SUPPORTING CHILDREN LEARNING ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE EARLY YEARS

Children’s Right to Childhood
C&K Early Childhood Annual Conference
Brisbane Convention and Exhibition centre
Friday 25th to Sunday 27th May 2012
OUTCOMES

- Building partnerships with CALD families
- Understand the linkage between home language maintenance and sustaining family culture
- Recognise bi and multi-lingualism as an asset
- Understand the importance of home language(s) maintenance in supporting children’s identity, wellbeing, communication and learning
- Identify strategies educators can implement to support families to maintain home language(s)
FKA CHILDREN’S SERVICES VISION

All children have access to quality early childhood services that recognise and value diversity where:

• Skilled early childhood professionals incorporate multicultural perspectives in all aspects of the program

• The maintenance and development of languages other than English is promoted and children are supported to learn English as an additional language

• Children from all cultural backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate and achieve.

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“Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. They value children’s different capacities and abilities and respect difference in families’ home lives”.

(Being, Belonging, Becoming p13)
DEVELOPING IDENTITY

‘Children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the context of their families and communities’.

(Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework p. 20)

Valuing cultural and family diversity means understanding and respecting the richness that comes from a variety of ways of bringing up children.
BILINGUALISM

- **Additive bilingualism** in which the first language continues to be developed and the first culture to be valued while the second language is added;

- **Subtractive bilingualism** in which the second language is added at the expense of the first language and culture, which diminish as a consequence.

HOME LANGUAGE USE SUPPORTS POSITIVE SELF CONCEPT AND WELLBEING

“Talk is a crucial link between parents and children: It is how parents impart their cultures to their children and enable them to become the kind of men and women they want them to be.”

WHY MAINTAIN THE HOME LANGUAGE?

“Child-parent relationships can be constrained and family cohesion disrupted when parents who are struggling with English are forced to communicate in English because their children no longer understand the home language”

PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

- Children and their families bring a wealth of cultural, linguistic and economic experience which the early childhood professional can draw upon.

- Families need opportunities to participate in both the development of the educational program and its implementation.

- Families are able to provide information that will help understand what children can contribute to the learning situation.
CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN

- The new environment can be a very strange and confronting place, quite different from the home environment.

- The people around them look different, speak in a different language, act in new ways and demand new ways of behaving and responding.

- Children need to feel confident in themselves and their families. They need to experience a sense of belonging in the new environment.
**HOW CAN EDUCATORS SUPPORT CHILDREN?**

- Be responsible and responsive so that children and families can develop trusting relationships.
- Encourage the use of the home language by bilingual staff and children.
- Acknowledge the child’s competency in their home language and build on their conceptual development.
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WORKING CLOSELY WITH BILINGUAL FAMILIES AND THEIR CHILDREN

• “It is essential that they recognise growing up bilingual is about negotiating social and cultural identity, social practices and languages in everyday lived experiences”.

• “Bilingual children’s understandings of themselves are mediated in the languages they speak, understand, read and write.”


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REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL READING


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