

## **No Kidding! Bilingual Books Help Prepare Dual Language Learners for Kindergarten, says New CECER-DLL Report**

A scary new building. Big kid chairs. A terrifying new teacher whose smile may or may not be genuine. Swarms of giant children rampaging around an unfamiliar playground. And my daddy's just gone off and left me... The first day of kindergarten is tough!

...Now imagine how much tougher it is for dual language learners (DLLs), lost in an aural fog of language they don't understand. Not to mention that they will now be expected to meet a whole raft of new Core Curriculum Standards during their journey from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade.

***How can you, their preschool teachers, help prepare them for the huge transition into "Big School"? And where do bilingual books fit in?***

The recently-published Center for Early Care and Education Research-Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL) report states that "Unfortunately, the disconnect between ECE policies and practices and those typically used in k-12 classrooms often means that once they enter kindergarten, DLLs accomplishments and abilities in both of their languages are not identified and built upon and they are not provided with the time and support they need to reach their optimal development in either language." Authors Dina Castro, Linda Espinosa, and Gene Garcia make it abundantly clear that more needs to be done to support DLLs as they get ready for kindergarten in order to capitalize on the good work that's already been done at the pre-k level. They say there needs to be more "coherence" between the programs.

***How can I use the report to make a difference in my classroom?***

There are many ways in which preschool educators can create that coherence. You can get started *now* using bilingual books to make the transition to kindergarten easier for your students. There are several key areas where bilingual books can help, both academically and socially. This article will focus on how the use of bilingual books can support the transition from an academic perspective and link to the Common Core Standards. Our next post will examine how the books support the transition by building interpersonal skills.

Teachers who use bilingual books can create preschool links to the k-12 Common Core Standards, specifically in speaking and listening, and reading. By the time they leave a preschool class in which bilingual books have been utilized, they have built up a strong foundation in the key academic areas in which they will be assessed during the next thirteen years of their education.

## ***Speaking and Listening***

The discourse skills that children learn in their home language can support their ability to use those skills in English. With bilingual literacy resources, DLLs will have plenty of practice discussing a variety of topics in the language in which they have the most extensive vocabulary, while gaining new vocab in their home language *and* in English with the rest of the class.

This practice is valuable enough for a student's general growth and development! However, it also happens to underpin the skills they need to meet Speaking and Listening Literacy Standard 1 ("participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own"). By discussing bilingual books, they'll be up to speed with their monolingual peers when it comes to oral assessments in kindergarten.

## ***Reading***

The Common Core State Standards Initiative explicitly recommends "extensive reading of stories, dramas, poems and myths from *diverse cultures*". Therefore stocking your "literacy-rich environment" with books in your students' home languages *and* with stories from their home cultures will benefit all of your students – not just the DLLs. Bilingual versions of the Bengali folktale *Buri and the Marrow*, or Russian folktale *The Giant Turnip* will provide home language resources to your DLLs while also exposing all students to diverse stories.

These books will also help pre-k students start to crack Reading Literacy Standards 1 (reading for meaning and making inferences) and 2 (understanding central ideas and themes in a text). Teachers can go over the stories in both languages and ask questions about them in the students' home languages so the whole class can access the keys to these standards. *¿Cómo se sentían los cerdos cuando el lobo feroz derribó su casa? ¿De qué material crees que deberíamos construir nuestras casas?* Of course your little ones aren't expected to write essay-style answers about the way the three little pigs felt, or what materials the story suggests we should use to build our homes, but this type of thinking lays the groundwork for developed responses to fiction and non-fiction once they've made the transition to grade school. Once your pre-k DLLs have accessed the stories and their vocabulary, they can start to move on to deeper and higher-order thinking about them that can only make their k-12 experience richer.

The CECER-DLL Report states in no uncertain terms that DLLs need the help of their pre-k teachers to thrive in the k-12 environment. The power of bilingual books to help *you* give them that help is amazing.

*This article was originally published on the Language Lizard Blog ([blog.LanguageLizard.com](http://blog.LanguageLizard.com)). The blog supports educators and parents of language learners and helps bring multiculturalism to the classroom. Please visit our blog for more informative articles to help you teach children about diverse languages and cultures.*