

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

THE ELL RESEARCH BRIEF AND TOOL KIT



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About the Author

Dr. Lisa C. Buenaventura has been an educator at both the PreK-12 and higher education levels for over 30 years. She has worked in urban, suburban, and rural settings with culturally and linguistically diverse children and adults in the Pacific Northwest and Central Pennsylvania. She has been a practitioner, researcher, and instructor specifically in the area of ESL and bilingual education, having served as a school psychologist, counselor, and central office administrator with ELLs, as well as a higher education faculty member preparing teachers to work with ELLs.

The ELL Tool Kit is an initiative of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). This is a collaborative effort between the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to address the needs of infants, toddlers, and PreK-3 English Language Learners (ELLs) from immigrant, refugee, and migrant families within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Executive Summary

According to researchers at the Center for Social Demographic Analysis (CSDA) at the University of Albany-State University of New York (SUNY), children in newcomer immigrant and refugee families represent 20% of all children in the United States and “...are leading the racial-ethnic transformation of America” (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). It is estimated that one out of every five children in Grades K-12 today is either a child who has newly arrived in the U.S. (“newcomers”) or is a child with at least one parent who has immigrated (Camarota, 2005). By 2030, 72% of the elderly population will be non-Hispanic white, while 56% of the working adults and 50% of the children contributing to the economic, educational, and civic activities within American society will represent a much broader range of racial and ethnic identities (Hernandez et al, 2007). Garcia and Cuellar (2006) have noted how this “national demographic transformation” has shifted, and will significantly continue to alter, the landscape of American society, and particularly public education. They have pointed out that *English Language Learners (ELLs)*, also known as *bilingual or dual language learners*, represent first, second, and even third generations. Thus, understanding the cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, political, and legal contexts for young ELLs and their families, and the implications for educational practice, is critical for early childhood educators in their efforts to become culturally competent.

The ELL Tool Kit has been developed to provide research-based information, guidelines, and principles for early learning professionals to promote culturally competent practice. While it provides a broad range of information about young ELLs and their families, its primary purposes are:

- To define cultural competence and proficiency;
- To describe second language acquisition;
- To unpack myths and realities about ELLs;
- To highlight research and best practices for educating and supporting young ELLs and their families; and
- To outline strategies to build and sustain culturally competent and proficient early learning professionals and organizations.

Cultural Competence

What is *cultural competence*? The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) (2009) has identified several characteristics of a culturally competent organization, including articulated values, beliefs, and principles that embrace diversity, and that are integrated into and reflected by policies, practices, and services involving all stakeholders and constituencies. Its simplest definition, whether describing an individual or an organization, reflects a continuous process of growth and change, involves taking another’s perspective and understanding alternative worldviews, and contains three key elements: 1) self-awareness; 2) cultural knowledge; and 3) intercultural or cross-cultural communication and interaction

(Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Cross, 1988; Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003; Lynch & Hanson, 2004; Ponterrato, 1988). Lindsey et al (2003) have reiterated that cultural competence requires a commitment to diversity, and openness to growth and change; it is not a collection of activities or instructional strategies, a “boilerplate” of policies and practices, or a quick fix or panacea.

For early childhood professionals, *cultural competence* as caregivers and educators is a necessary prerequisite for working effectively with young ELLs and their families. As Obegi & Ritblatt (2005) have indicated, many early learning organizations and programs have realized the need for culturally competent services because of the changing demographics, the lack of diverse caregivers, culturally different childrearing practices, and disparate treatment of cultural groups. According to a study conducted by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) with immigrants (Mathew & Jang, 2007), researchers have found that: (1) many immigrant families and community organizations are unaware of early learning programs and the importance of high quality experiences; (2) there is a shortage of bilingual and bicultural providers; (3) there are fewer quality early learning programs in immigrant communities; and that (4) many programs are not purposeful and responsive in working with immigrant families. In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006) indicates that 63% of childcare workers and 78% of preschool teachers are non-Hispanic White. LEP and other providers of color encounter barriers to licensing, training, and education. All of these factors result in significant challenges for young ELLs and their families in terms of access to high quality early care and preschool programs and, therefore, to the opportunities for learning, development, and enrichment.

Second Language Acquisition

Being cognizant about theories of second language acquisition and best practices in the field is critical for early learning professionals working with young ELLs. Whether it is a first or second/other language, language learning is a very complex and multi-layered undertaking. Language proficiency requires the learner to demonstrate strong and effective oral/verbal fluency, listening comprehension, reading ability, and writing ability, as well as the ability to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings in both simple and conceptually sophisticated ways. For young ELLs, language learning and acquisition in a second language (L2) assumes that they are already proficient in their first language (L1), which is not necessarily the case. Understanding language development and acquisition for young ELLs also means recognizing that they may have different ways of communicating and interacting that are culturally-driven (Park, 2003). Researchers have found that by also understanding the language socialization of young ELLs, they develop insights about the cultural contexts in which diverse communities use language (Park, 2003; Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986).

Two major researchers in the area of second language learning are Stephen Krashen and Jim Cummins. Krashen (1981) has proposed several hypotheses that help to understand and unravel second language acquisition theories and process. These include: a distinction between *acquisition* and *learning*, as *subconscious vs. conscious processes*; a *natural order* to language acquisition; the use of an internal *monitor* to edit oral and written communication;

the importance of comprehensible *input*; and the critical nature of an *affective filter*. Cummins (1986, 2000) has constructed another theory that distinguishes between two types of language: *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)* and *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)*. BICS is the language used in social situations, such as on a playground, in the lunchroom, or in another community activity. CALP is the language used in the classroom setting, in academic texts, or in higher order thinking activities. His theory is based upon work conducted by several different researchers who have found that, due to a number of socio-cultural and educational factors, a second language learner may become orally fluent in English within two to five years, but may take approximately seven years or more to achieve the linguistic proficiency necessary for technical and academic demands (Cummins, 1981, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Cummins has noted that communication is either *context-embedded* or *context-reduced*, as well as *cognitively undemanding* or *cognitively demanding*.

Myths and Realities

Numerous myths about ELLs related to such areas as demographics, enrollment, programming, language development and acquisition, professional development of teachers, assessment, and parent involvement continue to be perpetuated (Crawford, 1998; Espinosa, 2008; McLaughlin, 1992; NCTE, 2008; Samway & McKeon, 2007; Snow, 1992). Many of these myths are unfounded and not supported by research. In fact, research has debunked many of these misconceptions and shown instead that: 1) the number of culturally and linguistically diverse learners is increasing, and many of them are U.S.-born; 2) students who are not legal residents are eligible to attend public schools; 3) dual language learning enhances the development of both the native language (L1) and the second language (L2); 4) verbal fluency in English does not necessarily mean that ELLs have attained English language proficiency; 5) reading and writing instruction should not be delayed because ELLs are not yet language proficient; 6) being an ELL who is not proficient in English, does not necessarily warrant Special Education services; 7) federal (i.e., NCLB) and state legislation requires screening and yearly assessment of ELLs; 8) educators do not agree that there is only one particular approach to ELL instruction and programming; 9) teachers do not need to speak a second language to teach ELLs, although it is an added benefit; 9) second-language learning is not the same for all ELLs; and 10) ELL parents and families are deeply interested and invested in their children's education;

Research and Best Practices

Many factors influence ELLs' achievement of English language proficiency throughout the stages of L2 acquisition. These factors may include native language proficiency and educational preparation, as well as a range of historical, economic, social, and cultural experiences. Culture and language are two factors that influence and impact *cultural self-identity*--the group with which an individual identifies based upon race/ethnicity, culture, language, gender, religion, etc.--as ELLs become immersed in American society. The development or revision of cultural self-identity for ELLs, even young ELLs, is directly related to the degree to which they integrate their values, beliefs, and traditions, including culture and

language, with the dominant or majority group. ELL families or individuals, including young children, may find some of these values and beliefs to be congruent with those of their own cultures, or to be in conflict with their cultural self-identities.

The *cultural continua* identified by Lynch and Hanson (2004, pp. 49-55), while not new to the behavioral and social sciences provide a way of considering the range (continuum) for each of the systems of values and beliefs that characterize various cultural groups (i.e., how they define *family, time*, etc.). It includes the following categories: Family constellation; interdependence/individuality; nurturance/dependence; time; tradition/technology; ownership; rights/responsibilities; and harmony/control. The continua do provide ways of considering factors that may influence or impact the cognitive, academic, linguistic, physical, and socio-emotional development of young ELLs. This can help early learning professionals reflect upon what other perspectives or assumptions may exist when misunderstandings or miscommunication occur with ELL families and their children.

Among a number of sociocultural factors that influence interactions between service providers and ELL families and their children, *socioeconomic status (SES), education level of ELLs' parents, and personal efficacy* appear to be the most powerful factors (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). These factors may explain the responses of some ELL families and their children to early care and early learning opportunities and interventions:

ELL families' involvement with their children's education is quintessential in ELLs' success. Many factors influence the way ELL families interact with schools, including culture, fluency in English, prior experiences interacting with schools, beliefs about the authority of principals and teachers, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, and parental education levels (Orozco, 2007). Many culturally and linguistically diverse families believe very strongly in the power of education to help their children advance and succeed (Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). However, relocation or dislocation to a new country and culture may result in family separation, lack of family cohesion, role or power reversal due to shifts in family members' responsibilities, loss of familiar relationships, and economic imbalances (Orozco, 2007), as well as a loss of self-efficacy. ELL families may feel uncomfortable in early learning settings where they feel the pressure or need to be fluent and literate in English, where staff members do not resemble them or speak their language(s), and where materials, resources, and activities lack cultural relevance and are not presented in linguistically meaningful ways (Samway & McKeon, 2007). They may also feel powerless or alienated when they do not understand early education approaches that may be new or incompatible with their own cultural values and beliefs about child-rearing.

Researchers have reiterated the importance of understanding ELLs' and their families' cultural values and belief systems (Lynch & Hanson, 2004; Orozco, 2007; Trumbull et al, 2001). Being knowledgeable and aware of alternative worldviews and attitudes towards child-rearing, education, family and extended family relationships, and other elements of the cultural continua (Lynch & Hanson, 2004) provides early learning professionals with the opportunity to reach out to ELL families in a more culturally sensitive manner and to build partnerships with them for the benefit of young ELLs. Van Velsor & Orozco (2007) have emphasized that

involvement requires that ELL parents/families know and understand what is happening with their children in school, and that school personnel are aware and include knowledge and information from the ELL communities. Coltrane (2003) has suggested that early learning educators provide (1) many opportunities for parental input, (2) information about curriculum, instruction and standards, and (3) assistance to parents in understanding placement and assessment measures of achievement.

Several researchers have underscored the necessity for educators to develop multiple/multiethnic perspective taking ability (Hyun, 1994; Hyun & Marshall, 1997) and adopt *developmentally and culturally appropriate practices (DCAP)* (Bowman, 1992; Hyun, 1994; Novick, 1996) as these relate to culturally and linguistically diverse children. Because developmental milestones may vary culturally (Edwards & Gandini, 1989), Bowman (1990) has recommended the following *developmentally and culturally appropriate practices (DCAP)* when working with young ELLs and their families:

- Recognize developmentally equivalent behavioral patterns;
- Give equivalent developmental milestones the same value;
- Use familiar interactive styles;
- Reinforce the values of the ELL family;
- Address differences in home and school values and beliefs; and
- Recognize that certain content or subject matter may be viewed differently by different cultures (i.e., specific animals, symbols, etc.) (Bowman, 1990, p. 3)

Hyun (2007) has also identified several characteristics that teachers engaged in DCAP should acknowledge about these young ELL children:

- Their multidirectional, multidimensional, multiethnic, and multilingual development;
- Their culturally-based ways of knowing and understanding the world;
- The ongoing sociocultural changes they experience; and
- Their dynamic family structures, cycles, and environments (Hyun, 2007, p. 262).

Early learning professionals are encouraged to consider the following: 1) engaging in thoughtful, honest, and critical self-reflection about their own professional practice, cultural competence, and limitations; 2) continuously questioning themselves about what young ELLs may be perceiving differently and constructing as meaningful learning, and also sustaining active communication with ELL families and communities about children's learning; and 3) consistently using multiple and multi-ethnic perspective-taking in their practice (Hyun, 2007).

Building and Sustaining Culturally Competent Early Learning Professionals and Organizations

There is widespread agreement among researchers and scholars in the field of multicultural education and culturally responsive practice, that those who work with ELLs possess certain characteristics or develop specific skill sets. First of all, as Lynch and Hanson (2004) have indicated, culturally competent professionals must be self-aware, cognizant of how their values and beliefs influence their worldviews, and willing to learn about other cultures, languages, and ways of understanding the world. Garcia (1992) has identified four major domains associated with exemplary ELL teachers: 1) knowledge and implementation of specific instructional strategies informed by research; 2) meaningful and contextualized learning opportunities that encourage collaboration and cooperation; 3) advocacy, efficacy, and creativity; and 4) validation of learners' culture and language, as well as high expectations.

The National Center for Cultural Competence (2009) has developed a framework for culturally competent organizations. This definition includes: having cultural knowledge, valuing diversity and difference, engaging in self-assessment, communicating cross-culturally and effectively, and promoting values and principles of diversity as an institution. Other researchers have underscored the significance of proactive organizations whose values, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors about diversity and inclusion are congruent and transparent (Cross, 1989; Storti, 1998). In particular, Cross (1989) has emphasized *self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural understanding and communication*.

Individual/organizational assessment and professional development link knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to pedagogical practice with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. To develop the characteristics and attributes of cultural competence, early learning professionals must be willing to explore their own worldviews and practices honestly and directly, while also working very hard to infuse their teaching, programming, and services with culturally responsive and inclusive practices. They need to be able to acknowledge when their professional practice and programs may be less reflective of non-western or non-U.S. approaches to child-rearing and early childhood education. They must recognize that achieving or failing to achieve “developmental milestones” may be more a matter of perspective or a different way of measuring progress for a young ELL.

Because developing cultural competence is viewed as a dynamic and continuous process (Lindsey et al, 2003), organizational assessment should contain both formative and summative elements, which are influenced by the data gathered at the individual staff level, the community (family) level, and the center or program level. This may well involve multiple types of assessments at multiple levels, guided by how the various early learning constituencies, particularly the ELL communities, define cultural competency both within and outside of the early childhood education environment. As a formative process, this requires that the organization see assessment of cultural competence as cyclical and pervasive—a series of continuous and integrated efforts to improve and change proactively to meet the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population of children, families, communities, and educational providers. As a summative process, this requires the organization to be very willing and highly responsive to ending unproductive policies, practices, and strategies that do not reflect cultural competence.

Cultural competence for an entire organizational system should be defined by the expressed needs of members of the organization, the centers and programs, and the care homes, as well as the expressed needs of ELL families and children. Cultural competence, as Lindsey et al (2003) have emphasized, is **not** structured activities or instructional strategies, boilerplate policies and practices, or a quick fix (p. xxii). To reiterate, it **is** about self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural communication—the foundation for growth, change, and transformation for culturally competent individuals and organizations.

Introduction

“...culture refers to a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others.” (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba as cited in Gay, 2000)

Background

As the last U.S. Census indicated, there has been a rapid and continuing increase in the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the United States (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2001) that, in all likelihood, will again be reflected in the 2010 Census. While people of color comprised 28% of the population in 2000, with approximately 5.7 million legal immigrants having entered the U.S. since the early 1990's (as well as an undetermined number of undocumented immigrants), it is anticipated that they will represent 38% of the population by 2025 and 47% of the population by 2050 (Gay, 2000). This increase in the number of foreign- and American-born individuals for whom English is a second or other language continues to have a tremendous influence on various American systems—including *early care* and *early childhood education*.

Garcia and Cuellar (2006) have noted how this “national demographics transformation” has shifted, and will significantly continue to alter, the landscape of American society, and particularly public education. They have pointed out that these **ELLs (English Language Learners)**, also known as *bilingual or dual language learners*, represent first, second, and even third generations of families. Cohen and Clewell (2007) in an Urban Institute Policy Brief have reported the following statistics:

- Over a 20-year period (1980-2000), the ELL population in elementary schools increased by 50% (almost 2 million children);
- More than 50% of the immigrant children in grades PreK-5 were from Latin America and approximately 25% were from Asia;
- The ELL school population showed rapid expansion beyond the five most-populated states with the greatest shift to the Southeast and Midwest;
- Approximately 70% of ELLs were enrolled in only 10% of American elementary schools;

- Higher ELL concentrations were found in large, urban schools serving minority populations (i.e., students of color); and
- Schools serving higher ELL populations had a greater incidence of poverty and health issues.

ELLs may be members of **indigenous populations**, such as Native American tribes or natives of U.S. territories, such as Guam, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa. Or, they may be **documented** or **undocumented immigrants** and **refugees** to the United States. In any case, the rapidly expanding diversity of this country has presented many challenges for educators, service providers, policymakers who are actively involved with ELLs, particularly those eligible to participate in PreK-12 settings.

Young ELL Participation in Early Care and Early Learning Programs

The increase in the ELL population has had a significant impact on early childhood education, creating a more urgent need to address the complex social and educational needs of young ELLs. Like Cohen and Clewell (2007), Matthews and Ewen (2006) have reported that the majority of immigrant parents of children under age six were from Latin America (64%), followed by Asia (23%). Fewer immigrant families have originated from Europe and Canada (7%) or Africa and the Middle East (6%) (Cappes, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, & Passel, 2005, as cited by Matthews & Ewen, 2006). These statistics indicate that Latin American and Asian cultures and languages represent the majority of immigrants, and may have significant implications for the early learning community related to hiring practices and professional development. These researchers (Matthews & Ewen, 2006) have noted the following:

- Immigrant children under age three underutilize center-based care, have more irregular care arrangements (usually with a relative), and participate in some form of care arrangement if their parents work; and
- Immigrant children, ages three to five years, are found more frequently in parental care or without a regular care arrangement, but use center-based care more often if their parents work (although 25% of them do remain in the care of a relative).

For several reasons, as discussed below, the participation of young ELLs in regular or center-care arrangements has been less frequent or more inconsistent than for other populations.

The National Center for Children in Poverty (2006) has estimated that 20% of young children live in immigrant families, 14% of them have at least one Limited English Proficient (LEP) parent, and 33% live in linguistically isolated households. According to a study conducted by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) with immigrants (Mathew & Jang, 2007), researchers have found that: (1) many immigrant families and community organizations are unaware of early learning programs and the importance of high quality experiences; (2) there is a shortage of bilingual and bicultural providers; (3) there are fewer

quality early learning programs in immigrant communities; and that (4) many programs are not purposeful and responsive in working with immigrant families. In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006) indicates that 63% of childcare workers and 78% of preschool teachers are non-Hispanic White. LEP and other providers of color encounter barriers to licensing, training, and education. All of these factors result in significant challenges for young ELLs and their families in terms of finding access to high quality early care and preschool programs and, therefore, to early opportunities for learning, development, and enrichment.

“Culture is a shared system of meaning, which includes values, beliefs, and assumptions expressed in daily interactions of individuals within a group through a definite pattern of language, behavior, customs, attitudes, and practices.” (Maschinot, 2008)

The Educational Community and ELLs

English Language Learners (or ELLs)—including children under age three, preschoolers, students, and their families—live, work, attend school, participate in the community, and utilize goods and services across this country. For them, integration into American society is a complex process that, at the very least, requires the ability to speak, read, write, and understand English. In addition, they must learn how to navigate the nuances of socio-cultural, economic, and political landscapes within this country by communicating in a second or other language, in order to succeed and achieve. Their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, and their native languages, are juxtaposed against the backdrop of an American society steeped in European traditions with English as the dominant language. The pressure to **assimilate**, **acculturate**, and/or **accommodate** can be blatant. For instance, an ELL may be expected to speak English without accent in the classroom, workplace, or community or be perceived as less capable. Within classrooms, teachers may unconsciously implement curricular and instructional practices that are devoid of diverse, cross-cultural elements. Consequently, to assist ELLs in successfully negotiating American society, educators, employers, and service providers who work with them must be culturally knowledgeable, sensitive, and competent.

For early childhood professionals, **cultural competence** as caregivers and educators is a necessary prerequisite for working effectively with young ELLs and their families. As Obegi & Ritblatt (2005) have indicated, many early learning organizations and programs have realized the need for culturally competent services because of changing demographics, the lack of diverse caregivers, culturally different childrearing practices, and disparate treatment of cultural groups. However, these researchers also have admitted that “...the field offers no operationalized definitions or validated measures of the construct [of cultural competence] (p. 2).”

In its position statement on culturally and linguistically diverse children, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2005) has emphasized the importance of preparing early childhood educators who are knowledgeable about ELLs, understand the relationship between language and culture as vehicles for learning and

development, and forge partnerships with ELL families and their communities. NAEYC has stated that "...educators must accept the legitimacy of children's home language, respect (hold in high regard) the home culture, and promote and encourage the active involvement and support of all families, including extended and nontraditional family units" (NAEYC, 1995, p.2). Other professional organizations, such as Teachers of English and Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL, 2006) and the National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2006) have reiterated the importance of diversity and cultural competence. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 1986, 2006, 2008) has issued position statements, guidelines, and a research brief related to national language policies, ELLs, and their teachers. These beliefs include: "*respect[ing] all learners...as individuals with culturally defined identities*"; realizing that "*students bring funds of knowledge to their learning communities...*"; recognizing that "*socially responsive and responsible teaching and learning requires an anthropologically and ethnographically informed teaching stance*"; and acknowledging that "*teaching is a political act...[that requires] teachers and teacher educators...to be advocates for and models of social justice and equity*" (NCTE, 2006). The term *funds of knowledge* is defined as linguistic and cultural resources, or "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills," (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2001, p. 133). Several scholars (Clark, 1990; Cummins, 1989; Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & McDonald, 2005; Garcia, 1992; Gay, 2000; Hyun, 2006; Hyun & Marshall, 1997; Nieto, 1999; Novick, 1996; Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991; Roh, 1994) have also recommended that ELL teacher preparation emphasize knowledge and understanding of language and culture, culturally responsive pedagogy, assessment, and community engagement.

Culture and Language

Why is understanding culture and language so important? What is the relationship between culture and language? What is *cultural competence*? Knowing and understanding these concepts as they relate to ELLs is critical to the work of early childhood professional, their agencies, and organizations because culture and language are central to self-concept and self-identity for ELLs. Several researchers have underscored the necessity for educators to develop multiple/multiethnic perspective taking ability (Hyun, 1994; Hyun & Marshall, 1997) and adopt developmentally and culturally appropriate practices (DCAP) (Bowman, 1992; Hyun, 1994; Novick, 1996). Therefore, in order to define what it means to be culturally competent, it is *first* necessary to define the terms *culture* and *language*.

From a socio-cultural perspective, **culture** has both surface and deep meanings (Pransky, 2008). At a surface level it may include things like music, food, dance, crafts, religion, and language, while at a deep level it includes thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and actions, as well as religion and language (Pransky, 2008). Fetterman (1988) and Hollins (1996) have noted how some people define culture in terms of concrete and observable elements, such as artifacts, dress, food, rituals, and social norms, which tends to be what prevails in educational settings when "celebrating diversity." Others have focused on more "ideational aspects," which include knowledge and ideas (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001).

Cushner, McClelland, and Safford (2004) have developed a model for culture that includes twelve factors--among them race, ethnicity, education, sexual orientation, gender, language, and health—that define a person. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (2000), as well as Maschinot (2008), have incorporated other definitions of culture, while adding terms such as *dynamic*, *shared*, *worldview*, and *system*, to reflect the interactive and pervasive ways in which culture defines both individual and group identities while shaping perspectives and behaviors.

In describing the characteristics of culture, Gollnick and Chinn (2006) have added that, first, culture is *learned* through **enculturation**--the acquisition of a given culture's characteristics, language, behaviors, and ways of knowing-- and **socialization**--the process of internalizing the social and cultural norms of a culture. Second, culture is *shared*. There are identifiable customs and cultural patterns that define a particular group. Third, **adaptation** is a part of culture. An individual learns to **accommodate** to his/her own socio-cultural environment. S/he may **acculturate** by adopting the culture and norms of a more dominant group, **assimilate** by either adopting or changing a more dominant culture, or **transculturates** through give and take with the more dominant culture (Gutierrez, 2004). Taylor and Whittaker (2003) define acculturation and assimilation slightly differently: "Assimilation requires an individual to give up the culture and language of origin, whereas acculturation allows for the acquisition of a new culture and language while maintaining one's native culture and language" (p. 8). Finally, as other researchers have suggested, culture is a dynamic system and subject to continuous and ongoing change. Self-identity, in this case for young ELLs and their families, is inextricably linked to culture, which defines, shapes, and influences self-identity and worldview, as does language.

Language is more than a system of sounds, verbal and non-verbal expressions and gestures, and written symbols used to communicate with individuals and groups. As with culture, it shapes personal identity, awareness, and socio-emotional growth (Hay, 2003). While it reflects the worldviews and thinking of an individual or a group, it also provides opportunities "...to learn to see the world in new ways and voice new concepts..." (Daniels, 1998, p. 55). Language both connects and separates individuals and groups from the same or different cultures (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). As an example, many Hispanic/Latino groups speak Spanish, including those from Mexico, Puerto Rico, various South American countries, and Spain. However, while they all speak the same language, which links them, the linguistic differences (i.e., dialect, accent) among the speakers may also separate them. They may share a common language, but are culturally and linguistically different. ELLs, who speak many different languages and acquire English as a second language, encounter a similar experience with native English speakers.

Young bilingual (Garcia & Cuellar, 2006) or dual-language learners (Ballantyne, Sanderman, D'Emilio, & McLaughlin, 2008) ELLs, who are learning their first or native language while also acquiring English, may face significantly different cultural and linguistic challenges than their monolingual peers. Their self-identities are linked to at least two languages and cultures, and may be compounded by other socio-cultural factors, such as generational, socio-economic, and educational differences in the home environment

(Ballantyne, Sanderman, D’Emilio, & McLaughlin, 2008). Being cognizant of the linguistic issues that young ELLs may experience and of how to support their learning of English and academic adjustment is an important aspect of preparing early learning professionals.

In addition to being a vehicle for communication, *language is a socializing agent* (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). Learning the verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication helps to integrate an individual into a culture, by teaching him/her the acceptable linguistic and cultural patterns of that community. Young children generally learn the syntax of their native language, as well as the arrangement of words to convey meaning by age 5 (Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999). Over time, they learn rules and customs that govern communication within their cultural community, including those related to colloquialisms and slang (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). For ELLs, even young ELLs, these latter forms of language may be foreign, causing them to use words or phrases inappropriately or to misunderstand when those words or phrases are used with them. Early learning professionals need to be able to understand how language and culture influence learning and socialization, if they are to become culturally competent.

Cultural Competence

Numerous researchers from different disciplines have developed conceptual frameworks or models that can define *cultural competence*, *cross-cultural competence*, *multicultural competence*, or *culturally responsive practice* (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Sandler, 1996); Banks, 2006; Barrera & Kramer, 1997; Child Welfare League of America, 2002; Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Fong, 2001; Gay, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn, 2006; Hernandez & Isaacs, 1998; Lynch & Hanson, 2006; Lu, Lum, & Chen, 2001; Nieto, 1999; Storti, 1998; Sue et al, 1998); Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). These definitions have been applied to many disciplines, including counseling, health, social work, physical therapy, and education, among other areas.

As noted earlier, in the field of early learning there have been a lack of operational definitions, as well as validation, of the *construct* of cultural competence. Few empirical studies about early learning professionals and their cultural competence have been conducted (Obegi & Ritblatt, 2005). Davis (2007) has reiterated this lack of definition in stating that “the historical lack of clarity around the conceptual meaning of *cultural competence* leads one to question the constructs underlying the models [of cultural competence] and evaluative measures based on these models” (p. 359). Referencing the work of Spitzberg (1989), Davis noted that the conceptualization and assessment of cultural competence were frequently derived by the researchers rather than the cultural community. In her research study within the social work field, she actively engaged research participants. She used a *structured participatory conceptualization process* based on the work of Trochim (1989) to generate constructs for cultural competence through conceptual mapping. In other words, *to develop a conceptual framework and definition for cultural competence, the community/clientele served by providers was actively engaged through interviews and focus groups in the development of the construct*. Underpinning clusters (categories) that frame the construct derived from these

interviews included, but were not limited to, the ideas and values clients had about provider competencies, provider-family interactions, family-driven services, and empowerment.

While such a community-based process as that of Davis (2007) might be very productive for the early learning profession in the future, it is beyond the scope of the ELL Tool Kit to undertake such a project at this time. Instead, proposed definitions and conceptual frameworks for cultural competence within the early care and early learning field have been derived from the research cited below.

Many of the existing definitions of *cultural competence* emphasize the fact that it is a *continuous process*, influenced by various sociocultural factors, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, language, or culture. *Self-awareness* about one's own cultural and linguistic values, beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives, as well as *the ability to take the perspective of the other*, is a consistent theme. Knowledge and understanding about other cultures and worldviews, and the ability to be culturally sensitive and responsive, are also emphasized. This tri-dimensional model of awareness, knowledge, and skills has been used to define cultural competence in research with both individuals and organizations (Arredondo et al, 1996; Sue et al, 1998). In the definitions below, cultural competence is approached in one or more of the following ways: at the individual, organizational, and/or system level.

Barrera and Kramer (1997) have referred to cultural competence as "...the ability of service providers to respond optimally to all children, understanding both the richness and the limitations of the sociocultural contexts in which children and families as well as the service providers themselves, may be operating" (p. 217). In their definition, they considered a broad range of diverse contexts to which individuals respond based upon their own worldviews and experiences. Personal background, experience, and socio-cultural context(s) shape perspectives, interpretation, and responses.

Lynch and Hanson (2006) have described cross-cultural competence as "...the ability to think, feel, and act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and build upon ethnic, [socio]cultural, and linguistic diversity" (Lynch & Hanson, 1993, p. 50). In an earlier work, they described four related elements to working with diverse children and families cross-culturally: the provider's self-awareness about his/her own values and assumptions, the collection and analysis of community demographics, the transcultural functioning of families, and family orientation towards child-rearing practices (Hanson, Lynch, & Wayman, 1990). These elements are reiterated throughout other definitions of cultural competence.

Cross (1988, 1989) has defined cultural competence as "...a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or professional and enable that system, agency, or professional to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Cross et al, 1989, as cited by Ford & Whiting, 2008). In the model promoted by Cross (1988) and Ponterotto (1988), cultural competence is viewed as a continuum from *cultural destructiveness* to *cultural proficiency*. The table below outlines the elements of this model:

Table 1: Cross’ Cultural Competence Framework

Cultural destructiveness	Destructive attitudes, policies, and practices towards diverse cultures and individuals within an organization.
Cultural incapacity	Extremely biased organization and individuals in the dominant group. Oppressive policies and stereotyping. Decisions and actions fear-based. Disproportionality in resource allocation, discriminatory hiring practices, subtle unwelcoming messages, lower expectations for culturally diverse.
Cultural blindness	Ethnocentrism in policies, practices, and attitudes. Philosophy: “I don’t see color. We are all the same.” Cultural knowledge lacking.
Cultural pre-competence	Proactive organization and individuals. Acceptance and respect for differences, cultural assessment, ongoing professional development, organizational adaptations.
Advanced cultural competence	Culturally proficiency with integration of culture-based models and practices. Assertive and proactive agenda and programming.

Adapted from Cross et al, 1988, 1989, and Ponterotto, 1988.

Cross (1989) emphasized three critical elements in this model of cultural competence: 1) self awareness; 2) culture-specific knowledge; and 3) skills promoting effective socio-cultural interactions by an individual. His model has been widely cited and used as the conceptual framework for cultural competence.

The National Council for Cultural Competence (NCCC), which based its work on Cross (1988, 1989) has offered the following definition of cultural competence:

An organization should

- *Have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally;*
- *Have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve; and*
- *Incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, and service delivery, and systematically involve consumers, key stakeholders and communities (NCCC, 2009)*

Currently, there is no single definition or conceptual framework that encompasses what cultural competence means within the early learning profession. However, it is clear from the research and from position statements by professional organizations in the field of education, that there are identifiable characteristics that reflect a culturally competent individual, program, or organization. Some characteristics may be more qualitative in nature, while others may be more quantitative, observable, and measurable. ELLs would most likely be able to describe how it *feels* when they are with educators and providers, or in programs and organizations, that are culturally competent. As Davis (2007) found, when ELLs are with culturally competent educators, ELLs report that they feel being respected, valued, heard, included as equal partners, and empowered. They might describe culturally competent programs and organizations as promoting and advocating ELLs’ language, culture, and history. In essence, ELLs would be highlighting the high level of *self-awareness, knowledge, and skills of*

culturally responsive individuals and systems, which promote social justice, equity, and inclusion.

As Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003) have emphasized in their book entitled *Cultural Proficiency*, this is **not** about “quick solutions” or “step-by-step processes” to ensure cultural competence under any circumstances. It is **not** about “a collection of structured activities...boilerplate school policies and practices...[or] a magic formula, a silver bullet, or a panacea” (Lindsey et al, 2003, p. xxii). Cultural competence **is** about ***a process of growth, change, and transformation, which requires individuals and organizations to commit to diversity and inclusion*** (Lindsey et al, 2003).

Purpose and Goals of the ELL Tool Kit

The ELL Tool Kit has been developed to provide information about research, policies, and best practices in the field of early care and childhood education as these relate to young ELLs. The purpose is to offer guidelines and parameters for development and implementation of culturally responsive policies and practices within the early care and early learning system at all levels to promote cultural competence. Resources for professional reference purposes, specific curricular and instructional strategies, and assessment, as well as links to state and federal legislation and standards, have been included as addenda rather than in the main body of the document.

The ELL Tool Kit focuses on the following areas:

- Defining cultural competence and proficiency;
- Describing second language acquisition;
- Unpacking myths and realities about ELLs;
- Highlighting research and best practices for educating and supporting young ELLs and their families; and
- Outlining strategies to build and sustain culturally competent and proficient early learning professionals and organizations.

The ultimate goal is for all of those who serve this population to develop and sustain their knowledge, skills, and dispositions as culturally and linguistically competent and proficient early learning professionals.

As a result, it is hoped, as Matthews (2008) has noted, that:

- Providers will become more culturally responsive and competent in working with young ELLs, their families, and their communities;
- Programs and services will become more inclusionary and representative; and

- Agencies and organizations will build capacity as culturally competent systems.

Organization of the ELL Tool Kit

The ELL Tool Kit is divided into three parts. Part I provides historical background and a review of the literature about ELLs. In this section, Federal and state policies and legislation that have shaped educational initiatives and programming for ELLs are discussed. Major myths about ELLs are identified and unpacked as theories of second language acquisition are outlined. The cultural continuum (Lynch & Hanson, 2004) and other social, cultural, and linguistic factors that influence and impact the development and learning of young ELLs are described. Finally, the relationship of cultural and linguistic competence and proficiency is revisited.

Part II focuses on young ELLs and schooling. It is divided into two major sections: a) ELL families and communities and their perspectives about child development, learning, and education; and b) ELL programs and culturally responsive classrooms. In the latter section, field-based approaches, best practices, and strategies that have been informed by research with ELLs are described. In addition, culturally responsive instruction and assessment aligned with federal, state, and professional standards are highlighted.

Part III emphasizes continuous quality improvement and professional development for heightening cultural competence. It focuses on formative and summative assessment processes for professionals and organizations to incorporate as self-assessment and system-wide evaluation.

At the end of each Part, there are two sections entitled *Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice* and *Reflections*. These provide an opportunity to analyze, reflect, and summarize what has been presented in each section, as well as to suggest implications. Several questions are presented for the reader to consider in terms of his/her own perspectives and practice.

References, an Annotated Bibliography, Resources, and Glossary can be found at the back of the ELL Tool Kit, along with a CD of the PowerPoint Deck.

Terminology

Several terms are used to describe **English Language Learners** (ELLs), which is more commonly used. These terms include: **English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL)** learner; **English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)** learner; **Limited English Proficient (LEP)** learner, which suggests a “deficit” model for some researchers; and **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD)** learner. The term “**language minority**” is used by some to differentiate speakers whose native language is not the majority language of his/her adopted homeland. A **1.5 generation student** is a high school graduate entering college while still mastering English (NCTE, 2008).

For consistency, the term **English Language Learner** or **ELL** is used throughout this document unless another author or researcher is quoted who chooses to use a different term. An ELL may be an immigrant, refugee, member of an indigenous American tribe, or citizen from a U.S. territory.

In this document, the term “**immigrant**” refers to an individual who has chosen to leave his/her native country and has relocated legally to another country. The term “**refugee**” describes someone who has involuntarily been dislocated from his/her native country, due to political, religious, or other reasons, and has fled to another country for asylum. An “**undocumented alien**” is someone who has entered the United States but does not have documentation to support legal residency.

A **monolingual speaker** knows and uses only one language. A **bilingual speaker** is someone who speaks or is fluent in two languages, one being his/her native language. An alternate term used is **dual language learner (DLL)** (Ballantyne, Sanderman, D’Emilio, & McLaughlin, 2008; Garcia & Cuellar, 2006). A **multilingual speaker** speaks or is fluent in multiple languages. In both cases, “fluency” in oral language, written language, reading, and listening comprehension may vary. Both bilingual and multilingual individuals may demonstrate facility in expressive language, yet still have difficulty with receptive language, listening comprehension, reading, and/or writing in a native or second/other language.

L1 is the term used to describe an individual’s native or first language. **L2** is the term used to describe the second or other language an individual is learning and may eventually adopt as his/her primary language.

English as a Second Language (ESL) describes programming or instruction for ELLs.

PART I: Creating Culturally Responsive Environments for Young English Language Learners (ELLs)

**“In examining the practices of the past and the existence of linguisticism, it is also important to remember that in becoming Americans, all people have enriched the national language and culture.”
(Perez, 2004, p. 11)**

Demographic Trends: Who are ELLs?

The infants, toddlers, and PreK-3 children of *today*, including **English Language Learners (ELLs)** from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, *will be* the future leaders, workers, and citizens in the United States. Therefore, knowing what factors may contribute or impact their development and ultimate achievement and success is important to the work of early learning professionals, who nurture them and provide the formal educational foundation for these children. According to researchers at the Center for Social Demographic Analysis (CSDA) at the University of Albany-State University of New York (SUNY), children in newcomer immigrant and refugee families represent 20% of all children in the United States and “...are leading the racial-ethnic transformation of America” (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). By 2030, 72% of the elderly population will be non-Hispanic white, while 56% of the working adults and 50% of the children contributing to the economic, educational, and civic activities within American society will represent a much broader range of racial and ethnic identities (Hernandez et al, 2007). Thus, understanding the cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, political, and legal contexts for young ELLs and their families, and the implications for educational practice, is critical for early childhood educators in their efforts to become culturally competent.

Since 2000, U.S. Census Bureau data indicate that the foreign-born population has increased by 5.7 million or by 1.1 million per year (Camarota, 2005; U.S. Bureau of Census, 2001). Almost 18% of people over the age of 5 speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2001). There are more than 10 million school-aged children of immigrants (ages 5-17) in the United States, 1.3 million of who are foreign-born (Camarota, 2005). With more than 4.6 million children enrolled in school whose native language is not English, 79% are Spanish-speaking, with Vietnamese, Hmong, Cantonese (Chinese), and Korean following as the more common native languages (Kindler, 2002). ELLs also include children from indigenous U.S. groups (Native Americans) or from populations with the U.S. territories, such as Puerto Rico and Guam (Crawford & Krashen, 2007).

It is estimated that one out of every five children in Grades K-12 today is either a child who has newly arrived in the U.S. (“newcomers”) or is a child with at least one parent who has immigrated (Camarota, 2005). According to Hernandez et al (2007), the U.S. 2000 Census reveals the following:

Comment [1]:

- Almost 24% of children in immigrant families live with at least one parent who is U.S.-born;
- Approximately 68% of children in newcomer families have parents who have lived in the U.S. for over 10 years, including the 24% with U.S.-born parents;
- Almost 79% of children in newcomer families are American citizens because they were born in the U.S.;
- About 58% of children in newcomer families have a parent who speaks English exclusively or very well, while another parent may have limited proficiency;
- About 74% of children in newcomer families speak English exclusively or very well;
- Almost 50% of children in newcomer families speak languages other than English in the home, but also speak English well; and, finally,
- Approximately 25% of children in newcomer families live in linguistically isolated households and have Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

For young English Language Learners (ELLs), participation in quality early care and preschool is invaluable for cognitive, linguistic, academic, and socio-emotional development. However, according to the U.S. 2000 Census data (Hernandez et al, 2007; Cohen & Clewell, 2007; Matthews & Jang, 2006), newcomer families are less likely to enroll their children in preschool programs compared to native-born families: On average, at age 3, 32% of children from newcomer families vs. 39% of children from native-born families enroll in preschool; at age 4, 55% of children from newcomer families vs. 63% of children from native-born families enroll in preschool. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania exceeds this national trend: 41% of 3-year-old and 63% of 4-year-old children in immigrant families, vs. 35% of 3-year-old children and 61% of 4-year-old children from native born families (Hernandez et al, 2007). Researchers argue that cultural preferences as well as socioeconomic barriers may be contributing factors to lower enrollment of young children from newcomer families (Hernandez et al, 2007; Cohen & Clewell, 2007; Matthews & Jang, 2006). Recent reports also indicate that immigrant families with children are more likely than native-born families to face significant economic hardships, which include issues such as crowded housing, food-related problems, rent greater than income, and poor health (Dinan, 2006).

Pennsylvania is one of the top immigrant-receiving states, with more than 10% of its population comprising immigrants. Pennsylvania's increasing immigrant population is primarily from Europe (22%), East Asia (15%), West Asia (13%), the Caribbean (13%), and Indochina (10%). Those arriving from Central America and Mexico represent less than 10% of Pennsylvania's newcomer population, while those from the Soviet Union continue to be notable in comparison to other comparable states (Hernandez et al, 2007). The U.S. 2000 Census data reveal that, of approximately 3 million Pennsylvania children aged between 0 and 17, almost 7% of them belong to immigrant families; more than 75% of these children are second generation, with almost 35% living with one native-born parent and 32% living with at least one parent who has been in the U.S. for less than 10 years (Hernandez et al, 2007). Approximately 84% of children in immigrant families speak English exclusively or well, 52% speak a language other than English at home, and almost 73% have at least one parent who

speaks English fluently. About 40% have at least one parent who is LEP, 27% have two parents or a single parent who is LEP, while 18% live in linguistic isolation. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania faces many challenges associated with the dynamic and diverse language abilities of young ELLs, as its educators and families strive to serve their ELL children effectively within various educational environments.

Federal and State Legislation and Policies

Statewide educational policies related to identification, enrollment, programming, instruction, assessment, exit criteria, and family involvement have been shaped by historical and current federal and state legislation. These policies and guidelines provide protections for ELLs and other special populations as they navigate through the American educational system.

Several significant legal decisions have been made with respect to ELLs for the last six decades, and they continue to be relevant to the education of ELLs today (Gollnick & Chin, 2006; Perez, 2004; Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). It is important that early learning professionals be familiar with these decisions, which have had profound impact on issues of access and equity, instruction, assessment, classification, and programming for ELLs.

This history begins with the 1954 landmark Supreme Court case of ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka***, which gave equal access to education on equal terms to all children and ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional. In 1968, **Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965** provided authorization and financing of bilingual education programs.

School districts were ordered to take affirmative action measures to break down educational barriers faced by non-native English speakers. In the 1974 case of ***Lau v. Nichols***, a suit by Chinese parents in San Francisco resulted in a ruling that *identical education* was not *equal education* under **Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act**. Later in 1974, the **Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA)** reiterated that the failure of educational agencies to implement appropriate measures to overcome language barriers for students in instructional programs was also unlawful. The "**Lau remedies**" were established in 1975 to provide specific guidelines on how to obtain language rights in educational settings. Both Title VI and Title VII have provided guidance in addressing the educational and language rights of students whose first language is not English.

In 1974, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in ***Serna V. Portales*** determined that Spanish-surnamed students were achieving well below their White counterparts, and ordered implementation of a bilingual/bicultural curriculum, revised assessment procedures, and the hiring of bilingual school personnel. The Pasthogue-Medford School District's transitional bilingual program was cited in 1978, in the case of ***Rios v. Reed***, for not providing academic instruction in Spanish, when the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program was essentially an English class, and denying equal educational opportunity. In a landmark case in 1981, ***Casteneda v. Pickard***, the Raymondville, Texas Independent School District, was cited

for a violation of the **EEOA of 1974** because its remedial language instruction program failed to meet the standards of compliance, based upon three criteria: theory, educational practice, and results. In the 1982 Supreme Court case, *Plyer v. Doe*, denial of a free public education to undocumented immigrant children was ruled unconstitutional under the **Fourteenth Amendment**. In 1983, in *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, the U.S. District Court ruled that a Denver public school district had failed to implement a plan for ELLs and ordered that this be done. Another Federal Court case that resulted in a legal decision favoring the rights of second language learners occurred in 1984. In *Cintron v. Brentwood*, the Federal District Court for Eastern District of New York rejected Brentwood School District's proposed bilingual program, which it felt would segregate students for certain classes. It also cited the program for failure to appropriately exit ELLs who had achieved a satisfactory level of English proficiency.

The recent passing of **Proposition 227** in 1998, which mandated English as the language of instruction in schools, put an end to bilingual education in California while allowing for limited *structured English immersion (SEI)*, or English-only, programming to continue. **Proposition 203** in Arizona (2000) and the **Colorado English for the Children Initiative** in Colorado (2001) also eliminated bilingual education. Proponents of bilingual or dual language education have continued to raise concerns. This legislation has had an impact on the types of existing instructional models in the state (Mora, 2002).

The most current legislation that has had a critical influence on the educational outcomes for ELLs has been the 2001 **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**. Specific policies and guidelines have been put in place to address several issues, including the preparation and professional development of highly qualified teachers for ELLs, culturally responsive instructional programming, linguistically appropriate assessment of measurable progress and accountability, and parent involvement. **Title III** and **Title V** under NCLB provide funding and guidelines for programming for ELLs and for ELL parent involvement. States are now required to ensure that all ELLs are tested yearly to measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and need to meet specific goals as part of their **Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)** (Samway & McKeon, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

In reviewing the history of legal decisions and legislation related to ELLs in the U.S., the rulings reflect much more than the preservation of civil and educational rights. They have been purposeful efforts to be respectful and inclusive of learners who represent very diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities. A debate concerning English-only vs. bilingual or dual language instruction continues, which has had statewide impact in places like California. For early learning professionals, these legal and legislative efforts serve as a reminder about the power of advocacy in order to ensure (or deny) access, equity, and quality in education for *all*. However, as the following discussion shows, what may frequently interfere in providing effective programming and services, are assumptions and misperceptions based upon myths about ELLs.

Myths and Realities

As Samway and McKeon (2007) have noted, “a body of myths” or “urban legends” have been associated with ELLs and their education. They have identified fifty-eight myths about ELLs that fall into ten categories: demographics, enrollment, native language instruction, second language acquisition, literacy, placement, assessment, programming, staffing and staff development, and parent and community involvement. Espinosa (2008) has focused on six “commonly held beliefs” about young ELLs or “dual-language learners.” Other researchers have discussed myths related to language acquisition (McLaughlin, 1992), second language learning (Snow, 1992), and bilingual education (Crawford, 1998). NCTE (2008) has also highlighted several myths about ELLs in a research brief. While it is beyond the scope of this project to attempt to identify and debunk every possible myth or misperception about ELLs, it is possible to try to summarize and dispel some of the most common misconceptions noted in the literature that are associated with the ELL population (Crawford, 1998; Espinosa, 2008; McLaughlin, 1992; NCTE, 2008; Samway & McKeon, 2007; Snow, 1992).

Myth #1: The number of ELL students is decreasing and most of them are foreign-born and recent arrivals.

Reality: As evidenced by data from the U.S. 2000 Census and other sources (cited in Samway & McKeon, 2007), the number of ELLs is rapidly increasing in the United States. Also, more than 50% of ELLs have been born in this country, 24% of PreK-5 children are foreign-born, and the vast majority of ELLs are from Spanish-speaking backgrounds (Center for Public Policy, 2007; Matthews & Ewen, 2006). ELL children may be immigrants, refugees, undocumented immigrants, members of indigenous Native American tribes, or citizens of U.S. territories (i.e., American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico).

Myth #2: Students who are not legal residents cannot be enrolled in school.

Reality: Equal access to public education has been mandated by law for undocumented immigrant children since a Supreme Court decision in 1982 (*Plyer v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202) under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The U.S. Department of Education-Office of Civil Rights (2000), as well as every state, has provided specific guidelines regarding the access to education for ELLs, *including* undocumented immigrants, and other underrepresented groups. These students are also required to attend primary and secondary schools until they reach a mandated age.

Myth #3: ELLs should not use their native languages in the home, social settings, or the classroom because this will impact their ability to learn English effectively.

Reality: Research on bilingualism suggests that use of the native or primary language (L1) can mediate content-area instruction in English (L2), when L1 is used for cognitive and academic skill development (Cummins & Swain, 1996; Hakuta, 1986; Handscombe, 1994; Ovando & Collier, 1985). Note that the use of dual or bilingual approaches assumes that the learner has acquired proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in L1. If the learner does not have L1

proficiency in reading and writing, then achieving L2 (second language) proficiency will be much more challenging (Cummins, 2000).

Myth #4: Once ELLs are able to speak fluently, they have successfully acquired English.

Reality: In a study of 400 student referrals, Cummins (1984) successfully demonstrated that fluency in conversational language (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills or BICS) does not predict successful use of academic language (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency or CALP) for academic tasks. Being able to speak fluently in the social setting does not necessarily reflect mastery of language or its associated higher order thinking skills. In a review of the research, Samway and McKeon (2007) have noted that “the ability to learn content area material becomes increasingly dependent on interaction with and mastery of the language connected to such material” (p. 31). In other words, while knowing vocabulary and facts is important, it is the ability to take that basic, concrete information and use that information in order to understand more abstract concepts, synthesize information, and communicate it effectively, both in oral and written forms. This implies that early learning professionals may have culturally and linguistically diverse learners in their classrooms, who may speak English fluently yet can be identified as ELLs because of their lack of academic language proficiency.

Myth #5: Reading and writing instruction should be delayed until ELLs are proficient in English.

Reality: Exposure to meaningful literacy practices in reading and writing can facilitate the development of English language skills. Several studies have shown that ELLs can read and write before achieving oral fluency (Hans & Ernst-Slavin, 1999; Samway, 1993; Taylor, 1990), and that reading and writing can support aural and oral language development (Samway & Taylor, 1993). At the same time, reading and writing abilities can be supported through authentic oral language experiences (Samway & Whang, 1996; Uzria, 1987).

Myth #6: ELLs should be placed in Special Education programs for language services.

Reality: Being a non-native speaker of English does not constitute a handicapping condition. Delays in second language acquisition *are not* the same as delays in language development due to cognitive, motoric, or physical deficits. It is generally inappropriate to place an ELL in Special Education unless fair and culturally-appropriate assessment has been conducted in the native language, per Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act), now amended as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Research shows that there has been disproportionate over-representation as well as under-representation of ELLs in special and gifted education programs (Donovan & Cross, 2002). IDEA has provided specific requirements for gathering and analyzing statewide data about the representation of ELLs in Special Education. In addition, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, and the National

Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) have guidelines available for educators about special education placement and assessment (Samway & McKeon, 2007).

Myth #7: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) does not require ELLs to be tested for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) because they do not speak English proficiently.

Reality: Schools, districts, and states are required by NCLB (2001) to include ELLs in state testing and AYP reporting. They must be tested for listening, speaking, reading,

and writing. They are required to take language arts and math achievement tests, although they can be excused for language arts if they have been in the country for less than a year; tests can be conducted in their native languages, if available. Specific statewide assessments are used to measure the academic progress of ELLs and to meet federal Annual Measures of Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). Guidelines are provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

Myth #8: There is agreement among researchers regarding effective programming for ELLs.

Reality: There is no one specific program or approach that works with all ELLs, as reflected in the range of ESL and bilingual programming identified by the National Center for English Language Acquisition (NCELA). Researchers have proposed a variety of strategies, practices, and programs to address the complex needs of ELLs in educational environments (Cummins, 1986; Gollnick & Chinn, 2006; Haynes, 2007; Kim, Roehler, & Pearson, 2009; Lachat, 2004; Nieto, 2000; Nilles & Rios, 2009; Pranksy, 2008; Robles de Melendez & Beck, 2007; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Swain, 1986). There are several indicators of *effective* ELL programming: high expectations, integrated language and content-area instruction; concept development in L1; extensive professional development; supportive school environment; and school leadership (Samway & McKeon, 2007). NCELA (n.d.) has developed a chart, which reflects a continuum of ELL programming and describes each type of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) or bilingual program model that might be used. Some models incorporate strategies that emphasize a pull-out approach, while other models integrate ELLs within the mainstream classroom setting (<http://ncela.gwu.edu>) [Note: These models are described in more detail later in this document.]

Myth #9: Teachers of ELLs need to speak a second language.

Reality: Speaking another language may be helpful, but not necessary because the language of instruction is English. Nationally, many (if not most) teachers of ELLs are not bilingual. Fluency and proficiency in another language, whether it is the teacher or a classroom aide, is an asset. There are early caregivers and educators who are bilingual, but as the research has shown, the majority of early learning professionals tend to be White and monolingual (Matthews & Jang, 2006). In any case, it is important that *all* educational professionals have ESL preparation and

knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogical practices, considering dramatically increasing numbers of ELLs.

Myth #10: Immigrant and refugee parents and families do not respond to invitations to participate because they just do not care.

Reality: ELL parents and families may be reluctant to participate because they themselves lack effective English skills, do not understand the culture of American schools, or may simply have additional job or family responsibilities that preclude involvement (Samway & McKeon, 2007). Alternative approaches, which are more culturally sensitive to the needs of these families, such as using a cultural liaison or sending information home in the native language (Trumbell, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001), may produce better participation.

Myth #11: Younger ELLs absorb a second language (L2) more quickly and more easily than older ELLs.

Reality: While younger ELLs may appear to learn a second language (L2) more easily, much of their learning activities involve concrete representations of language or multi-sensory cues in, what Cummins (1981a, 1981b) has called, “context-embedded” settings. Cummins (1986, 2000) refers to the initial communication skills of beginning ELLs as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). BICS provide the basic language structure for communication and reflect the type of social language heard on the playground, at lunch, and in other social situations. This level of communication involves simple words, phrases, and sentences, and *may appear to suggest* that young ELLs have achieved language proficiency, when that is not the case. Citing several European and Canadian studies, Snow (1992) has reported that older children demonstrated better L2 acquisition and proficiency in school immersion programs than younger children, except in the area of pronunciation, where younger children sounded more like native speakers. Effective L2 acquisition and proficiency reflect what Cummins has labeled as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), or the English used for instruction, textbooks, academic writing, higher order thinking, and more abstract and complex forms of linguistic communication (Cummins, 1986, 2000).

Myth #12: Second language (L2) acquisition is the same for all children.

Reality: Snow (1992) has suggested several factors that influence L2 acquisition and learning, including social class, peer or sibling influence, culture, home and school environments, and instructional practices. Cummins (1986, 2000) has theorized that there are two forms of proficiency: BICS--social language and CALP--cognitive academic language. In addition, other researchers have proposed five stages of second language acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1981) through which ELLs proceed, some earlier stages which last a few months to other later stages which may last several years. At the very least, researchers in the field of second language acquisition estimate that it takes at least five to seven years, at a minimum, to attain English language proficiency.

These examples of myths about second language learners, if not addressed, may negatively impact the ways in which early learning professionals interact with young ELLs and their families. Misconceptions may result in instructional and programming practices that may not be culturally responsiveness or reflect the valuable contributions that these children and their families can offer. Misconceptions may discourage early learning professionals from implementing culturally responsive practices or from incorporating the invaluable cultural resources that these children and families bring into the educational setting.

Lack of knowledge and understanding about the nature of L1 and L2 development and social, cultural, and legal issues related to ELLs or dual-language learners contributes to the perpetuation of myths and inadequate educational practices. By integrating ELL families' values and beliefs about learning and child development into the educational setting, as well as demonstrating respect for their cultures and languages, higher quality educational experiences can be provided.

“Language acquisition means learning new language through using it and/or hearing it in meaningful experiences, and having it available for use in future communicative contexts.”
(Pransky, 2008, p. 35)

Language Learning and Second Language Acquisition

In acquiring proficiency in any language, a learner is exposed to various aspects of **linguistics**, or the **nature and structure of language**. This includes: **phonetics** and **phonology** (the sounds and sound system), **morphology** (the structure of words), **lexicon** (the words or vocabulary), **syntax** (structure of sentences and the parameters of correct grammar and usage), **semantics** (word meanings), **dialects** and **accents** (regional or social language variations, such as the Southern drawl or African American Vernacular English), **sociolinguistics** (the relationship of culture, class, gender, race, etc. to language), **pragmatics** (the relationship of signs and symbols of language to social interaction), and **discourse analysis** (texts and conversations) (Bergman, Hall, & Ross, 2007). Whether it is a first or second/other language, language learning is a very complex and multi-layered undertaking. Language proficiency requires the learner to demonstrate strong and effective oral/verbal fluency, listening comprehension, reading ability, and writing ability, as well as the ability to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings in both simple and conceptually sophisticated ways. For young ELLs, language learning and acquisition in a second language (L2) assumes that they are already proficient in their first language (L1), which is not necessarily the case.

Research has shown that first language (L1) acquisition for children between ages 5 to 10 is still in process, and for children under age 5, there are many aspects of language that are still in development (Chomsky, 1969, as cited by Coltrane, 2003). According to several researchers, young ELLs need to continue to develop L1 along with their L2 language, English, because a solid foundation in L1 strengthens the acquisition of L2 (Ballantyne et al, 2008; Coltrane, 2003; De Houwer, 1999; Espinosa, 2008; Garcia & Jensen, 2009; Gomez, Freeman, &

Freeman, 2005; REL, 1995). Therefore, early learning professionals need to know and understand many aspects of language development (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

According to Clair (2000), “teachers are the agents of socialization. They play a central role in socializing children to the norms, beliefs, and communication patterns of school—and for immigrant children and native-born children from nonmajority backgrounds, to the patterns of mainstream U.S. culture” (p. 2). Researchers have found that by understanding the language socialization of young ELLs, they develop insights about the cultural contexts in which language is used by diverse communities (Park, 2003; Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986). Some research has also suggested that teachers believe that young ELLs may be deficient or may have learning difficulties because their school behavior reflects their own cultural values and norms (i.e., being quiet with eyes downcast because that is expected in certain cultures, not raising a hand to volunteer answers or ask questions in class) (Fillmore & Snow, 2002; Ochs, 1997; Ochs & Schiefflin, 1984). Therefore, understanding language development and acquisition for young ELLs also means recognizing that they may have different ways of communicating and interacting that are culturally-driven (Park, 2003).

Being cognizant about theories of second language acquisition and best practices in the field is critical for early learning professionals working with young ELLs. The work of several theorists has contributed to the field of second language acquisition and learning. However, two particular researchers, Stephen Krashen and Jim Cummins, have significantly influenced how educators understand second language acquisition and how they integrate these theories in practice.

Krashen (1981) has proposed several hypotheses that help to understand and unravel second language acquisition theories and process. First, he has suggested a distinction between **acquisition and learning**. Language acquisition is viewed as a *subconscious process*, absorbing the underlying rules of language through meaningful and contextual experiences with it. An example might be learning the concept of “red” by seeing objects of that color. Language learning is *conscious* and *deliberate*, involving knowing, understanding, and using the rules of a language correctly. Understanding the rules concerning noun-verb agreement or the appropriate use of pronouns through explicit explanations would be an example of learning. Second, Krashen believes that there is a “**natural order**” to language acquisition specifically related to grammatical structures, no matter what language is being learned. Third, he suggests that every language learner uses an internal **monitor** that serves to edit oral and written communication. For someone who is extremely self-conscious about his/her oral language, this may result in being overly concerned about correctness to the point of negatively impacting fluency when speaking. Young children, including ELLs, however, may not be as sensitive about correctness as they learn, develop, and practice language. Fourth, Krashen has hypothesized that **comprehensible input** is important in helping a second language learner. That is, when communicating, responses to an ELL should be clear and contextual, *as well as allow the learner to use linguistic rules from his/her first language and L2 repertoire that s/he already built*, to further language learning and understanding. Comprehensible input also provides the ELL with the opportunity to “absorb” the new

language while also being challenged by language “a little beyond” his/her current level of linguistic competence (Krashen, 1981, p. 103). Finally, Krashen has suggested that a second language learner uses an **affective filter** that may impact language acquisition and learning. Confidence, anxiety, and motivation may influence how well or how poorly an ELL may learn English. As an example, a young ELL who is ridiculed because of an accent, or is constantly corrected because of inconsistent grammar or usage, may be less motivated and less likely to take risks to improve his/her English language skills. The hypotheses that Krashen has developed provide a framework for understanding second language acquisition and learning, as well as for considering implications for practice.

Cummins (1986, 2000) has constructed another theory that distinguishes between two types of language: **Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)**. BICS is the language used in social situations, such as on a playground, in the lunchroom, or in another community activity. CALP is the language used in the classroom setting, in academic texts, or in higher order thinking activities. His theory is based upon work conducted by several different researchers who have found that, due to a number of socio-cultural and educational factors, a second language learner may become orally fluent in English within two to five years, but may take approximately seven years or more to achieve the linguistic proficiency necessary for technical and academic demands (Cummins, 1981, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 1997). This is why a young or older ELL may *appear* to be linguistically competent because s/he uses common English euphemisms or slang and may be highly verbal and social. However, this same child may have difficulty within the classroom setting when asked to read or to write, where strong vocabulary, grammar, and usage skills are required.

Cummins has developed two additional concepts that help understand second language acquisition and learning. He has noted that communication is either **context-embedded or context-reduced**. Understanding and communication in English may be strengthened or weakened for an ELL depending upon how extensive the visual, auditory, aural, or written clues are to help provide context and meaning. In addition, **cognitively undemanding communication (BICS)** is very simple and concrete. As examples, young ELLs in a play group may ask each other to pass a crayon box or toy, or they may ask to share a toy. On the other hand, **cognitively demanding communication (CALP)** requires the learner to use more abstract and conceptual thinking. For example, content-area subjects such as science, social studies, or economics, require the learner to know facts and be able to analyze and synthesize ideas. Table 2 below provides some examples of these concepts.

Table 2: Examples of Communication Context and Cognitive Demand

	Context Embedded	Context Reduced
Cognitively Undemanding	Sharing the swing on a playground	Having a conversation on the playground

Cognitively Demanding	Reading a story book with pictures with auditory/taped cues.	Completing a science or social studies lesson and writing an essay
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Second language acquisition and language learning progress through a sequence of stages for all ELLs (Cummins, 1981, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 1997). These stages are developmental and predictable for second language learners as they advance from little to no linguistic competency in English until they reach proficiency comparable to a native speaker. Table 3 below outlines the key stages. The time period for each stage is approximate and is in addition to the timeframe for a preceding state. It *does not* reflect the age of the ELL. These stages provide a framework to understand L2 acquisition and learning progress.

Table 3: Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Stage	Period	Characteristics	Examples
I Silent/Receptive or Pre-Production	10 hours to 6 months	Receptive vocabulary about 500 words	Responds to simple commands. May point or answer simple yes/no questions
II Early Production	6 months	Receptive and expressive vocabulary of approximately 1000 words.	Says 1-2 word utterances. Shows understanding by giving short answers to yes/no, either/or, who/what/where questions.
III Speech Emergence	About 1 year	Receptive and expressive vocabulary of approximately 3000 words	Uses short phrases and simple sentences. May continue with grammatical errors.
IV Intermediate Language Proficiency	About 1 year	Receptive and expressive vocabulary of approximately 6000 words	Uses more complex statements, expresses thoughts and opinions.
V Advanced Language Proficiency	5-7 years or more after Stage 1	Specialized vocabulary related to content areas	Uses English grammar and vocabulary comparable to a native speaker. Able to actively participate in grade level classroom activities.

Cultural Identity and the Cross-Cultural Continua

Many factors influence ELLs' achievement of English language proficiency throughout the stages of L2 acquisition. These factors may include native language proficiency and educational preparation, as well as a range of historical, economic, social, and cultural experiences. Culture and language are two factors that influence and impact **cultural self-identity**--the group with which an individual identifies based upon race/ethnicity, culture, language, gender, religion, etc.--as ELLs become immersed in American society. Early learning professionals should be aware of and sensitive to these issues, which may have a direct bearing on how young ELLs and their families interface with early care and early learning programs.

ELLs, including children of legal or undocumented immigrants, as well as refugees, may go through several stages on a continuum as they are settling in a new country (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). These stages involve a struggle with or integration of language, culture, values, beliefs, and traditions representing the native homeland and the adopted country.

Tensions and conflicts may be internalized for an individual, or may be externalized between generations, between native vs. foreign-born members of a family or community, or between home and school or workplace environments. Individuals or groups may eventually resolve these socio-cultural and linguistic issues by adopting the dominant culture, or find themselves marginalized and excluded (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003).

The development or revision of cultural self-identity for ELLs, even young ELLs, is directly related to the degree to which they integrate their values, beliefs, and traditions, including culture and language, with the dominant or majority group. In this case, the predominant cultural group in the U.S. is white and middle class. Althem (1988) has identified what appear to be mainstream American values and beliefs to which ELLs may or may not choose to subscribe to: individualism and privacy; equality; informality; future change and progress; the goodness of humanity; time; achievement, action, work, and materialism; and directness and assertiveness (Althem, 1988, as cited in Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 16). ELL families or individuals, including young children, may find some of these values and beliefs to be congruent with those of their own cultures, or to be in conflict with their cultural self-identities.

ELLs may choose several pathways in redefining cultural self-identity: 1) *assimilate*, rejecting their native cultural framework and accepting mainstream culture; 2) *accommodate and acculturate*, becoming bi-cultural and making choices about which aspects of their native cultural framework and the American cultural framework they will integrate; 3) *transculturalize*, blending and mixing cultures (Gutierrez, 2004) ; 4) *alienate*, rejecting the dominant culture entirely; or 5) *marginalize*, rejecting one’s own culture without connecting to any other cultures and losing a sense of belonging (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). Table 5 provides examples of each aspect of the continuum as described by Gutierrez (2004), Lynch & Hanson (2004), and Taylor & Whittaker (2003).

Table 4: Continuum of Cultural Self-Identity

	Action	Example
Assimilation	Rejecting of native culture	Speaks English only and adopts dominant aspects of U.S. culture.
Acculturation or Accommodation	Choosing aspects of both dominant and native cultures	Speaks English and L1. Incorporates values, beliefs, traditions, etc. of both cultures. May speak English in public, but the L1 at home or when with members of own cultural group.
Transculturalization	Blending of cultures	Integrates both cultures in a seamless manner.
Alienation	Rejecting of dominant culture	Only speaks L1, maintains culture separation and holds on to native cultural framework. May not speak any English even after having lived in the U.S. for many years.
Marginalization	Rejecting of native culture with no connection to other cultures	Neither acknowledges nor engages in native culture or language, or with any other cultural groups.

The **cultural continua** identified by Lynch and Hanson (2004, pp. 49-5), while not new to the behavioral and social sciences, provide a way of considering the range (continuum) for

each of the systems of values and beliefs that characterize various cultural groups (i.e., how they define *family*, *time*, etc.):

1. **Family constellation:** A “family” may consist of a small unit (single parent and child) to an extended kinship network of siblings, multiple generations, and/or friends and neighbors. The decision-making process and caretaking arrangements may vary (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 50).
2. **Interdependence/Individuality:** While U.S. culture applauds individualism, many other cultures emphasize interdependence and cooperation. Individuality may be viewed as selfish (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 51). In their research, Trumbull et al (2001) have found that culturally and linguistically diverse children encounter two different value-based orientations—the collectivist or interdependent emphasis of home and the individualistic emphasis of school culture—that influence the levels of independence, achievement, self-expression, and choice manifested by these children and may cause conflict.
3. **Nurturance/Independence:** Many cultures define nurturance in such a way that young children are fed, dressed, and kept by their parents and families much longer, sometimes even until age 6 or 7. They may be watched or cared for at home or by relatives rather than placed in an early learning environment (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 51-52), as also noted by researchers studying early childhood education participation by immigrant families (CLASP, 2008; Matthews & Ewen, 2006; Matthews & Jang, 2007) This particular value may explain, in part, some of the statistics related to ELL participation in early care and early learning programs.
4. **Time:** In other cultures, time is viewed and handled differently. It is *given* rather than *measured* (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 52). Tending to a family member or neighbor in need may take precedence over keeping an appointment with a service provider, or it may determine when someone shows up at a party or funeral (i.e., several hours after the stated starting time).
5. **Tradition/Technology:** Cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, including folk wisdom, may hold more weight for ELL families and children than more modern technology (i.e., computers) and improvements (i.e., medical interventions) (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 53). A cultural belief may dictate that someone who is ill seek attention from a healer who uses herbs and prayers, rather than seek formal medical attention. An oral tradition of passing on family history or learning information may preclude having a formal written system of recording information or having written documents.
6. **Ownership:** Property is viewed by many other cultures as belonging to the family or community. It may be borrowed or shared. Therefore, if school materials are sent

home and not returned, it may be that they have been shared with others rather than lost or stolen (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 54).

7. **Rights and Responsibilities:** Within other cultures, gender and generational roles and responsibilities may be viewed quite differently than in the U.S., where equality is emphasized (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 54).
8. **Harmony/Control:** Harmony and peace, for a number of ELL families and communities, are central goals within their cultures. What might be viewed by an early learning professional as lack of cooperation or judgment may be the way in which an ELL family or child maintains harmony and avoids conflict (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 55).

The framework for a “**cultural continua**” (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 49) avoids culture-specific information that may not be accurate or relevant for a given cultural group. The continua do provide ways of considering factors that may influence or impact the cognitive, academic, linguistic, physical, and socio-emotional development of young ELLs. This can help early learning professionals reflect upon what other perspectives or assumptions may exist when misunderstandings or miscommunication occur with ELL families and their children. Miscommunications may take place in an early care setting, center, or home, or during a home visit, interview, or meeting. The continua may also assist in identifying who, besides the early learning professional, may need to be involved in working with a particular young ELL and his/her family.

Culturally competent professionals are knowledgeable and sensitive to the range of values, beliefs, and traditions that may be reflected in the behaviors of a given ELL family or child. By considering the worldviews presented by another cultural group and being aware of their own perspectives (or biases), early care and early learning professionals can become more effective in addressing the cultural, linguistic, and educational needs of young ELLs.

Sociocultural Influences for Young ELLs and Their Families

Among a number of sociocultural factors that influence interactions between service providers and ELL families and their children, **socioeconomic status (SES)**, **education level of ELLs’ parents**, and **personal efficacy** appear to be the most powerful factors (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). These factors may explain the responses of some ELL families and their children to early care and early learning opportunities and interventions.

ELL families may experience levels of poverty, which limit their ability to benefit from educational, medical, and other community resources. ELL families living under the poverty level or working for less than a living wage may have limited access to the types of services offered by early education programs because they do not know about these services or are too busy keeping their families financially stable to access these programs (Matthews & McEwen, 2006). Matthews and Jang (2006) have found that levels of participation in regular non-

parental care, early care and early learning programs by immigrant families to be much less than that of non-immigrant families. However, research that investigates reasons for immigrant families' lack of participation in early childhood education is inconclusive. In other words, whether this is due to a lack of knowledge, a lack of financial resources, or cultural values and beliefs about children and their development is unclear. Headstart data from 2006, however, has shown that approximately one-third of their participating preschoolers are from families where English was not the first language in the home (Ballantyne, Sanderman, D'Emilio, & McLaughlin, 2008). So, at least in some cases, SES may be factor in early learning participation.

The educational backgrounds and experiences, first language proficiency, and literacy of ELL adults, and/or their cultural values and beliefs about child development and learning may greatly influence their responses to the efforts of early learning professionals and programs. Ballantyne et al (2008), in their review of early learning data from federal, state, and professional organizations, have noted that (a) the parents of dual language learners are less likely to be high school graduates and that (b) young dual language learners living in poverty are less likely to attend preschools. Matthews (2008) has also found that approximately 25% of ELLs under age 3 live in an immigrant family with 62% having origins in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that one in seven U.S. babies and toddlers lives in a home where a language other than English is spoken. As noted earlier, data have shown that they are less likely to participate in early learning programs, or to be in programs that are particularly designed for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. As a result, young ELLs in these families will have less exposure to English and potentially to the pre-academic, linguistic, and social preparation and stimulation that other infants, toddlers, and preschoolers may have.

Finally, personal efficacy may be a strong factor in how ELLs respond to service providers such as early learning professionals. If ELL families feel disempowered or not in control of their own lives and circumstances, they may be less motivated to access services, such as early learning programs. This may be the case when the programming is foreign to them or these families can hardly identify themselves with service providers because of cultural or linguistic barriers. If ELL families are asked to approve services or engage in programming for their young children that they do not understand, they may quietly resist or not respond. For young ELLs, this lack of self-efficacy may be manifested in an early learning setting through passivity or limited responsiveness, particularly if the instructional materials, activities, and the providers themselves fail to reflect ELLs' rich cultural and linguistic experiences.

Cultural competence on the part of early learning professionals, as well as the integration of culturally responsive practices both within and outside of the early education environment, is critical in ELLs' linguistic, academic, social, and emotional development. Cultural competency will advance cross-cultural communication and build the relationships among early learning educators, support personnel, ELL families, and their communities necessary to strengthen the educational experiences and outcomes of young ELLs.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

- Additional research is needed to determine how specific socio-cultural factors impact the participation of ELL families and their children in early care and early learning programs. Research questions might include: 1) How does SES influence ELL families' decision-making related to early childhood education? 2) What impact do ELL early learning professionals in care and center programs have on the ELL families' participation in programs, as well as the linguistic proficiency and academic progress of young ELLs?
- Given the research that demonstrates the effectiveness of dual language programs for young ELLs, national policy recommendations, along with the necessary research, funding, and evaluation measures should be incorporated into the state and local levels.
- Culturally responsive practices in curriculum, instruction, assessment, program and organizational outreach to ELL families and their communities, and professional development training should be undertaken in order to develop culturally competent professionals, programs, and systems. Multilingual resources and service providers should be readily available for ELL families to access.

Reflections

- What knowledge, skills, and dispositions are critical for cultural competency? Which do you possess? Which do you lack?
- What specific misperceptions or assumptions have you consciously or unconsciously had that may have framed your interactions or communication with culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and groups?
- In terms of the **cultural continua**, describe your own worldview (values, beliefs). What unspoken or hidden perspectives do you have about each of the elements of these continua?

PART II: Bridging Cultures and Communities: Culturally Responsive Practices Within and Outside of the Early Learning Environment

“...cultural norms, beliefs, and values deeply influence a child’s development, cognition, use of language, and identity, and form the parameters within which children learn best.” (Pransky, 2008, p.2”)

A. ELL Families and Communities

ELL Family Involvement

ELL families’ involvement with their children’s education is quintessential in ELLs’ success. Many factors influence the way ELL families interact with schools, including culture, fluency in English, prior experiences interacting with schools, beliefs about the authority of principals and teachers, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, and parental education levels (Orozco, 2007). When ELL families fail to respond to invitations to visit an early learning center, or to answer phone calls or notes, or do not attend school conferences or activities, educators may believe that they have little interest in their children’s education. In reality, many culturally and linguistically diverse families believe very strongly in the power of education to help their children advance and succeed (Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). For example, in many Asian cultures, “children are engrained with a lifelong respect for knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, and love of learning” (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 253). Particularly for immigrant and refugee families, their migration or escape to the U.S., is ultimately to seek a new and better life, safety, employment, and economic security for their families and themselves. However, this relocation or dislocation to a new country and culture may result in family separation, lack of family cohesion, role or power reversal due to shifts in family members’ responsibilities, loss of familiar relationships, and economic imbalances (Orozco, 2007), as well as a loss of self-efficacy. In a study of self-efficacy, Jerusalem and Mittag (1995) found that stability in terms of employment, social networks, and partnerships supported self-efficacy and the ability to adapt. The impact of these factors may not be readily apparent to early learning professionals without culturally sensitive outreach and interaction with these families.

While the importance of family involvement in children’s academic retention and achievement has been overwhelmingly validated by the research (Berger, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Moles, 1999; Trumbull et al, 2001) and stressed by NCLB (2001), at the same time researchers have also acknowledged the limited participation of families from low SES backgrounds and “minority” populations (Moles, 1993, as cited in Trumbull et al, 2001). Researchers have also noted that schools tend to reflect the dominant culture, reinforcing structures of power, privilege, resources, and knowledge that covertly or overtly exclude certain segments of the population (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Fine, 1993; Pransky, 2008; Young,

1999). In a specific study of school-to-home literacy practices with African-American and ESL parents from urban environments, Dudley-Marling (2009) found that school-to-home collaboration left participants to feel that their children, family, and communities were not respected. It was also argued that an incorporation of “unidirectional model of parent involvement” and failure to reflect or integrate family values or routines contributed to participants’ negative feelings.

ELL families may feel uncomfortable in early learning settings where they feel the pressure or need to be fluent and literate in English, where staff members do not resemble them or speak their language(s), and where materials, resources, and activities lack cultural relevance and are not presented in linguistically meaningful ways (Samway & McKeon, 2007). They may also feel powerless or alienated when they do not understand early education approaches that may be new or incompatible with their own cultural values and beliefs about child-rearing. In a number of cultures, such as Middle Eastern and Latino groups, dependence, interdependence, and relationships are highly regarded. In those cultures, adults may keep young children close, engage in a lot of physical contact and verbal interaction, and limit their exploratory behaviors (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). This incongruence between ELL families and early learning professionals in their values and beliefs about child-rearing and early childhood education may then be reflected in what appears to be disinterest or unresponsiveness by ELL families to information or recommendations by the caregivers.

Several researchers have reiterated the importance of understanding ELL families’ cultural values and belief systems (Lynch & Hanson, 2004; Orozco, 2007; Trumbull et al, 2001). Being knowledgeable about and aware of alternative worldviews and attitudes towards child-rearing, education, family and extended family relationships, and other elements of the cultural continua (Lynch & Hanson, 2004) provides early learning professionals with the opportunity to reach out to ELL families in a more culturally sensitive manner and to build partnerships with them for the benefit of young ELLs. Providing ELL families with activities reflective of their own cultures and languages, as well as events not requiring them to speak in English may also increase responsiveness, engagement, and interest level of ELL families in school (Huss-Keeler, 1997).

Robles de Melendez and Beck (2007) have outlined several specific strategies and activities to help educators learn more about their ELL communities and to engage culturally and linguistically diverse families and communities within educational settings in their book, *Teaching young children in multicultural classrooms: Issues, concepts, and strategies*.

In reviewing the research about effective parent involvement, Trumbull et al (2001) have identified several best practices, using a sociocultural framework that acknowledges the **collectivist orientation** (the *interdependent orientation* described by Lynch and Hanson, 2004) of ELL families. These researchers have suggested that school personnel focus more on *process variables* that consider *parents’ wishes for their children, roles parents are comfortable assuming with their children, their feelings of competence in handling these school-related tasks, the types of invitations to participate that parents receive, and other roles parents are willing to*

accept (Trumbull et al, 2001, pp. 48-49). Van Velsor & Orozco (2007) have emphasized that involvement requires that ELL parents/families know and understand what is happening with their children in school, and that school personnel are aware and include knowledge and information from the ELL communities. Coltrane (2003) has suggested that early learning educators provide (1) many opportunities for parental input, (2) information about curriculum, instruction and standards, and (3) assistance to parents in understanding placement and assessment measures of achievement. Language and literacy activities that promote family interaction through story-telling and book-making projects based upon their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds provide one example of how to actively involve ELL families in the early learning process within their own homes (Innocenti, Boyce, Jump, Roggman, & Linaries, 2008) and to promote parental engagement.

Delgado-Gaitan (2004) has also reiterated the importance of non-judgmental outreach and interaction by educators with ELL parents. Engaging in such collaborative and respectful partnerships, where ELL families and educators learn from one another and contribute to the content of instruction, strengthens not only children's academic readiness and literacy but also parental self-efficacy and involvement (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Pelletier & Brent, 2002)

Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, and Moodie (2009) have recently completed an extensive literature review entitled *Family engagement, diverse families, and early childhood education programs: An integrated review of the literature* for NAEYC and PreK Now that provides both research and best practices related to ELL family participation.

Cross-Cultural Communication

In developing cultural competence, effective interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills are paramount. Communication includes both verbal and non-verbal messages sent and received by ELLs and by early learning professionals. Communication is a *complex* system of interactions that are influenced by the *different cultural experiences and/or sociocultural backgrounds* that ELL families and caregivers bring (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 61). Three major principles for effective communication focus on the following: (a) **high-context and low-context cultures**; (b) **acknowledgement and respect for cultural differences**; and (c) **communication of attitudes through words** (Lynch & Hanson, 2004).

Hall (1976, 1984) has noted that cultures vary in their use of explicit communication through words in contrast to information communicated implicitly through situational contexts, relationships, and cues; in other words, verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. **High-context cultures** (which include Asian, American Indian, Arab, Latino, and African-American cultures) rely more on nonverbal cues and messages (Hecht, Andersen, & Ribeau, 1989). On the other hand, **low-context cultures**, such as white European Americans and Scandinavians, tend to emphasize direct, sequential, and verbal communication (Hecht et al, 1989). According to Hall (1976, 1984), high-context cultures may be more formal, hierarchical, and rooted in the past, while low-context cultures may be more informal,

egalitarian in communication style, and much less rooted in the past and in traditions. An example might be a home interview by a Caucasian female caregiver, who may rely on words and directness to communicate with a Native American or Latino family, who use a more indirect style of communication that interprets non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures. Misunderstanding or miscommunication may arise because of different ways of responding to the message being sent and received. While the early learning provider might expect the family to respond verbally and quickly to information shared, the ELL family may remain silent as they absorb the information to discuss *after* the service provider has left.

“Actions speak louder than words.”

Non-verbal communication may be more powerful than words. It includes the following: (1) **eye contact and facial expressions**; (2) **proximity and touching**; (3) **body language**; (4) **gestures**; and (5) **listening** (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). Across cultures each of these forms of non-verbal communication may be interpreted differently and, as a result, may lead to miscommunication or negative communication among early learning professionals, young ELLs, and their families (Haynes, 2007).

Researchers have identified several forms of non-verbal communication that, in non U.S. cultures, may have negative, hostile, or sexual connotations as described below (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Haynes, 2007; Lynch & Hanson, 2004). For example, direct **eye contact** in American culture is expected during conversations, while in other cultures it may be viewed as being very disrespectful. Extended eye contact or staring may be perceived as rude and cause great discomfort. Attitudes about **social distance (proximity)** and touching also vary from culture to culture: In American culture, there is an expected amount of proximity between individuals (about three feet) when interacting, while in some other cultures (i.e. Latino, Middle Eastern) closer proximity is not unusual. **Body language**, such as positioning, may also transmit messages of disrespect or hostility, depending upon the culture as, for example, crossing one’s legs or ankles. The same **gestures** may have contrasting meanings in other cultures: (1) crossing fingers in American culture signals hope while in another culture it has sexual overtones; (2) beckoning someone with an index finger is considered disrespectful in countries where it is used to call animals; (3) touching the head or patting another part of the body as a sign of affection in American culture is considered disrespectful and intrusive in other cultures; and (4) nodding one’s head up and down may mean agreement in American culture, but may only mean hearing but not necessarily understanding or agreeing in many other cultures. Finally, **listening** is a very significant form of non-verbal communication. There is a difference between hearing and understanding. Just because someone from another cultural quietly hears what is said does not necessarily mean *agreement*.

In many cultures, non-verbal communication may enhance or exacerbate cross-cultural interactions. Underlying values may be reflected in what is not stated verbally. Non-verbal expressions or gestures may inadvertently signal disrespect or have alternative meaning for someone from a non-U.S. culture. The lesson here is for early learning professionals to become knowledgeable about the particular ELL families and children they serve, and attempt to learn

what communication patterns and signals specific cultures may use, rather than make assumptions based upon their own worldviews and experiences.

Respect for Cultural Differences

Several researchers have emphasized the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural differences as well as similarities (i.e. Banks, 2000; Banks & Banks, 2005; Gay, 2000; Golnick & Chinn, 2006; Lynch & Hanson, 2004; Nieto, 2004; Panksy, 2008; Robles de Melendez & Beck, 2007; Pang, 2005; Trumbull et al, 2001). Orozco (2007) has recommended that educators “assume a strength-based perspective” that honors, values, and integrates the “history, language, and traditions” that ELL families and their children bring into the educational setting (p. 10). Rather than discount or minimize, educators should demonstrate effective cross-cultural communication by showing “the willingness to engage in discussions that explore differences openly and respectfully” and that “dispel myths and open doors of understanding” (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 67).

To engage ELL families more actively in the educational process requires that “educators need to create learning environments that are culturally and linguistically relevant” (Nissani, 1993, p. 2). In this regard, early learning professionals are encouraged to emphasize “serving the whole child within the context of the family and community” (Nissani, 1993, p. 2). Because developmental milestones may vary culturally (Edwards & Gandini, 1989), Bowman (1990) has recommended the following culturally and developmentally appropriate practices when working with young ELLs:

- Recognizing developmentally equivalent behavioral patterns;
- Giving equivalent developmental milestones the same value;
- Using familiar interactive styles;
- Reinforcing the values of the ELL family;
- Addressing differences in home and school values and beliefs; and
- Recognizing that certain content or subject matter may be viewed differently by different cultures (i.e., specific animals, symbols, etc.) (Bowman, 1990, p. 3)

For early learning professionals, being cognizant of and sensitive to cultural differences, and understanding that young ELLs may demonstrate equivalent developmental behaviors and achievements differently, are elements of what several researchers have identified as **developmentally and culturally appropriate practices or DCAP** (Bredecamp & Copple, 1997; Copple & Bredecamp, 2009; Hyun, 1997, 1998, 2006, 2007; Hyun & Marshall, 1997; Novick, 1996; Roh, 1994). These practices acknowledge that there are both universal and individual development patterns for young children that are influenced by sociocultural experiences. These practices reflect awareness, knowledge, and skills of a culturally competent early learning professional. Expanded discussion about DCAP is covered in a subsequent section.

Communication of Attitudes

Words and labels consciously or subconsciously transmit values, beliefs, and attitudes. Lynch and Hanson (2004) have noted the shift in terminology to describe different racial/ethnic groups over time, encouraging service providers to use terms they prefer. While people from non-Caucasian groups continue to be called *minorities*, those who view the term minority as pejorative prefer the terms people of color and underrepresented groups. Some individuals from Spanish-speaking groups prefer *Latino/a* to *Hispanic*, or vice-versa, or they prefer to be identified by a more specific group name: *Cubano, Puerto Rican, Chicano, etc.* The term *Asian* is now used in place of *Oriental* while *African-American* or *Black* has replaced the terms *colored* or *Negro* (Tong, 1990, as cited in Lynch & Hanson, 2004). For many people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups, being misidentified as belonging to a certain racial/ethnic group when they do not can be unsettling. Early learning professionals should refrain from making assumptions and instead ask ELLs and their families what their preferences are.

Lynch and Hanson (2004) have identified seven emerging characteristics of cross-cultural competence in communication: *respect for people from other cultures; persistent efforts to understand other worldviews; openness to learning; flexibility; humor; tolerance for ambiguity; and the ability to approach others with a willingness to learn.* No single individual or organization can possibly learn everything there is to know about every culture. However, developing cultural competence begins with a desire to learn and to engage in seeing the world from another cultural viewpoint. Sometimes, it may also require the help of a **cultural liaison, mediator, or broker** (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lynch & Hanson, 2004) to provide cultural knowledge and to assist both early learning professionals and ELL families in understanding one another.

The Role of Cultural Liaisons in Family-School Partnerships

In their review of the literature about home-school partnerships involving culturally and linguistically diverse families, Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott (2002) have noted how important the role of a **cultural liaison** is in building and strengthening these relationships. Several studies cited by Howland et al (2002), including the work of Henderson and Mapp (2002), have underscored how crucial a cultural liaison is—someone who represents the family's culture, has been successful within the American educational system, and is able to assist the family in understanding and negotiating the educational system. This individual must have linguistic proficiency in both L1 and L2 in order to be able to *interpret* and/or *translate* for both the family and the school or community agency. This person becomes a critical bridge between and among cultures, communities, and early learning homes, centers, and programs.

Interpreters and **translators** provide important services for various organizations and programs that serve ELL populations, serving as cultural liaisons or bridges into and between

diverse communities. They can be critical links between ELL families and early learning professionals by providing cultural and linguistic knowledge that may help build and sustain strong family-school partnerships. An **interpreter** is someone who assists with **oral communication**, while a **translator** assists with **written communication**. An interpreter or translator may have different roles requiring distinct skill sets depending upon the context, such as a school conference, a medical interview, a court hearing, or a professional conference (Freimanis, 1994).

In the case of early childhood education activities, an effective interpreter/translator should be proficient in the target language (native language) of the ELL family, possess cross-cultural communication competency, be trained and educated in the relevant profession, and be proficient in knowing and understanding the two cultural perspectives represented (i.e., the ELL culture and American culture) (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 69). The interpreter/translator also needs to understand linguistic nuances, be sufficiently skilled in both languages and cultures, and be neutral as well as confidential (Freimanis, 1994; Lynch & Hanson, 2004). Issues arise when one or more of these characteristics is lacking.

In early learning settings, as in other educational environments, the availability of highly skilled and proficient interpreters/translators is somewhat limited. Lynch & Hanson (2004) and Friemanis (1994) have identified several potential issues in using interpreters or translators. Often, ELL family members or untrained non-family members might be enlisted. However, there are potential risks in using someone from either of these groups, given the qualifications previously discussed. Personal relationships may result in conflicts. Limited linguistic proficiency in the target language or English, as well as lack of knowledge about the information or issues under discussion, may result in miscommunication or incomplete communication. If health or psychological information is disclosed, there may be discomfort due to the personal nature of the information. In addition, if children are enlisted to serve as interpreters/translators, role-reversal ensues between the adult(s) and the child(ren) (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). Early learning professionals need to carefully consider and screen potential interpreters/translators, given these issues.

A.T. Henderson and K.L. Mapp (2002) have conducted extensive analyses of studies about parent and family involvement in their report entitled *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*.

Guidelines for Working Effectively with ELL Families

To address the challenges that ELL families may face and to encourage active participation in the educational process, early learning professionals should:

1. Be aware and knowledgeable about these issues for ELL families and their worldviews about child development, child-rearing, early childhood education for their children,

2. Consider alternative, non-traditional ways to reach out and communicate with these families in a culturally responsive manner, particularly in light of the myriad of socio-cultural and economic issues they may be facing.

3. Identify and implement culturally and linguistically relevant curricula and instruction that address the unique developmental needs of young ELLs (i.e., developmentally and culturally appropriate programming).

4. Know and understand effective strategies for effective cross-cultural communication with ELL families, including sensitivity to non-verbal communication and to the use of skilled interpreters and translators who are culturally knowledgeable and respectful of confidentiality.

Successful cross-cultural communication becomes critical for early learning professionals in developing and sustaining relationships with ELL families and their communities and in actively engaging them in early childhood settings. Another critical aspect is developing and sustaining an early care or early learning environment that is culturally responsive and inclusive.

“To provide continuity for young children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, home, school, and community partners must work to build a common understanding about the powerful influence of culture and the role of the family as the child’s first teachers.” (REL Early Childhood Collaborative Network, 1995, p. 48)

A. Culturally Responsive Early Learning Environments

What is *culturally responsive pedagogy* or practice? How do early learning professionals create educational environments that are welcoming and inclusive for culturally and linguistically diverse infants, toddlers, and preschoolers? What does culturally responsive practice have to do with cultural competence?

Geneva Gay (2000) defines the term ***culturally responsive pedagogy*** or ***culturally responsive practice*** as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them [culturally linguistically diverse learners]. It teaches *to* and *through* the strengths of these students. It is culturally *validating* and *affirming*” (p. 29). Culturally responsive practice is *comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, and transformative* (Gay, 2000, pp. 29-36). Several research pioneers in the area of multicultural education and diversity studies (Abrahams & Troike, 1972; Aragon, 1973; Banks, 1975; Chun-Hoon, 1973; Forbes, 1973), as well as more recent scholars (Delpit, 1995; Gollnick & Chinn, 2006; Hollins, 1996; Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Nieto, 1999; Pang, 2005; Pansky, 2008), have reiterated the critical importance of teaching and learning practices that respect, celebrate, and purposefully integrate the histories, languages, and cultures of diverse learners in meaningful ways. Culturally responsive practice requires self-awareness,

cross-cultural communication, and cultural knowledge on the part of early learning professionals, and also openness and flexibility to alternative approaches to teaching and evaluating the development and learning of young ELLs.

Early Learning Professionals and Young ELLs: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive practice can be reflected in the work of early learning professionals. The integration of cultural knowledge and experience goes well beyond the simple act of having an activity where ethnic food, dress, and music are featured. It explores and studies the values, beliefs, and worldviews embedded within the history, economy, religion and philosophy, education, health practices, rituals and traditions, folklore, and family and social networks of various cultural groups and communities. The use of literature reflecting the cultures of the group to teach concepts related to math or language arts, or to help children talk about their own personal experiences, is just one example.

Historically, education in the U.S. has been influenced primarily by western European middle-class traditions. From a sociocultural framework, culturally responsive practice addresses social inequalities (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006; Planksy, 2008)--issues of power, privilege, and difference--that are embedded in what is commonly known as the **hidden curriculum** (Ornstein, Behar-Horenstein, & Pajak, 2003). Scholars, researchers, and practitioners in the field of early childhood have called for a different way of approaching early childhood development and learning that is dynamic and process-oriented rather than static and prescriptive (Mallory & New, 1994; Quintero, 2004). They also have questioned ways of understanding and defining *the whole child*, which have been historically predicated upon European or Western theories of child development (Soto, 2000).

Developmentally and culturally appropriate practice (DCAP) has been promoted by a number of early learning researchers to address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse young children (Bredecamp & Copple, 1997; Copple & Bredecamp, 2009; Hyun, 1997, 1998, 2006, 2007; Hyun & Marshall, 1997; Novick, 1996; Roh, 1994). Such an approach expands self-knowledge, cultural communication, and cultural knowledge through "...critical and ethical reflection about what it means to bring a wider variety of cultures into dialogue with each other, to theorize about cultures in the plural, within rather than outside of antagonistic relations of domination and subordination" (Hyun, 2007, p. 261). In her exploration of young ELLs at home, at play, and in school, Hyun (2007) has identified several characteristics that teachers should acknowledge about these young children:

- Their multidirectional, multidimensional, multiethnic, and multilingual development;
- Their culturally-based ways of knowing and understanding the world;
- The ongoing sociocultural changes they experience; and
- Their dynamic family structures, cycles, and environments (Hyun, 2007, p. 262).

Therefore, in recognizing these characteristics, early learning professionals are

encouraged to consider the following: 1) engaging in thoughtful, honest, and critical self-reflection about their own professional practice, cultural competence, and limitations; 2) continuously questioning themselves about what young ELLs may be perceiving differently and constructing as meaningful learning, and also sustaining active communication with ELL families and communities about children's learning; and 3) consistently using multiple and multi-ethnic perspective-taking in their practice (Hyun, 2007). While learning and knowing how to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional and assessment strategies are very important, culturally responsive pedagogy or developmentally and culturally appropriate practice, begins essentially with and *within* the individual early learning professional.

The Continuum of ESL and Bilingual Programs

To address the cultural and linguistic needs of ELLs using culturally responsive practices, several different program models have been implemented, primarily for PreK-12 populations. Based upon school or district demographics, the particular characteristics of the ELL population, and resources, the types of model(s) chosen may vary (Rennie, 1993). Many emphasize English-only instruction, while others may use bilingual or dual-language instruction. And, as is discussed below, there continues to be research supporting the integration of L1 to support L2 acquisition, particularly related to literacy and content-area instruction.

Rennie (1993) has described some of the more prevalent models of ESL and bilingual instruction. In addition, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Bureau of Teaching and Learning Support has provided a link to the [National Center for English Language Acquisition \(NCELA\)](#), where a comprehensive table of [major ELL program models](#) is presented. The [PDE Basic Education Circular \(BEC\) \(\(22 Pa. Code §4.26\)](#), issued April 2009, has also outlined the legislative requirements and state mandates regarding ELLs in PreK-12 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including those related to identification of ELLs, programming and instruction, grading, assessment, exiting criteria, special needs, retention and promotion, support programs, etc. These models are briefly described below, although for early care and early learning settings, young ELLs (particularly infants, toddlers, preschool) may be involved in less formalized versions of these types of programs.

ESL (English-as-a-Second-Language) models include: (1) **ESL pull-out**, which is used primarily for elementary grades, where children spend part of their instructional day outside of the mainstream classroom learning English from a full-time ESL teacher or an itinerant ESL teacher; (2) **ESL class period**, used at the middle and high school levels, where students are in credit-bearing ESL classes for English instruction and content-area support; and (3) **ESL resource room**, where students from several grades and linguistic levels are gathered to receive ESL instruction (Rennie, 1993).

Bilingual or dual language programs integrate the use of L1 with L2, which research has shown to be effective in teaching content. These types of programs include: (1) the **early exit bilingual program**, where some initial instruction in L1 occurs, but quickly transitions to L2 instruction; (2) the **late exit program** (Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991), where students receive approximately half of their instruction in L1 throughout elementary school until they have achieved English proficiency; (3) a **bilingual program**, where children receive instruction in both L1 and L2; or (4) a **two-way bilingual program (or dual language program)**, where instruction is provided for both ELLs and non-ELLs in both L1 and L2 (Rennie, 1993). Researchers (Garcia & Jensen, 2009, MacSwan & Pray, 2005) have noted that the data suggest that L2 acquisition by children in bilingual programs appears to be more rapid than that of children in English-only programs. Lindholm and Birsato (2007) have found that high-quality instruction is linked to high academic achievement, particularly when language and content-area instruction are coordinated, and specific language instruction is embedded in content-area instruction. Their findings suggest support concurrent emphasis on ESL and content.

Two other program models have been implemented or adapted widely to meet the instructional and linguistic needs of ELLs. The **Sheltered English (content-based) program** involves English instruction with the use of visual and other aids to teach content to a multilingual, if not multilevel, group of ELLs. [SIOP or the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol](#) (Echeverria, J., Vogt, M.E., & Short, D., 2004) highlights the key elements of sheltered instruction, and can be used to develop, implement, and assess teaching in the ELL classroom. It consists of three major sections: 1) preparation; 2) instruction; and 3) review and evaluation. Under instruction, there are several items for preparation and implementation: building background, comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981), instructional strategies, interaction (independent, group collaboration), practice and application, and lesson delivery. The teacher develops both content and language objectives so that ELLs are learning subject matter while also improving their English skills.

In contrast, the **structured immersion program** uses English only without specific ESL instruction. There is very limited to no incorporation of L1 to bridge learning and understanding of content in L2 (Rennie, 1993).

No single ESL or bilingual program can meet the needs of diverse populations of multilingual, multilevel ELLs, who represent a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences. However, researchers have been able to identify some characteristics of effective programs for ELLs. These include: coordination of language and content instruction; social and collaborative interactions between ELLs and non-ELLs (Garcia, 1991; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2007); developmentally and culturally appropriate programming (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997; Nissani, 1993; Pransky, 2008); staff development and training with an emphasis on culturally and linguistically diverse populations (Rennie, 1993; Robles de Robles de Melendez & Beck, 2007); and ELL parent/family involvement (Melendez & Beck, 2007; Halguenseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009).

Alignment of Standards for the Early Learning Profession and for ELLs

While comprehensive research has not been conducted to specifically determine which ESL or bilingual programs are more effective (MacSwan & Pray, 2005) in terms of L2 acquisition, all formal programs for ELLs are guided by federal, national, and state standards for the profession. For early learning professionals in Pennsylvania, these would include [NCLB](#) (2001), [ACEI](#) (2009), [NAEYC](#) (2001), and [TESOL](#) (2006) standards for PreK-12 English language learners, the [Pennsylvania Standards for Early Childhood](#) (2007, 2008), the [Pennsylvania English Language Proficiency Standards or PA ELPS for ELLS](#) (2005, 2007), the [World Class Instruction and Design Assessment \(WIDA\) English Language Proficiency Standards \(ELPS\)](#) (2007). The new [Basic Educational Circular \(BEC\)](#) (22 Pa. Code § 4.26) for ESL and bilingual guidelines within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also provides comprehensive information and links to pertinent resources. [Note: The reader can click on the links above to the websites listing complete standards.]

Since readers are most likely to be familiar with NCLB, PA Standards for Early Childhood, ACEI, and NAEYC standards, a brief description of the other guidelines that specifically emphasize ELL student learning follows. The PA ELPS are based on the WIDA ELPS. They focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing with six levels of proficiency: 1) *entering*, 2) *beginning*, 3) *developing*, 4) *expanding*, 5) *bridging*, and 6) *reaching* (PDE, 2005, 2007).

TESOL (2006) standards focus on five areas of communication:

- Standard 1- social, intercultural, and instructional
- Standard 2- language arts
- Standard 3- mathematics
- Standard 4- science; and
- Standard 5- social studies.

Goal 1: *To use English to communicate in social settings* and Goal 2: *To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways* are linked directly to Standard 1. Goal 3: *To use English to achieve academically in all content areas* relates to Standards 2 through 5. There are five grade level clusters—PreK-K, Grades 1-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12-- related to each of the language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The language proficiency levels for each grade cluster and domain are as follows: 1) *starting*; 2) *emerging*; 3) *developing*; 4) *expanding*; and 5) *bridging*. These proficiency levels are developmentally aligned with the goals and standards of communication.

Culturally competent early learning professionals are knowledgeable about these federal, state, and professional standards, particularly in the areas that focus specifically on culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The PA ELPS, WIDA ELPS, and TESOL PreK-12 standards, in particular, have been designed so that educators can deliberately align curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices to meet the needs of ELLs. As early care and early learning professional develop their programs and activities, these particular standards need to be included, along with other national and state requirements (i.e., PA Standards for Early Childhood, NAEYC, ACEI), to ensure that culturally responsive practices are implemented

The other aspect of standards alignment that needs to be considered is assessment. Issues of access, equitability, comprehensiveness, accuracy, and accountability are among the factors to be considered in the assessment of ELLs.

ELL Assessment

Assessment of young ELLs can be **formative** or **summative**. **Formative assessment** may be used to determine how they are doing at a given time and over time while **summative assessment** is effective to determine if their educational programs should continue or be terminated. Assessment occurs at the system level (as dictated by federal, state, and professional standards) and at the individual level. Young ELLs are evaluated as they enter programs to determine where they function developmentally, and also as they exit programs. Ultimately, ELL assessment is used to measure not only developmental milestones and English language proficiency, but also academic progress and achievement.

At the federal level, NCLB (2001) requires that reporting on Annual Yearly Performance (AYP) and Annual Measures of Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) be submitted for ELLs in the PreK-12 system. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, ELLs are initially screened as required by state guidelines using the [W-APT](#). ELLs with adequate language proficiency take the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) and the WIDA Consortium's [ACCESS for ELLs English Proficiency Test](#), which is the statewide assessment for Pennsylvania. (The [Kindergarten ACCESS](#) is new in 2009.)

At the individual level, assessment can be quite challenging for dual-language learners who are essentially still learning L1 while simultaneously acquiring L2. It is, therefore, recommended that young ELLs be evaluated in both L1 and L2, that interview and observational information be gathered from the family and staff, and that narratives/stories be elicited from the young ELLs themselves to assess language ability and comprehension (Gutierrez-Clellan, 2005). Head Start's National Reporting System (NRS) has been used with young Spanish-speaking ELLs, who were assessed in 2003-04 in Spanish-only or in Spanish and English (Schultz & Jagielo, 2005). The testing has provided data about ELLs' progress in language development, vocabulary, knowledge of letters, and early mathematics. It also presents comparative data for ELLs who enter the program with different levels of knowledge and skills. As with any screening or formalized assessment with young ELLs, Santos & Ostrosky (2005) have cautioned against the misinterpretation of linguistic behaviors they may exhibit: Young ELLs generally display a pattern of English language development that includes use of L1, a silent period, experimentation with sound and telegraphic speech, and productive use of new language (p. 56).

The use of **authentic performance-based assessment** (Brice, 2002; McLean, 2002) provides early learning professionals with the opportunity to evaluate *the whole child* by gathering information about cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical development as they might relate to second language acquisition. Using information from multiple sources about a

young ELL from family and community members, staff, and the child him/herself, a more comprehensive picture of his/her strengths, abilities, and needs can be gleaned. The ELL family can offer insights about the child away from the early care or early learning setting, as well as cultural, linguistic, and other factors that may explain behaviors observed in the early learning setting. Staff observations and interviews may also provide alternative perspectives or interpretations of ELLs' behavior based on staff's own worldviews. Finally, the child himself/herself may provide a wealth of information through drawings, writing, or play. Using these authentic data, "teachers can develop a systematic plan to promote meaningful participation and inclusion of English language-learners in routines and activities in the classroom" (Santos & Ostrosky, 2005, p. 57).

Culture and language serve as the foundation for decisions about curriculum, instruction, programming, and assessment. Authentic assessment is a holistic approach that purposefully considers language and culture in evaluating the cognitive, social, physical, and linguistic aspects of development for a young ELL. Culturally responsive practice is an integrated, dynamic, and iterative process or what Quintero (2004) has described as *pluralistic programming*.

Guidelines for Culturally Responsive Educational Practices

In early learning environments, culturally responsive practice in curriculum, instruction, and assessment might be characterized by the following:

1. Reflection of care and connectedness (Nilles & Rios, 2009);
2. Integration of cultural and linguistic knowledge that defines ELLs' self-identity into educational practice (Quintero, 2004);
3. Respect and acknowledgement of family and community values and belief systems related to child development and learning from other non-western groups (Lynch & Hanson, 2006);
4. Demonstrated understanding about the unique challenges that ELL children and families encounter in American society (Orozco, 2007);
5. Incorporation of dynamic and process-oriented strategies that build upon the cultural and linguistic contributions of each young ELL brings to the early learning environment (Quintero, 2004) and are aligned to standards.
6. Use of culturally appropriate formal and informal assessment strategies or authentic performance-based assessment (Brice, 2002; McLean, 2002) to evaluate developmental progress and achievement (i.e., child and family interviews, work sampling, observations).

Literally hundreds of books and journal articles have been developed to provide early learning professionals with detailed educational strategies that reflect the characteristics listed above. A few specific examples would be:

1. Organizing and hosting family get-togethers in school, where ELL families and children can share food, literature, stories, and art from their cultures with other families, either during evenings or weekends when family schedules allow;
2. Asking ELL families about child-rearing practices and beliefs about child development and learning, and finding ways to incorporate these into curricular, instructional, and assessment activities;
3. Meeting with ELL families and children in familiar community-based settings for orientation or other meetings;
4. Integrating other cultures and languages into literacy activities, such as asking children how particular vocabulary words are said or written in their languages;
5. Having the class read, discuss, and reflect upon their own cultures, languages, and experiences through a multicultural literature; and
6. Engaging in multilingual/bilingual instruction within the educational setting and utilizing L1 to help young ELLs learn basic concepts and ease L2 acquisition.

Additional curricular and instructional resources for culturally responsive practice are available at the end of this document.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

- Further research is needed to determine which types of ESL and bilingual programs may be more effective in increasing the rate of English language acquisition and proficiency for young ELLs at various levels of linguistic and academic competency.
- More cohesive articulation and alignment across state and national standards are needed to measure young ELLs' learning outcomes with no redundancy.
- Early learning professionals should become more proactive in engaging ELLs' parents and families in ELLs' dynamic and fluid educational process, including parents providing input and feedback related to instruction, programming, and assessments.

Reflections

- To what extent do you consciously consider and integrate cultural and linguistic elements into the development of curriculum, instruction, and assessment so that the self-identities of young ELLs are acknowledged and included?

- How do you create bridges and linkages between home and school for young ELLS and their families?
- In what ways are you consciously aware of your own values and beliefs about culture and language as they influence your work with young ELLs in your care?

Part III: Becoming Culturally Competent Early Learning Professionals

“All of America’s children need good educational policies and good teachers; all teachers need to think about all children as they flesh out their own professional identities and as they develop personal stances on issues.” (Hinchey, 2004, p. 48)

A. Guidelines for Culturally Competent Professionals and Programs

Characteristics of Exemplary ELL Educators and Programs

National professional associations for early childhood and elementary education (ACEI, 2006; NAEYC, 2006), teacher preparation (NCATE, 2006), teachers of English (NCTE, 2008), and ESL teachers (TESOL, 2006) have all prepared standards for preservice and in-service teachers working with ELLs and/or have developed specific position statements related to culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), in its 2006 revision of standards, included specific references to English language learners. They focus on competencies for the profession with an emphasis on diversity as it relates to content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. A common thread is the increasing recognition of the demographic shift towards more culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and the significant implications for practicing educators and those in preparation programs, including early learning professionals. There are two major questions: 1) What are the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to ensure that these educators are culturally competent? and 2) What do they need to know and be able to do in order to create culturally responsive and inclusive classrooms?

There is also widespread agreement among researchers and scholars in the field of multicultural education and culturally responsive practice, that those who work with ELLs possess certain characteristics or develop specific skill sets. First of all, as Lynch and Hanson (2004) have indicated, culturally competent professionals **must be self-aware, cognizant of how their values and beliefs influence their worldviews, and willing to learn about other cultures, languages, and ways of understanding the world.** Garcia (1992) has identified four major domains associated with exemplary ELL teachers: 1) knowledge and implementation of specific instructional strategies informed by research; 2) meaningful and contextualized learning opportunities that encourage collaboration and cooperation; 3) advocacy, efficacy, and creativity; and 4) validation of learners’ culture and language, as well as high expectations. Many other characteristics have been discussed previously in the ELL Tool Kit and are summarized below:

1. Early learning professionals working with ELL populations should not only be very familiar with early childhood practices and programs, but also be very aware and sensitive to their diverse cultural and linguistic needs (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997; Nissani, 1993).

2. They must be fair in their treatment of ELLs by:
 - a. accommodating their unique linguistic and academic needs (Lake & Pappamihiel, 2003), including use of L1;
 - b. viewing development as dynamic and using “pluralistic programming” (Quintero, 2004);
 - c. understanding the development of ELLs as contextual and situational, influenced by sociocultural, linguistic, and other factors (Brisk, Burgos, & Hamerla, 2004; Lubeck, 1994; New, 1994); and
 - d. using both formal and informal types of assessment, observations, and work sampling to identify and evaluate ELLs’ strengths, abilities, and needs (Kushner & Ortiz, 2000).
3. As *cultural brokers* (Gentemann & Whitehead, 1983), early learning professionals need to understand:
 - a. how culture and language influence educational settings and dynamics;
 - b. how they as educators create inclusive and respectful environments;
 - c. how they can facilitate communication among ELLs and with their families and communities; and
 - d. how they can promote equitable and productive learning experiences for all culturally and linguistically diverse learners through curricular, instructional, and interpersonal and cross-cultural activities.
4. Teachers are *communicators, educators, evaluators, educated people, and agents of socialization* (Fillmore & Snow, 2000). They must communicate effectively, know their subject matter and adapt curriculum and instruction appropriately to meet the individual needs of ELLs, have a breadth of knowledge and understanding about language and language learning (i.e., linguistics, language development and acquisition), and be a skilled cultural mediator/interpreter/broker between home and school for ELLs (Echevarria, 1998; Fillmore & Snow, 2000).
5. To provide high quality and instruction for young ELLs, early learning professionals must have time for planning and program development (Coltrane, 2003). Using developmentally and culturally appropriate practice (Greenburg, 1990; Robles de Melendez & Beck; Nissani, 1990), these teachers incorporate different types of learning that is purposeful, creative, and very learner-centered.
6. *Funds of knowledge* generated by ELL parents and families are used as the foundation for teaching and learning (Coltrane, 2003). This includes using literary and creative practices, rituals and traditions, ELL community volunteers, family interviews, home-school partnerships, etc., to design classroom instruction.

In reviewing the vast literature about teacher competencies for

early childhood educators working with young ELLs, Kushner and Ortiz (2000) have summarized the major domains as follows:

- **Teacher language proficiency** in English and, ideally, in one or more other languages;
- **Foundational knowledge** in all aspects of linguistics;
- **Cultural competence**;
- **Strong content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge** that fosters culturally responsive instruction and programming;
- **Strong background in culturally appropriate informal and formal assessment strategies**, as well as **use of assessment data** for instructional and programming purposes;
- **Reflective practice as a habit**; and
- **Professional leadership and advocacy**

Throughout the research reviewed and cited in the ELL Tool Kit, these competencies and characteristics have been reiterated many times. How do early learning professionals acquire these attributes and reflect culturally responsive practice in their programs? How do they know when they are progressing towards cultural competence? The answers to these questions are the focus of the following discussion about the role of assessment and professional development in this process.

Assessment and Professional Development

Self-awareness, a key attribute that researchers have indicated is critical for cultural competence, requires the ability to be self-reflective and honest with one's self. There are a number of formal and informal [assessment tools](#) that researchers and practitioners have developed to evaluate cultural competence and/or culturally responsive practice, as well as unconscious or subconscious biases that people may have. One example is the [Project Implicit](#) at Harvard University explores the "conscious-unconscious divergences" in people's minds that they may not share openly. As another example, the National Center for Cultural Competency (NCCC, 2009) has defined what it believes reflects a culturally competent individual, program, and organization. It has developed a specific [self-assessment measure](#) for individuals in an organization to evaluate their self-perceived levels of cultural and linguistic competence. Kushner, McClelland, & Safford (2003) have created the *cultural learning process model*, which requires individuals to consider how twelve sociocultural factors have shaped and influenced how they view the world. Lindsey et al (2003) have developed a collection of assessments and activities to assist individuals, groups, and organizations in identifying unconscious or subconscious biases, to encourage honest self-reflection, and to promote and strengthen the process towards cultural proficiency.

In the realm of professional education, Robles de Melendez and Beck (2007) have suggested a few assessment instruments that may be particularly relevant and useful for early learning professionals:

1. The **Hernandez Teacher Survey** (Hernandez, 1989, as cited in Robles de Melendez & Beck, 2007) was adapted from a school district assessment by a California teacher. It addresses four areas: content, instruction, school climate, and parent/community involvement. The questions themselves are framed to describe areas such as cross-cultural studies and interpersonal relations along a continuum (in Melendez & Beck, 2007, p. 283).
2. The **Baruth and Manning's Criteria** (Baruth & Manning, 1992; 2004) as adapted for early childhood settings by Robles de Melendez and Beck (2007) uses a seven-point questionnaire that deals with: multicultural perspectives, attitudes towards diversity, instructional resources, instructional strategies and activities, school activities, parent and community, and language diversity (p. 284). In addition, Melendez and Beck (2007) have another five-dimension scale dealing with classroom practices: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equitable pedagogy, and classroom and school empowerment (Robles de Melendez & Beck, 2007, pp. 284-285).
3. Schools and school districts may develop their own assessment tools to measure aspects of diversity, multiculturalism, and/or cultural competence. One such instrument is the **Diversity Anti-Bias Checklist** (Eliot, 2002, p. 137, as cited in Melendez & Beck, 2007, p. 287), which asks specific questions about programs, teachers, and learners. Early learning professionals also have the ability to develop their own assessment instruments or questions to help them review their own practice and programs.

No matter what the assessment tool, using formal and informal methods to evaluate one's own worldview about culture and language, to reflect on hidden or unconscious biases, and to honestly consider one's professional practice in working with ELLs, is a step towards cultural competence.

Lindsey et al (2003) have identified two critical barriers to cultural competence or proficiency: a) a lack of awareness about a need for change (by the individual and/or the organization); and 2) the presumption of **entitlement**. While the importance of self-awareness has been previously discussed in detail, the notion of entitlement has not been explored in depth. It is "...the accrual of benefits solely because of membership in a dominant group" (Lindsey et al, 2003, p. 246). In terms of American society, Peggy McIntosh (1988) has referred to it as **white privilege**. This sense of entitlement creates a power imbalance that results in **institutional oppression** of those groups (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, etc.) that are marginalized and are not part of the dominant group. The *hidden curriculum* is one example within the educational environment, where historically research, curriculum, instruction, and assessment have reflected Western or Eurocentric perspectives, values, and beliefs. Differing expectations and/or identification of developmental or learning differences as deficits for children based upon race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, or class would be another example (Lindsey et al, 2003). Early learning professionals whose own cultural identities and learning styles may significantly contrast with those of their young ELLs must remain

conscientious in recognizing when a sense of entitlement and power may inadvertently interfere with their daily practice.

Self-evaluation, while sometimes can be very difficult, can provide opportunities to change the early education setting and to create a more responsive and inclusive learning environment for ELLs and their families, particularly if it becomes evident that there is a clear gap in terms of developmentally and culturally appropriate practice. It requires openness to learning and change, without defensiveness or fear. It can help lead to clarification of what types of pre-service preparation and professional development may be useful in addressing professional and/or programmatic issues.

The research literature about early childhood education teacher preparation related specifically to ELLs has expanded over the last decade. Kushner and Ortiz (2000) have summarized some of the major desired competencies for early learning teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse young children: a) linguistic competency in English and in a non-English language (which is particularly relevant to *bilingual* early childhood educators; b) a strong foundation in linguistics, language development, and language acquisition; c) cultural competence; d) content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, as well as the ability to identify and develop curricular and instructional materials and strategies which are socio-culturally and academically appropriate; e) knowledge of appropriate informal and formal assessment strategies for ELLs; f) knowledge of various cultures, outreach strategies, and community resources; g) the ability to be reflective practitioners; and h) the ability to lead and advocate for ELLs. In terms of teacher preparation programs themselves, the importance of recruiting and retaining culturally and linguistically diverse candidates, providing coursework and field experiences specifically with young ELL populations, and providing purposeful and consistent teacher induction during the initial years have also been emphasized (Howland et al, 2006; Kushner & Ortiz, 2000). Because not all early learning professionals have had the opportunity as pre-service candidates to acquire knowledge and experience with developmentally and culturally appropriate practice, in-service professional development must fill this gap if these educators are to become culturally competent.

Clair (2000) has emphasized the critical nature of professional development for teachers of ELL populations: Such training requires a heavy time commitment in order to explore language acquisition and learning because it also means dealing with values, beliefs, and attitudes about language and ELLs. These educators, including early learning professionals, need opportunities to reflect upon their own worldviews and practice, their relationships with ELL learners, sociocultural factors that impact ELLs, and the role of education in a diverse society (Clair, 1998; Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hyun, 2007; Roh, 1994).

Assessment and professional development link knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to pedagogical practice with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. To develop the characteristics and attributes of cultural competence, early learning professionals must be willing to explore their own worldviews and practices honestly and directly, while also working very hard to infuse their teaching with culturally responsive and inclusive practices.

They need to be able to acknowledge when their professional practice and programs may be less reflective of non-western or non-U.S. approaches to child-rearing and early childhood education. They must recognize that achieving or failing to achieve “developmental milestones” may be more a matter of perspective or a different way of measuring progress for a young ELL. The educational environment and climate they create within their classrooms or programs will be a reflection of a much larger early learning organization and community.

B. Guidelines for Culturally Competent Organizations

Characteristics of a Culturally Competent Organization

As noted earlier, the National Center for Cultural Competence (2009) has developed a framework for culturally competent organizations. This definition includes: having cultural knowledge, valuing diversity and difference, engaging in self-assessment, communicating cross-culturally and effectively, and promoting values and principles of diversity as an institution. Other researchers have underscored the significance of proactive organizations whose values, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors about diversity and inclusion are congruent and transparent (Cross, 1989; Storti, 1998). In particular, Cross (1989) has emphasized **self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural understanding and communication**. Whether at the *individual* or the *collective* level, these three elements have emerged as recurring themes when defining cultural competence. So the question becomes: How does a cultural competent organization manifest itself, and how do people within and outside of the organization experience it?

Self-awareness at an organizational or systemic level means that the organization recognizes both its strengths and its weaknesses in terms of diversity, including its practices towards culturally and linguistically diverse populations. At its best, a culturally competent organization demonstrates *spontaneous sensitivity* (Storti, 1998) and uses **culturally based models** (Cross, 1989). It acknowledges and addresses such issues as cultural knowledge and awareness, organizational climate, discrimination, and cross-cultural communication in proactive ways.

Cultural knowledge might include the understanding of other cultures’ values, beliefs, attitudes, rituals, traditions, and behaviors (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). An organization would identify opportunities for its employees to learn about other cultural worldviews, to engage in professional development activities focusing on diversity and cross-cultural communication, and to become more knowledgeable through cultural events and celebrations.

Cross-cultural understanding and communication involves exchanging, negotiating, interacting, discussing, or mediating the nuances of culture, language, gender, age, religion, class, education, etc., through both verbal and non-verbal means (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Lindsey et al, 2003; Lynch & Hanson, 2004). Effective cross-cultural communication requires that people modify or change how they interact in order to avoid conflict and/or misunderstanding. Within an organizational context, a culturally competent environment is one in which there are continuous and focused efforts to help individuals and groups become

more culturally sensitive in their use of language and to be more effective in intergroup or cross-cultural interactions.

As noted in the Introduction to the ELL Tool Kit, the [National Center for Cultural Competence](#) (NCCC) (2009) has provided a definition of cultural competence for organizations, which is holistic and systemic. It *articulates* values, beliefs, and attitudes about diversity *and* also *demonstrates* these through ongoing policies, practices, and services, which engage all of its stakeholders (personnel, clients, communities). It is a continuous process of building cultural knowledge and self-awareness, strengthen cross-cultural communication and interaction, and integrating culturally responsive strategies and practices throughout the organization, its programs and services, and personnel. This definition provides guidelines and principles for cultural competence and cultural proficiency.

Assessment and Professional Development

As noted earlier, several organizational tools are available to use for informal and formal assessment of programs, and organizations (Lindsey et al, 2003; [NCCC](#), 2009; [The Cross-Cultural Healthcare Program](#), 2009). Because developing cultural competence is viewed as a dynamic and continuous process (Lindsey et al, 2003), organizational assessment should contain both formative and summative elements, which are influenced by the data gathered at the individual staff level, the community (family) level, and the center or program level. It may well involve multiple types of assessments at multiple levels, guided by how the various early learning constituencies, particularly the ELL communities, define cultural competency both within and outside of the early childhood education environment. As a formative process, this requires that the organization see assessment of cultural competence as cyclical and pervasive—a series of continuous and integrated efforts to improve and change proactively to meet the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population of children, families, communities, and educational providers. As a summative process, this requires the organization to be very willing and highly responsive to ending unproductive policies, practices, and strategies that do not reflect cultural competence.

Professional development related to cultural competence for the organization is, therefore, defined by the expressed needs of members of the organization, the centers and programs, and the care homes, as well as the expressed needs of ELL families and children. Specific characteristics of culturally competent professionals and organizations have previously been described. At an organizational level, professional development to develop cultural competence, as Lindsey et al (2003) have emphasized, is **not** structured activities or instructional strategies, boilerplate policies and practices, or a quick fix (p. xxii). To reiterate, it **is** about self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural communication—the foundation for growth, change, and transformation for culturally competent individuals and organizations.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

- Early learning professionals, organizations, and their stakeholders/constituencies need to be able to clearly define what cultural competence means to and for them, and develop guiding principles, practices, and policies that reflect this definition.
- Early learning professionals and organizations should engage in self- assessment practices related to cultural competence in order to identify specific areas of competence to be developed and/or strengthened. These may include: intercultural communication, linguistics and language development, ELL family involvement and outreach, and developmentally and culturally appropriate practice.
- Further research is needed to explore the current effectiveness of pre-service early childhood education programs in preparing candidates to work with young ELL populations and in incorporating developmentally and culturally appropriate practices into program content and clinical experiences.

Reflections

- How do you define cultural competence? How does your center/program and/or organization define it?
- How would you describe your current level of cultural competence? How would you describe the current level of cultural competence of your center/program and/or organization? Upon what criteria do you base this assessment?
- In what ways do you promote self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural communication in your educational practice? In what ways does your center/program and/or organization promote these?

Conclusion

As research and best practices have demonstrated, educating young ELLs and working collaboratively with their families and communities requires self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural communication skills. However, these factors alone will not ensure that early learning professionals, programs, or organizations will demonstrate or be viewed by ELL children and families as culturally competent.

Achieving cultural competence or cultural proficiency is a dynamic and changing process that requires sensitivity, care, compassion, openness, flexibility, honesty, and humility. Values, belief systems, and perspectives are challenged by individuals and groups with different worldviews about child rearing and child-development. Traditional early childhood education theories and practices are reframed by cultures with alternative approaches. There may be some obvious tensions between U.S. standards of practice for the early learning profession, and other cultural and linguistic perspectives. In addition, while there are many developmentally and culturally appropriate practices (DCAP) proposed for working with ELL families and teaching their children, use of these strategies alone does not necessarily ensure cultural competence.

Hyun (2007) has underscored the need for early learning professionals to 1) engage in thoughtful, honest, and critical self-reflection about their own professional practice, cultural competence, and limitations; 2) continuously question themselves about what young ELLs may be perceiving differently and constructing as meaningful learning, and also sustain active communication with ELL families and communities about children's learning; and 3) consistently use multiple and multi-ethnic perspective-taking in their practice. The same recommendations might also be made for programs and organizations.

Developing cultural competence at the individual level and at the collective level involves a continuous cycle of self-assessment and self-learning. Professional development activities that build cross-cultural communication skills, as well as instructional skills, while also encouraging individuals and groups to constantly reflect and re-quiring people to evaluate their values, beliefs, and views about people and cultures that are different, are necessary but not enough. The ability to engage *daily* in questioning assumptions, evaluating actions, and refining behaviors towards ELLs and their families, *as well* as with peers and colleagues who may be culturally and linguistically diverse, is critical. As Lindsey et al (2003) have stated, cultural competency/cultural proficiency is a commitment.

Glossary

Several researchers, including NCELA, have developed extensive glossaries for many of the terms used in the ELL Tool Kit. The reader may link directly to each of the following websites to review the most frequently used terms used in the study of English Language Learners (ELLs) and their definitions.

Headstart Bulletin (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children and Families)

http://edlkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Dual%20Language%20Learners/DLL_%20Resources/GlossaryofTerms.htm

LessonSense.com - Education Glossary and dictionary - NCELA

<http://www.lessonsense.com/glossary/?ESL:N:NCELA>

TESOL Glossary (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse)

<http://www.uwlax.edu/tesol/Glossary.htm>

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Annotated Bibliography

Assessment

Herrera, S.G., Murry, K.G., & Cabral, R.M. (2007). *Assessment accommodations for classroom teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.

This book provides a comprehensive overview, as well as specific strategies and practices, for the assessment of CLD children. Assessment issues are discussed in detail. In addition, the authors thoroughly describe the uses for authentic assessment, pre-instructional and post-instructional assessment, assessment of acculturation, assessment of language proficiency and content areas, and the issues involved in special education assessment.

Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP)

Copple, C. & Bredecamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8 (3rd ed.)*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

This is a comprehensive resource of research-based evidence about development, learning, and early learning practice. The authors include stories and examples, along with a CD that demonstrates effective DAP.

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2004). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model (2nd ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

This text provides the theoretical framework for the SIOP model for lesson planning and assessment. In addition, the reader is provided with the SIOP templates to use in the classroom, as well as the rubrics to use for evaluation. ESL teachers in Pennsylvania for classroom teaching use THE SIOP model.

Hyun, E. (1998). *Making sense of developmentally and culturally appropriate practice (DCAP) in early childhood education*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

The author uses a series of vignettes to demonstrate how culture influences the development and learning of young children. This book provides early learning professionals with examples of how to incorporate DCAP into their own practice and how to be sensitive to the multiple lenses through which young ELLs see, experience, and learn.

Robles de Melendez, W. & Beck, V. (2007). *Teaching young children in multicultural classrooms: Issues, concepts, and strategies (2nd Ed.)* Clifton Park, NY: Thomas Delmar Learning.

This book is a very practical guide to developmentally and culturally appropriate practices to use in the classroom, with ELL families and communities, and with early learning personnel to meet the cultural, linguistic, and developmental needs of young English Language Learners (ELLs). The authors offer both research-based information as well as best practices in the field, and include specific activities and resources that early learning professional can readily incorporate into their daily practice.

Cultural Competence

Brislin, R.W. & Yoshida, T. (Eds.). (1994). *Improving intercultural interactions: Modules for cross-cultural training programs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This book offers individuals and organizations from various disciplines and professions the opportunity to learn about cultural competence and cross-cultural interactions. Two chapters, in particular, deal with ELLs in school settings. What is most valuable in this book are the exercises that people can complete individually and in groups to evaluate their own levels of cultural awareness, knowledge, and communication.

Lindsey, R.B., Robins, K.N., & Terrell, R.D. (2003). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders (2nd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press Inc.

The authors offer both theoretical and practical information about cultural proficiency as a commitment to diversity and a process for change within educational settings. In Part I, they first provide a working definition and an historical overview about the issues related to diversity and inclusion. In Part II, they describe tools that individuals and organizations can use to analyze behaviors and practices, as well as offer some principles of cultural proficiency. In Part III, the authors identify barriers to cultural proficiency, focusing on issues of adaptation and entitlement. Finally, they discuss cultural proficiency as a moral imperative and provide a case analysis for review. In all chapters of the book, the authors have provided a series of exercises and activities for individuals and organizations to use for self-assessment, reflection, and action.

Lynch, E.W. & Hanson, M.J. (2004). *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide to working with children and their families (3rd ed.)*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

This book provides a very comprehensive framework for culturally responsive practice in working with culturally and linguistically diverse groups. Using the foundations of the cultural continua to describe the range of perspectives different cultural groups may have, the authors discuss how the different racial/ethnic groups approach issues related to family, health, education, religion, and a host of other arenas. The authors also provide suggestions related to culturally competent practice. However, the authors do caution the reader not to rely on

culturally-specific information to guide all practice, noting that individual and group differences still exist even within cultural groups.

Language Learning and Acquisition

Adgar, C.T., Snow, C.E., & Christian, D. (Eds.). (2004). *What teachers need to know about language*.

This book is a good resource for teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. The authors discuss various issues related to early childhood education, second language learning, and teacher preparation and performance within the context of CLD classrooms.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

This book is considered a major contribution to the field of language learning and acquisition. The author discusses the overarching issues of language in the classroom, the nature of language proficiency (BICS and CALP), and the implications for pedagogical practice.

Freeman, Y., Freeman, D., & Mecuri, S. (2004). *Dual language essentials for teachers and administrators*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The authors provide administrators and teachers with essential information about curriculum and instruction, programming and planning, and assessment for dual language learners. They include research-based information and best practices, in addition to questions for consideration and reflection.

Krashen, S.D. (1981). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. English Language Teaching Series. London, UK: Prentice-Hall International Ltd.

This book is considered another major contribution to the field of language learning and acquisition. The author describes the stages of language acquisition and the various factors that influence and impact language learning.

Myths and Realities

Crawford, J. & Krashen, S. (2007). *English learners in American classrooms: 101 questions & 101 answers*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

This book provides succinct answers to a range of questions about ELLs. It covers everything from historical legislation to curriculum and instruction. For busy early professionals, it is an easily accessible and readable resource.

Haynes, J. (2007). *Getting started with English Language Learners: How educators can meet the challenge*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

In addressing myths and realities about ELLs, the author uses research-based evidence and facts to make recommendations for practice. The book includes some short “quizzes” which help the reader to identify any other misconceptions s/he may have about ELLs and to also acquire new information and perspectives.

Samway, K.D., & McKeon, D. (2007). *Myths and realities: Best practices for English language learners*. Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann.

The authors identify numerous myths related to ELLs ranging from demographics to language learning and programming. As they debunk each myth, they offer research-based evidence, demographics, and statistics to support their findings.

ELL WEB Resources

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)

<http://www.cal.org>

CAL is a private non-profit organization that promotes teaching and language learning. It has resources about teaching, language learning, language, and culture.

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

<http://www.clasp.org/>

CLASP is a non-profit organization that focuses on low-income populations. It produces research and policy briefs concerning economic, educational, and workforce issues related to children, youth, and families. Several of the research and policy documents cited in the ELL Tool Kit can be found on this website.

Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research

<http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~cmmr/>

CMMR is located at the University of Southern California (USC). This website contains numerous resources, including information about research projects, reports, grants, and other initiatives. It is dedicated to research, publication, training, and public service. The research and other activities at CMMR focus on language, language learning, culture, teacher education, recruitment and retention, and language policy, as well as other interests.

Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE)

<http://crede.berkeley.edu/>

CREDE is dedicated to improving education for students and addressing barriers to access, academic achievement, and advancement, such as language, culture, poverty, geography, and location. This website contains research publications, multimedia, professional development, a speakers' series, and announcements of special events.

Child Trends

<http://www.childtrends.org/>

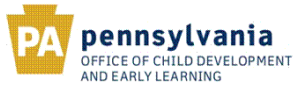
Child Trends describes itself as non-profit and non-partisan. It offers research-based data, analysis, and reports about a range of topics related to child development. There are specific reports about second language learners and their families. This website, as with others, offers a listserv for early learning professionals who would like to be kept abreast of current research, policy, and practice in the field.

Cooperative Service Area #6

http://www.cesa6.k12.wi.us/products_services/eseanochildleftbehind/ell_resources.cfm

CESA6 is a cooperative educational service center in Wisconsin. This website provides links to English Language Learner resources, including instructional resources and web links.

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS): Early Childhood Research Institute



<http://clas.uiuc.edu/>

CLAS is a federally-funded collaborative effort of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, The Council for Exceptional Children, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. CLAS gathers, analyzes, collects, and categorizes information and materials for dissemination to providers, policymakers, researchers, and the community about CLD children.

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC)

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/eclkc/index.html>

This website is associated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children and Families. It lists several areas of interest for early learning professionals, researchers, and families, with information about research and best practices, as well as other tools and resources.

ERIC Clearinghouse (ERIC)

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>

ERIC contains research studies and publications about language, language learning, and linguistics, including resources about English Language Learners, programs, and language integration.

Literacy Connections (George Washington University)

<http://www.literacyconnections.com/index.php>

This website provides research and best practices for literacy and English language learning, including specific activities for classroom use for teachers. A list of other web links is included on the website.

National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE)

<http://www.nabe.org/>

NABE is dedicated to bilingual education and bilingual educators. This website contains resources and publications about bilingual education, as well as information about research, advocacy, and policy.

National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC)

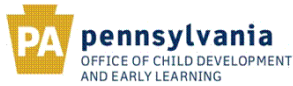
<http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/>

Research-based information and resources related to cultural competence within health care and mental health systems are provided. Included are definitions for cultural competence, assessment tools, policies, and best practices.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA)

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>

NCELA is part of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at the U.S. Department of Education. Its purpose is to produce research and to disseminate pertinent information related



to the inclusion of English Language Learners. Information about the English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and assessment, accountability, academic content standards and assessment, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and Title III administration is available through the website. There is a monthly newsletter, *AccELLerate!*, through which strategies, best practices, policy, and other news is shared with the educational community.

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

http://www.edpartnerships.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Resource_Center/Parent_Family_Engagement/Resources.htm

Information and resources to develop and sustain parent-school-community partnerships are provided. Strategies and best practices outlined and linked to theory and research.

Northwest Educational Regional Laboratory (NWREL)

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html>

NWREL is a private, non-profit organization that provides services school districts and other educational entities related to classroom teaching and learning; research, evaluation, and assessment; school and district improvement; and school, family, and community. A number of research reports and materials related to English Language Learners can be found on this website.

Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA)

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html>

OELA is the entity within the U.S. Department of Education dedicated to leadership and advocacy for English Language Learners and immigrant students in attaining English language proficiency and academic achievement. It also oversees capacity-building for foreign languages. Legislation, policies, research, and programming for ELLs are discussed and disseminated through this website.

PBS Teachers

<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/earlychildhood/>

This website under the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is devoted to early childhood education. It contains tools and resources, including multimedia, for early learning professionals, researchers, and families. It offers specific resources for ESL and ELLs.

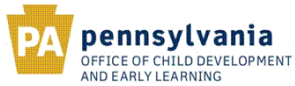
PBS: What is race?

http://www.pbs.org/search/search_results.html?q=sorting+people

Several aspects of race are explored. The website includes links to information about race/ethnicity, activities to assess self-knowledge about race/ethnicity and common myths, and several examples of activities for professional development for educators and for PreK-12 classrooms

Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE): ESL Resource Documents

<http://www.pdehigered.state.pa.us/esl/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=74490&eslNav=|4974|>



This website is part of the PDE ESL website and contains links to several documents and resources related to ELLs and to the state and federal guidelines.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

<http://www.tesol.edu>

TESOL is the professional association that focuses on English language teaching. It has multimedia resources about issues, policies, practices, and research dealing with all aspects of ESL and ESOL.

U.S. Department of Education Regional Comprehensive Centers

<http://www.ed.gov/about/contacts/gen/othersites/compcenters.html>

These Regional Comprehensive Centers provide research, dissemination of publications, and technical assistance nationally. Resources on the various websites include research, policy, and best practices for working with English Language Learners.

University of North Carolina (UNC) FPG Child Development Institute

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/>

This research institute provides access to a number of sites related to research about parent and family support, early care and education, child health and development, early identification and intervention, equity, access and inclusion, and early childhood policy. The Natural Resources website (http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/nat_allies/na_resources.cfm) coordinated by Camille Catlett can also be accessed through this website.

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium

<http://www.wida.us/>

The WIDA consortium has developed English language proficiency standards and assessments for ELLs. Pennsylvania is part of this consortium. The [PA ELPS](#) have been developed in partnership with the WIDA consortium.

Zero to Three

<http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer>

Key developmental topics related to research, education, and practice for the 0-3 age range are available on this website. Actual research documents can be downloaded and information about other available resources is listed. Training, leadership, and publication opportunities are advertised.