrates the existing knowledge and language practices of minoritized communities (García et al., 2017).

Combined, these frameworks support the use of educational practices that acknowledge and make use of the family's strengths, including home languages, cultural identities, family relationships, and home learning practices.

Family Engagement

The Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) defines family engagement as:

> A collaborative and strengths-based process through which early childhood professionals, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and staff at all levels that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. Family engagement focuses on culturally and linguistically responsive relationship-building with key family members in a child's life. (n.d., paragraph 1)

Family engagement influences, and is influenced by, social contexts such as race, culture, language, socioeconomic status, and levels of physical and cognitive ability. Despite this, many engagement expectations and practices are based on the expectations of white, middle-class, monolingual English-speaking families (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; McWayne et al., 2013, 2021). Without appropriate linguistic resources and support, multilingual families may have difficulty communicating with their child's educators to discuss their child's progress, their goals for their child, and their home learning practices making effective engagement difficult. If the assets and strengths of EBs/EMs are ignored or minimized, early childhood education programs can perpetuate inequities and inequitable education (García, 2009).

Learning additional languages benefits children of all ages and can lead to academic, social, and cognitive advantages, yet, without supports, EB/EM children can fall academically behind their monolingual English-only speaking peers (Espinosa, 2018; Bak et al., 2014; August & Shanahan, 2010; García, 2009). Many EB/EM children enter early childhood programs using their home language. Continued use and development of an EB/EM child's home language(s) is crucial so that it is complemented by, not replaced by, the dominant language. Replacing a child's home language with English impedes their cognitive abilities, language and literacy skills, as well as social and family connections (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Families are vital in maintaining a child's home language, yet monolingual bias often pressures bilingual parents to hide their bilingualism, underscoring the need for support in valuing home languages as assets (Gar-

cia & Kleifgen, 2018).

When family members are engaged in their child's education, EB/EM children experience positive academic and social-emotional outcomes (Sheridan et al., 2010; Sheridan et al., 2011). These include improved language, literacy, and math skills (Mendez, 2010; Sheridan et al., 2011), less disruptive classroom behavior (Mendez, 2010), lower rates of retention in elementary, middle, and high school (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999), greater assessment gains, and higher graduation rates (Barnard, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2003).

Family Engagement Practices of Latine Multilingual Families

To overcome challenges to family engagement, educators must make intentional efforts to learn about families, their funds of identity, and how they support their child's learning at home and in the community. Studies including Latine families of children enrolled in Head Start showed that participants tended to view family engagement in terms of home and family-focused activities rather than school-based activities (McWayne et al., 2013, 2021). Latine family members often supported their child's learning in ways not generally recognized in mainstream American educational systems. To support linguistically diverse children and their families, educators must become curious learners willing to transition to a home-to-school model of partnering with families (McWayne et al., 2021; Morita-Mullaney, 2021). When educators leverage EB/EM children's language practices by teaching through a translanguaging lens and pedagogy, there is an opportunity to close the academic achievement gap experienced by EB/EM children (García & Li 2014; García 2009; Song 2022). The following strategies are for educators aiming to create a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom.

Strategies for Incorporating Translanguaging Practices in the Classroom

As you interact with the children in your class, include phrases and 3-5 key vocabulary words in the EB/EM child's home language during circle time, storytime, group activities, routines, and informal interactions. Teachers do not have to be fluent in another language to translanguage, rather, they are creating a space that does not limit their EB/EM children to using only one language. Translanguaging exposes monolingual children to the sounds of different languages and supports multilingual families by valuing their home language and affirming multilingual identities.

Incorporate the EB/EM Child's Funds of Identity into Curriculum. To thoughtfully integrate the backgrounds of culturally and linguistically diverse children into the curriculum, start by learning about their families. When engaging with multilingual families, consider involving a translator or another adult family member who can assist with translation. Be sure to note the translator's relationship with the child. Learn about the child's home country, cultural traditions, home language(s), interests, hobbies, skills, etc. Use this information to inform the curriculum, to create opportunities for family members to engage in curriculum development, and to be included in classroom learning activities in meaningful ways. Consider a hypothetical Head Start classroom with a newly enrolled child named Roberto, whose family recently immigrated from Mexico. The teacher, Ms. Lee, takes proactive steps to learn about his cultural background. Ms. Lee discovers that Roberto's family celebrates *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead). His *tia* (aunt) is bilingual in English and Spanish, his mother speaks only Spanish, and his father frequently travels between Mexico and the United States. Ms. Lee also learns that Roberto enjoys playing outside with his younger brother and has a passion for creating art.

To integrate this knowledge into the curriculum, Ms. Lee plans a classroom activity about global traditions in November and intentionally includes Dia de los Muertos. Roberto and his peers make colorful paper marigolds, a key symbol of the celebration, used to honor deceased loved ones. To foster an inclusive environment for Roberto's home language, Ms. Lee checks out the bilingual text, *I remember Abuelito: A Day of the Dead Story* from the library. She also sends a note inviting Roberto's mother and *tía* to be guest readers, providing an opportunity for family engagement and fostering a deeper cultural connection in the classroom.

Frontload Keywords and Cognates in the Child's Home Language with Visual Support. Prior to starting a lesson, provide EB/EM children with three to five keywords and cognates that carry the meaning of a story or content material. Cognates are words shared between languages with similar spelling, pronunciation, and meaning. These words serve as a direct connection to the child's home language and can be printed to provide visual language support. Display keywords and cognates on an easel or chart paper. Use this as an opportunity to provide a realistic image (visual support) of the keyword. When adding labels, it can be helpful to color code each additional language, being consistent with the colors used (Spanish in pink, Hindi in black, English in blue, etc.). Teachers can use the colors to support EB/EM children's learning with instructions like "In Spanish, elephant is elefante which are the letters in pink." Consider sending the key vocabulary words home with EB/EM children and asking families to contribute by adding the home language translations. The example in Figure 1 illustrates how multiple languages can be integrated into a lesson and into the classroom with meaning and purpose.

FIGURE 1
Multilingual Vocabulary SupportSpeaking Children

Integrating multiple home languages into your classroom. Teachers may feel overwhelmed when multiple languages are represented in their classroom. However, with thoughtful planning and intentional support strategies, teachers can create inclusive learning experiences that support and represent all home languages. For example, in Ms. Lee's Head Start classroom, she plans to teach a lesson on the lifecycle of a frog in April. She begins by showing pictures of the frog lifecycle and introduces the key vocabulary words- egg, tadpole, froglet, and frog, in the languages represented in her classroom: English, Spanish and Hindi. Ms. Lee reads a story about frogs in English, pauses to ask questions in Spanish, and uses Google Translate to share the Hindi translation. She intentionally seats Roberto, a Spanish-speaking student, next to another Spanish-speaking peer, knowing they can provide mutual linguistic support. During story time, Ms. Lee points to a picture and asks her Hindi-speaking student, "How do you say this stage, 'egg,' in Hindi?" The EB/EM student may respond or may not know the word, creating an opportunity for learning and participation. Meanwhile, Roberto's peer supports him by explaining in Spanish, "First comes the eggs, then the tadpole." This intentional integration of students' home languages serves as a bridge to enhance their understanding and engagement, making the lesson more accessible and meaningful for all learners.

Learn and Use Basic Greetings, Phrases, and Content Concepts in the Child's Home Language. If an EB/EM child enters a monolingual English-only speaking classroom, they will eventually realize their home language is neither valued nor affirmed. By including important conversational words and phrases in each child's home language, children will feel welcomed in the classroom, that their home language is of great value, and that the educators support the continued use of the child's home language. Table 1 includes basic greetings and Table 2 displays instructional phrases that educators can readily incorporate into classroom routines. This can be applied across a range of home languages. Please note these can be adapted for languages that are represented in the classroom. Although Spanish is the predominant home language for EBs/EMs in the United States, it is crucial for less-represented languages, such as Hindi, to be celebrated and valued (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

TABLE 1
Common Greetings and Phrases

Greetings and Common Words		
English	**Spanish**	**Hindi**
Hello	Hola	namaste
Good morning	Buenos dias	shubh prabhaat
Welcome	Bienvenidos	svaagat
My name is ___.	Me llamo ___.	mera naam hai ___.
What's your name?	¿Cómo te llamas?	tumhaara naam kya hai?
It is nice to meet you.	Mucho gusto	aapase milakar achchha laga.
Please	Por favor	krpaya
Thank you	Gracias	dhanyavaad
Where is ___?	Dónde está ___?	kahaan hai ___?
bathroom	baño	snaanaghar
book	libro	kitaab

TABLE 2
Common Instructional Phrases

Common Instructional Phrases		
English	**Spanish**	**Hindi**
The title of this book is _____.	El título de este libro es ____.	Is kitaab ka sheershak _____ hai.
The author wrote the words to the story.	El autor escribió las palabras de la historia.	Lekhak ne kahaanee ke lie shabd likhe.
The illustrator is _____.	El ilustrado es _____.	Ek chitrakaar hai _____.
The illustrator made the illustrations, paintings, drawings, pictures, photos.	El ilustrador hizo las ilustraciones, las pinturas, los dibujos, las fotografías, las fotos.	Chitrakaar ne chitr, penting, chitr, tasveeren, tasveeren banaeen.
We are going to do a picture walk.	Vamos a hacer un paseo fotográfico.	Ham pikchar vok ke lie ja rahe hain.
What do you notice on this page?	¿Qué notas en esta página?	Aapane is prshth par kya dekha?

Enablement Activities to Empower Multilingual Families and Educators

Teachers can provide support to families and children through enablement activities. Enablement refers to a help-giver's actions that create opportunities for all families to empower themselves (Dunst et al., 1988). In this context, the teacher or another program staff member is the help-giver who creates engaging opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse families to recognize diversity as a strength and asset, to share these strengths with others in the classroom and program, to facilitate family engagement, and to help families reach their goals. The following family engagement strategies provide opportunities to support continued bilingual practices and to engage multilingual families in their child's education.

"In this context, the teacher or another program staff member is the help-giver who creates engaging opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse families to recognize diversity as a strength and asset, to share these strengths with others in the classroom and program, to facilitate family engagement, and to help families reach their goals."

Bilingual and Translanguaging Read-Alouds

Bilingual and translanguaging read-alouds are opportunities for linguistically diverse families to share their literacy practices, languages, and cultures with the children, teachers, and program staff. This may include inviting families to read a book from their home, a book from the classroom's bilingual library, or by accessing digital books in various languages from the program's curriculum and/or assessment software such as the My Teaching Strategies Digital Children's Library.

Bilingual read-alouds may be done by a single family member or in pairs with the family member reading the text in their home language and a bilingual family member or the teacher reading the same text in English. For example, at the end of their parent-teacher conference, Ms. Lee invites Roberto's mother and tia to read to the children during storytime. When the family arrives Ms. Lee asks Roberto to pick un libro from a stack of bilingual books, he selects T*he Very Hungry Caterpillar, La Oruga Muy Hambrienta*. Roberto's mother reads the Spanish text on the page, then his tia reads the same text in English. During translanguaging read-alouds the family member reads the book aloud using their entire language repertoire, interchangeably using the language of the written text and the languages spoken by the reader (García, 2020). Read-alouds using wordless picture books provides opportunities for translanguaging as the family member and the children interpret and read the story together using the visual cues in the pictures to tell the story (Moody & Matthews, 2022).

Engaging through Family and Child Together (FACT) Time

Family and Child Together Time (FACT) is a recent adaptation of Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time (Brizius & Foster, 1993; Paul et al., 2020). FACT Time is a multigenerational family engagement strategy that draws on the principles of translanguaging and funds of identity by valuing the diverse and cultural resources multilingual families bring to the classroom. This strategy embraces all family members, including extended family members such as a child's aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and other caregivers. Teachers plan a hands-on learning activity and invite families to be a part of the in-class activity with their child and the child's peers. The duration of FACT Time depends on the activity but usually lasts between 20 - 40 minutes. Regular planning and communication with families is critical for FACT Time to be successful because it encourages active participation and collaboration. A sign-up sheet can help ensure that all families are invited and participate at different times, preventing overcrowding in a busy classroom. The use of a childcare communication and management app may also help to schedule and manage FACT Time participation. FACT Time follows four steps aligned with family engagement

and literacy: Pre-brief, Observe, Interact, and Debrief (Brizius & Foster, 1993).

Pre-brief. The educator prepares the family members for the lesson or activity by briefly discussing the activity, providing materials and resources, and verifying that the family member has a clear understanding of what to expect during the activity. The family member is asked to join their child and encouraged to work with the child in their home language.

Observe. The educator models the mini-lesson or learning activity for the child's family member. Through modeling, the educator demonstrates how the family member can use new or existing skills to help their child complete the learning activity.

Interact. The family member interacts with their child as they complete the modeled activity together, preferably while using the family's home language.

Debrief. The family member and educator debrief by discussing what the family member observed in the lesson, and the educator provides suggestions and resources for extending this learning at home.

By encouraging families to use their home language during activities, FACT Time honors and leverages the rich linguistic repertoires and lived experiences of families as valuable tools for learning. This strategy also fosters a deeper connection between home and school.

"By encouraging families to use their home language during activities, FACT Time honors and leverages the rich linguistic repertoires and lived experiences of families as valuable tools for learning."

Partnering with Families in the Assessment of Children's Learning and Development

Families possess a wealth of knowledge about how their child thinks, learns, and behaves at home and in the community. This information is vital to a holistic understanding of the child's learning and development and to establishing home-to-school connections. Often, linguistically diverse families of young children have limited experience with the assessment expectations and processes in the U.S. education system (Antony-Newman, 2019). Inequities in the assessment process often fail to acknowledge or value these diverse identities, putting Emergent Bilinguals (EBs) at a significant disadvantage. Standardized assessments and traditional evaluation methods are frequently biased toward English language speakers, overlooking the linguistic and cultural strengths that EBs bring to the classroom.

Inviting families to contribute to their child's assessments is an enablement opportunity to support family empowerment using the child's and family's funds of identity. This allows teachers and families to recognize each other as co-experts who can build strong, reciprocal family-educator partnerships. Asking families to share examples of their child demonstrating skills and developmental milestones at home and in the community demonstrates that the family plays an important role in supporting and interpreting their child's academic and developmental progress. This collaborative effort requires providing families with information about learning standards, sources of data, and assessment processes in the family's home language. Sharing this information early in the year communicates to families that they are valued co-experts, which is essential to helping the educator learn about their child.

Teachers, or other staff members, such as a Family Service or Curriculum Specialist, may conduct home visits with interested families. These visits offer educators the opportunity to observe the child's skills, behaviors, and use of their home language in a familiar, comfortable setting. Home visits also validate and empower families by recognizing their home as an important learning space and affirming the importance of their cultural and linguistic practices. This approach helps families feel valued as key contributors to their child's education. When

conducting home visits with multilingual families, it's important to bring a translator or ask if the family has a bilingual family member. Additionally, preparing key talking points in the family's home language ensures effective communication and shows respect for their linguistic background.

Reciprocal Communication through Family Dialogue Journals

When selecting a communication format for working with multilingual families, remember that families may not be able to attend a family engagement opportunity held during the day or evening. Family Dialogue Journals (Allen et al., 2015) enable family members to gain insight into what their children are learning and to integrate children's home lives into the curriculum. This family engagement strategy provides families with a shared responsibility for student learning and an opportunity to integrate family funds of identity into the curriculum (Allen et al., 2015). Educators generate journal entries by asking questions such as, "What have we learned this week that has been the most interesting?", "What could you teach your family?" or "What do you want to tell your family about what we learned in class?" (Allen et al., 2015). To further tap into the child's funds of identity, ask questions like, "What do you like to do as a family?" or "What is your family's favorite thing to do on the weekend?" (e.g. Figure 2).

The Family Dialogue Journal excerpt (see Figure 2) depicts a teacher initiating dialogue through the journal. The child, family members, and educators have opportunities to contribute through drawing or writing. Monolingual educators can contribute by receiving help from a translator or using a free translation application, such as Google Translate, or an Artificial Intelligence (AI) writing tool, such as Translate Now- AI Translator.

Although translation apps may not always be entirely accurate, when no human resources are available, educators can inform families that they are using these translation apps. This way, if errors or misunderstandings arise, family members can assist the teacher in clarifying the information. This two-way language support can empower families by fostering collaboration, encouraging the use of the family's home language, and improving communi-

cation. Additionally, it helps build a sense of trust as the teacher demonstrates a commitment to ensuring clear and effective communication.

FIGURE 2
Family Dialogue Journal Excerpts from Teacher
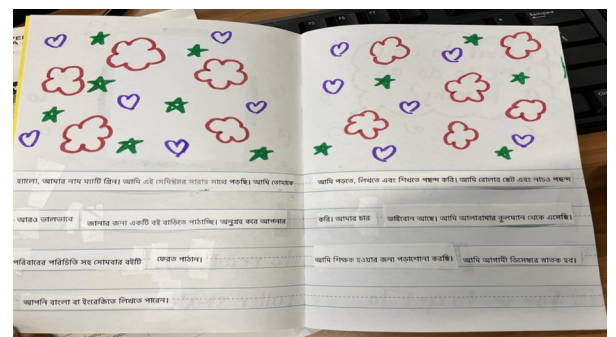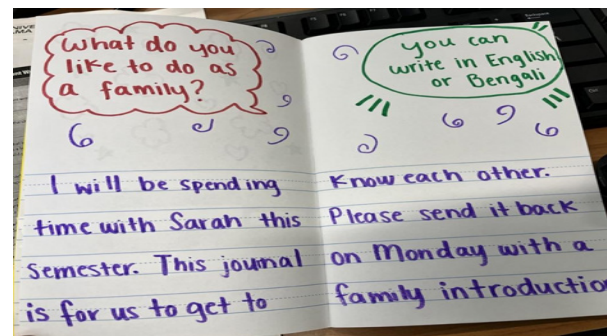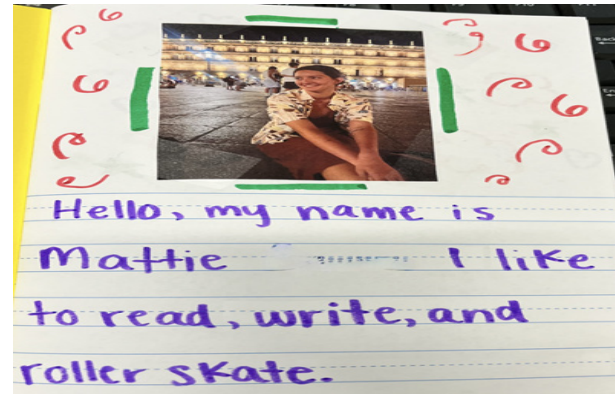
Conclusion

The classroom and family engagement strategies presented here create opportunities for educators to build meaningful partnerships with children and their families, particularly marginalized populations such as linguistically diverse children and families. By incorporating these strategies as foundational components of the classroom environment, educators communicate to families that they are valuable contributors to their children's education and recognize the family's home language as an asset to their child's learning and development. Using and building upon these strategies during the preschool years establishes early partnerships between empowered families and educators that will benefit the children, the family, and educators throughout their educational experience.

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Embracing Multicultural and Multilingual Families: Transforming Education, Empowering Communities

A Research to Practice Summary

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ABSTRACT

Recognizing and valuing the strengths of immigrant families and emergent multilinguals (EMs) is crucial in today's diverse classrooms. Many of these students face systemic barriers, including limited access to high-quality education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and mentorship in STEM fields. This article explores practices for cultivating inclusive learning environments through reflexive practices, culturally responsive literature circles, authentic cultural celebrations, and family engagement initiatives. By drawing on frameworks such as Family Empowerment and Enablement, Funds of Identity, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, and Translanguaging, this article emphasizes the role of reflexive practices in preparing educators to support diverse learners. Through these practices, educators can foster meaningful school-family partnerships, affirm students' linguistic and cultural identities, and create equitable learning experiences that empower EM students and their families.

KEYWORDS
Emergent multilingual learners; early childhood education; Head Start programs; family engagement; partnerships

In today's diverse classrooms, recognizing the strengths that immigrant families and multilingual learners bring to the learning environment is crucial. Many of these students have been affected by global crises, with millions displaced due to war, violence, and persecution (International Rescue Committee, 2024). In the U.S., approximately 10.3% of students are designated English Learners (ELs) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), yet the term "Emergent Multilinguals" (EMs) more accurately reflects their linguistic diversity and cultural richness. Unfortunately, general education and pre-service teachers often prioritize English acquisition over multilingualism and may lack the preparation needed to

support diverse learners effectively. This can lead to lower expectations and reinforce stereotypical perceptions of students in urban schools (Liou & Rotherham-Fuller, 2019). Furthermore, neglecting an EM student's home language development in favor of English can result in lost cognitive and literacy advantages that come with developing proficiency in multiple languages (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

To address these challenges, it is critical to prepare teachers to recognize and nurture the assets that students of color, emergent multilinguals, and recent immigrants bring to the classroom. Teachers must adopt a mindset that values diversity, actively learning from and embracing the rich stories and cultural backgrounds of their students. This article draws on frameworks such as Family Empowerment and Enablement, Funds of Identity, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, and Translanguaging, which advocate for valuing the cultural assets of immigrant families and creating inclusive, strengths-based learning environments that address educational inequities (Dunst et al., 1988; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Grant & Ray, 2023; Paris & Alim, 2017). Additionally, it highlights the role of translanguaging in affirming home languages, encouraging multilingual learners to use all of their language knowledge, also known as their linguistic repertoire, to enhance comprehension and honor the language practices of minoritized communities (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015; García et al., 2017). We present two professional development practices, and two implementation practices teachers may use to support their engagement with emergent multilingual families.

Professional Development Practices

Engage in Reflexive Practices

Early childhood educators work not only with the children in their classrooms and centers but also with the children's caregivers and other family members. The interactions they have with children and families can positively or negatively impact their relationships. In order to build strong, beneficial relationships with others, one must first spend time in reflection and then engage in ongoing reflexive strategies. Reflexive practices relate to ongoing, critical questioning and exploration of personal beliefs, values, assumptions, and expecta-

tions as well as the practices employed when working with children and families (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Ryan & Walsh, 2018). As it relates to creating, maintaining, and supporting relationships with EM students and their families, reflexive practices help educators to think critically to acknowledge and challenge potentially negative attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and stereotypes about people from different backgrounds. By asking oneself "Why?" and "How?" questions, such as, "Why do I believe that certain behaviors indicate that a family does or does not support their child's learning?;""Why do I believe that a certain trait is a family's strength or weakness?;" and "How do my culture and life experiences help me understand or misunderstand the children and families I work with?" educators can learn more about their own deep-seated beliefs and create opportunities to reconsider their understanding of the values, practices, and behaviors of the children and families in their early childhood education (ECE) classrooms and programs. These questions also allow educators to reconsider their initial assumptions about families and see strengths in the family's cultural and linguistic practices. Educators may engage in reflexive practice by keeping a private, personal journal or by participating in reflexive coaching activities with other educators.

While reflective and reflexive practices are not directly family engagement strategies, engaging in these practices is necessary if educators wish to establish and maintain authentic, respectful partnerships with children and families and create enablement activities that facilitate a family's empowerment. The following practices create opportunities for educators to engage in reflective and reflexive practices that may lead to a greater understanding of and empathy toward EM students and their families.

Literature Circles with Culturally Responsive Texts

The U.S. teaching workforce, especially in early childhood, is predominantly composed of white, monolingual female educators, creating a mismatch with the growing diversity of student populations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022a). To address this disparity, literature circles were implemented as a collaborative learning strategy to enhance cultural awareness among pre-service teachers (PTs)

(Boudreau, 2021). This study took place in a pre-service teacher course at an urban research university using purposive sampling. To capture participants' voices, emotions, and evolving perspectives, thick descriptions were gathered from written reflections, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect their identities (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Participants (n=25) were undergraduate students in Elementary or Early Childhood Education in the university's teacher preparation program. Over 10 weeks, PTs read a designated section of the culturally and linguistically responsive text, wrote a reflection, created a mixed media page, and participated in an in-class literature circle.

In small groups of four to five PTs, participants took on rotating roles, such as discussion facilitator, note taker, and timekeeper, and engaged in weekly discussions guided by reflective questions. These discussions encouraged PTs to critically examine cultural perspectives, their own assumptions, and the challenging journeys many emergent multilingual students face. Weekly discussions were led by guiding questions, such as, "What part of the reading made you think differently about something or someone?;" "As a future teacher, what steps will you take to ensure you build trusting relationships with families of all cultural backgrounds?"

Additionally, PTs used mixed media journals to represent their comprehension, incorporating both visual elements and a variety of mediums to express their understanding of the weekly section of reading.

One of the selected texts, *My Family Divided: One Girl's Journey of Home, Loss, and Hope* by Diana Guerrero, provided a powerful narrative of the experiences of undocumented immigrant families. The memoir details Guerrero's personal journey as the daughter of Colombian immigrants who were detained and deported while she was at school. By engaging with such reflective literature, PTs developed a deeper understanding of the hardships faced by millions of undocumented immigrant families and the emotional toll on children in these situations. Figure 1 illustrates a mixed media journal entry and two excerpts from one PT candidate's reflections.

FIGURE 1
PT Candidate's Mixed Media Journal Work Sample

Excerpt from PT Candidate on the impact of Guerrero's story: "*I really enjoyed learning more about Guerrero's family. I can't imagine how she must have felt after her mom got arrested. She must be incredibly devastated and heartbroken. My mixed media journal entry* (Figure 1) *represented the terror she must have experienced.*" Excerpt from the PT Candidate on the impact of the book: "*The story has profoundly impacted my understanding of what children in similar situations go through. I thought I was empathetic before, but now I have a clearer perspective on how quickly these children have to grow up. The book also highlights how difficult the citizenship process can be. It feels like the government makes it incredibly difficult for undocumented individuals to obtain citizenship without risking deportation, which only worsens the situation because many are too afraid to apply.*"

"I thought I was empathetic before, but now I have a clearer perspective on how quickly these children have to grow up."

A thematic analysis identified two overarching themes from the reflections: (1) Current and future inclusive classroom teaching practices, which included the subtheme of inclusive family engagement activities, and (2) Challenges of immigrant families and students, with the subtheme of immigrant children's advanced maturity level. Overall, the literature circle discussions, individual reflections, and mixed media journal work samples helped bridge the gap between PTs' limited knowledge of immigrant families, the challenges these families face from their home countries to the U.S., and the steps PTs plan to take to support EM students in their future classrooms. Additional culturally responsive young adult texts included: When Stars Are Scattered by Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson, Refugee by Alan Gratz, and All the Stars Denied by Guadalupe Garcia McCall.

Implementation Practices

Collaborate with Families to Plan Authentic and Respectful Cultural Celebrations

Celebrations of holidays and observances of other important dates and events are common in ECE programs in the U.S. They may vary by classroom, involve center- or program-wide activities and observations, or they may play no role in the ECE program. For programs that include holiday celebrations and observances, it is essential to authentically include and learn about all represented cultures equally (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019). Inauthentic or misinformed cultural activities and celebrations may be well-intentioned but can create misunderstandings, depriving EM students and their families of the opportunity to share their cultural identity with others.

The planning of cultural activities and celebrations must include the families of that culture to avoid stereotypical displays and activities. By asking the families of EM students to take the lead in planning and guiding educators and other families, learning goes beyond the typical "holidays and heroes" celebrations and activities (Derman-Sparks et al., 2015). When families have opportunities to share their culture and traditions with their children, educators, and other families, they experience empowerment.

One way to honor the cultural and linguistic identities of all families is to recognize and celebrate the cultures represented in the classroom or program. Engage families in this process by inviting them to share important dates, traditions, and ideas to create meaningful, authentic learning experiences. For example, families may want to introduce the Lunar New Year, a significant celebration observed in many Asian countries, including China, Vietnam, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore. The holiday marks the beginning of a new year in the traditional Chinese calendar and is often celebrated with the color red, symbolizing joy and good fortune in Chinese culture. Other holidays and traditions to explore may include Kwanzaa, a celebration of African heritage; Holi, a vibrant festival of colors celebrated in India; or Día de los Muertos, a Mexican holiday honoring deceased loved ones. Asking the families of EM students to share how they observe cultural celebrations and activities leads to a deeper understanding of a variety of cultures that move beyond popular stereotypes to create a culturally inclusive environment. However, it is important to respect the wishes of families who do not wish to share this information.

In ECE programs that do not include holiday activities or celebrations, educators may invite families to take part in classroom learning activities that include teaching children about different cultural practices and traditions through sharing songs, stories, games, or food. Another option is to host a center- or program-wide family culture exhibition event, perhaps to coincide with International Mother Language Day in February or the International Day of Families in May. By inviting all families to prepare a display of artifacts of their culture, families share their funds of identity with the other children, families, and educators. In addition to visual displays, families may work together to include cultural storytelling, games, and songs as part of the event.

Again, it is important to respect the wishes of families who do not wish to share this information about their family, but to invite them to enjoy the event with their children. Whether these activities or celebrations occur in the classroom or in a center or program event, educators will have created enablement opportunities that facilitate family em-

powerment. Families are empowered by using their funds of identity to share their culture with children, families, and educators who otherwise may never have such an experience.

Family Engagement Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Nights

In addition to center- or program-wide cultural exhibitions, educators can organize family engagement STEM nights to strengthen collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Research highlights significant barriers to STEM education for underrepresented cultural and linguistic groups, including Emergent Multilinguals (EMs). These barriers include disparities in educational quality, limited opportunities to apply STEM skills, a lack of mentorship in STEM careers, and the absence of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Family engagement initiatives, such as STEM Nights (Figure 2), help address these challenges by fostering meaningful school-family partnerships. As illustrated in Figure 3, translated instructions encourage all families to engage and participate in family engagement nights. Research has shown that such collaborations lead to improved academic outcomes, including higher grades, better attendance, enhanced social skills, more positive school behavior, and increased graduation rates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
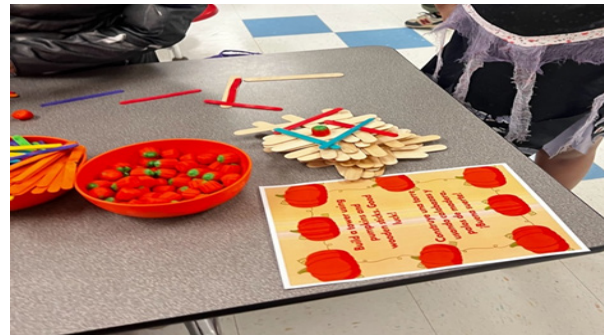
FIGURE 3
Bilingual Materials for STEMtacular Family Night

Conclusion

This article offers valuable insight into how pre-service and in-service teachers can intentionally reflect on their own pedagogy and foster authentic partnerships with linguistically and culturally diverse families. Additionally, it presents practical, student- and family-centered strategies for integrating families into the curriculum. These strategies empower educators to recognize and leverage the cultural and linguistic strengths of EM students and their families, enriching the experiences of educators, children, and families throughout the program.

FIGURE 2
EM Children Engaging in STEMtacular Family Night

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