

Preface

Elementary school administrators and preschool directors work in schools that may look quite different from those described in their university textbooks, and these schools continue to change rapidly. Today, growing numbers of elementary schools, both public and private, provide general education, special education, and inclusion classes for 3- and 4-year-olds. Young children who are growing up in homes with languages other than English (LOTE) are the fastest-growing segment of our population. New state standards and their connection to the Common Core State Standards are changing the way administrators approach learning, accountability, and professional development. Furthermore, budget cuts and demanding new funding streams are coming and going at an alarming rate. This guide helps administrators make sense of the many factors at play as they build the best services possible for children who enter school speaking a LOTE.

Young Dual Language Learners is essential for the following people:

- Principals, directors, supervisors, and other administrators in schools or programs that serve children from age 3 to grade 3
- Administrators of programs for children who speak a LOTE at home
- General education teachers with young dual language learners (DLLs) in their classrooms, English as a second language teachers, bilingual education teachers, and special education staff working in schools serving young DLLs

This book puts the answers to all of your questions at your fingertips, giving you guidance from the leading experts in our field. You will be able to proceed with confidence as you set up rooms, hire and prepare staff, assign appropriate placements, and make sure that best practices are understood and observed.

Administrators may have to work with a variety of specialists to establish appropriate services for young children who are new to English. Many specialists have experienced rather isolated forms of professional development. Administrators therefore need to consider the following types of questions:

- Has your special education staff taken coursework on adapting instruction for DLLs?
- Has your English as a second language or bilingual education staff taken coursework about the specific learning needs of children under age 6?
- Do your general education teachers feel supported and prepared to meet the needs of children in the early grades who come with differences in language, culture, and ability?

These are issues that require the leadership of a well-informed administrator.

Regulations that affect early childhood education come from many different fronts. Elementary schools have to follow state regulations that may or may not include kindergarten. States have one separate set of special education regulations and a separate set of bilingual education regulations, but many states do not spell out what schools should do when a child is identified in both of those categories. Many public and private elementary schools offer preschool classes as well. Depending on the state, those classes may or may not be subject to the same rules as K–3. Furthermore, many schools provide preschool by partnering with local private preschool programs or Head Start programs. These programs generally follow regulations from the state office of health and human services. In addition, Head Start programs are subject to many federal rules tied to their funding. There is a lot of information for an administrator to understand and put into place to make this all work.

This array of regulations also means that administrators have to be in contact with more state, county, local, and even federal offices. When different streams of funding are involved, each stream also comes with particular rules. In this changing landscape, no book could cover or anticipate everything you would need to know. Instead, we put administrators on a path to success and alert them to changes they need to be aware of.

Our expert contributors carefully describe the ways in which young DLLs are like K–3 learners and the ways in which they are quite different. The contributors help preschool administrators understand more about the rules, regulations, and expectations faced by their elementary school counterparts, and they help district administrators understand the nuances of operating preK–3 programs. You will find answers to questions such as how to interview, select, and prepare the right teachers for the right settings, and you will find a combination of research based and real-life experience to give you the answers you need.

The role of a child's home language in the educational process and environment in the early years is subject to a great deal of misunderstanding and controversy. Our experts take on this topic from several perspectives, including how to use paraprofessionals appropriately to support home languages and how to address different home languages when assessing children and classrooms.

Features

To enhance the reader's experience using this book, we provide several learning support features. These special features allow the book to be used as an in-depth planning tool, an easy-access desktop reference for any early childhood education administrator, and a great resource for graduate courses and high-level professional development.

Key Considerations for Language Plan

Each chapter begins with a set of Key Considerations for Language Plan to show administrators how they can use what they read to create a specific language plan for their schools that represents the shared knowledge and vision of the entire school community. With so many factors to consider and so many changes and challenges to face, it is very important for early childhood educators to develop written language plans. For classroom teachers, this plan should address the overall approach to first and second language supports for students by taking into account the languages used by the staff and the context of the curriculum and resources available. Classroom teachers may also add a daily language plan to their lesson plans to spell out exactly how they will make adaptations for DLLs on any given day.

Directors, principals, and other administrators must have a building- or program-wide language plan that addresses broader issues while incorporating the elements of the individual classroom plans. The general language plan should address how the school will provide for student learning opportunities, staff support, family engagement, and teaching strategies as appropriate for the needs and requirements of that program. In its 2008 semiannual report—*Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take?*—the Office of Head Start emphasizes the importance of having a comprehensive language plan: “Successfully serving children and families from various language and cultural backgrounds cannot be accomplished without a program-wide, comprehensive plan” (p. 2). As the full report clearly indicates, supporting children in the acquisition of two languages is a complex, multi-faceted task that requires intentional support at all levels of a program.

Terms and Glossary

Elementary school administrators and preschool directors may encounter a wide array of terms when attending meetings or reading guidance about working with young children who have home languages other than English. In addition to the officially sanctioned terms used in conjunction with federal funding and assessment initiatives, other terms arise from state policy, local tradition, and other factors. For example, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has joined with the Office of Head Start to use the term **dual language learner** (DLL) to refer to young children who have home languages other than English, and DLL is the term we see more often in preschool. The international association Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) uses the term **English language learner** (ELL) to refer to those students who are officially designated for **English as a second language** (ESL) instruction, and ELL and **English learner** (EL) are the terms we see most often in school districts. We are also beginning to see the term **emergent bilingual** used to refer to students who have home languages other than English and who are acquiring English in preschool and in K–12 districts. Terms that are boldfaced in the text are defined in the glossary.

Resources and Questions

Each chapter concludes with tools that can immediately be used in practice:

- Self-Assessment Checklist
- Planning Guide
- Language Development Graphic
- Assets/Resources/Needs Assessment Grid
- Assessment Comparison Chart
- Resource Connections
- Advocacy Planning Tool
- Questions for Reflection

These practical tools help administrators and teachers apply their understanding of important issues in educating young DLLs within their school context.

Young Dual Language Learners has been created for you—the educational leader in early childhood education—the all-important foundation for our nation’s future success.