STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM

For Classroom Teachers

A Read to Succeed Workshop

UNITED WAY OF METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE

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DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Dual Language Learner is just one of many terms that can be used to describe a child whose first language is not English. These children may also be called, "bilingual," "multilingual," "English language learner," "Second language learner," etc. The term Dual Language Learner is used to emphasize that the child is learning their home language in addition to English.
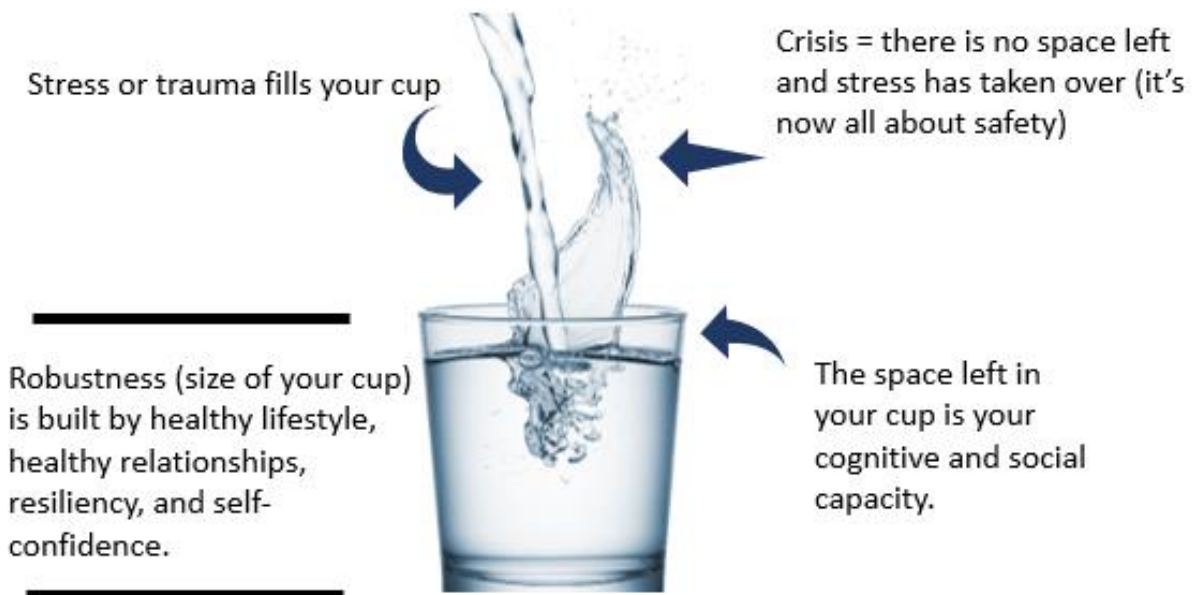

Historically, our nation has tended to regard differences, especially language differences, as cultural handicaps rather than cultural resources. (Meier & Cazden, 1982) "Dual Language Learner" conveys respect and value for a child's home culture, language, and diverse learning styles as much as the new language and culture they are working to acquire.

Working with Dual Language Learners can be great, but it can also be difficult. Take a minute to think about your DLL students:

It can be **great** to work with Dual Language Learners when…	It can be **difficult** to work with Dual Language Learners when…
When I work with Dual Language Learners I wonder if…	My hopes for my Dual Language Learners are…

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Robustness = the capacity to hold the energy needed to live the life the individual desires to live.

Stress or trauma fills your cup

Crisis = there is no space left and stress has taken over (it's now all about safety)

Robustness (size of your cup) is built by healthy lifestyle, healthy relationships, resiliency, and self-confidence.

The space left in your cup is your cognitive and social capacity.

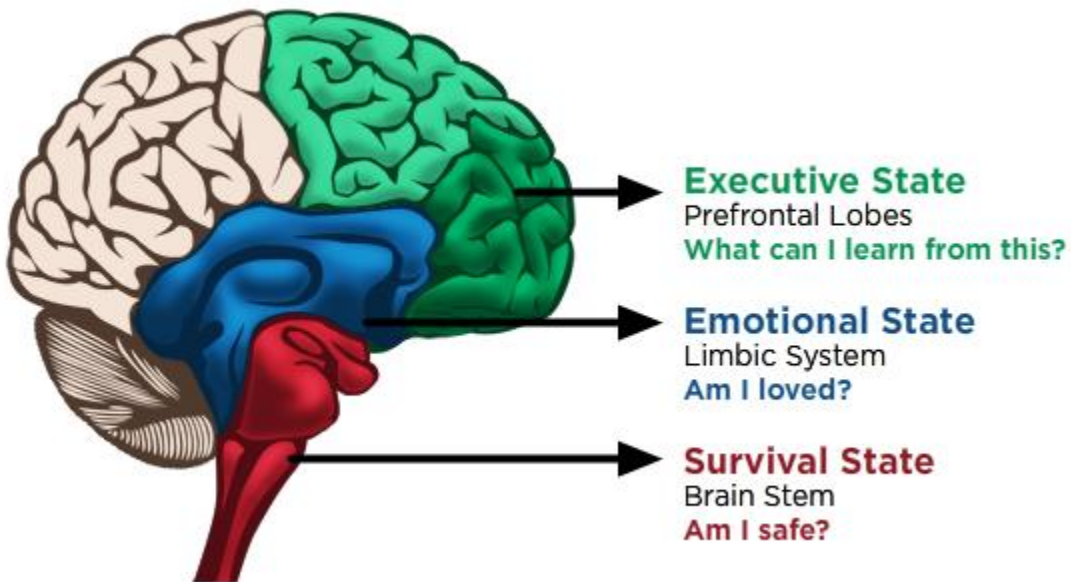**Window of Tolerance – where's there's still room in the cup**

Within our window of tolerance, we are:

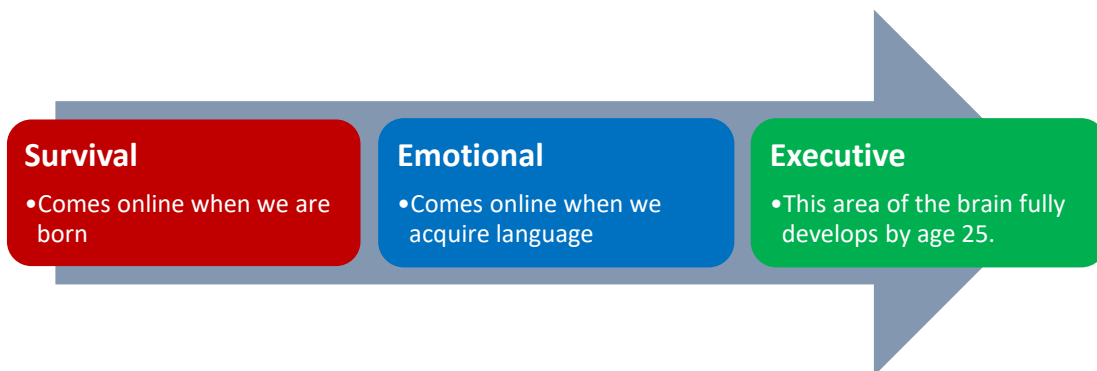- Flexible
- Adaptive
- Coherent
- Energized
- Stable

Outside our window of tolerance, we experience:

- Hyperarousal (fight or flight)
- Hypoarousal (freeze)

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The Conscious Discipline Brain State Model

Executive State
Prefrontal Lobes
What can I learn from this?

Emotional State
Limbic System
Am I loved?

Survival State
Brain Stem
Am I safe?

Typical Brain Development in a Healthy Environment

Survival
•Comes online when we are born

Emotional
•Comes online when we acquire language

Executive
•This area of the brain fully develops by age 25.

A Traumatized Brain

Executive
•Everything is about SAFETY

Emotional
•Everything is about SAFETY

Survival
•Everything is about SAFETY

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What happens in care will have a tremendous impact on a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development, influencing the child's values, view of the world, perspectives on family, and connections to community.

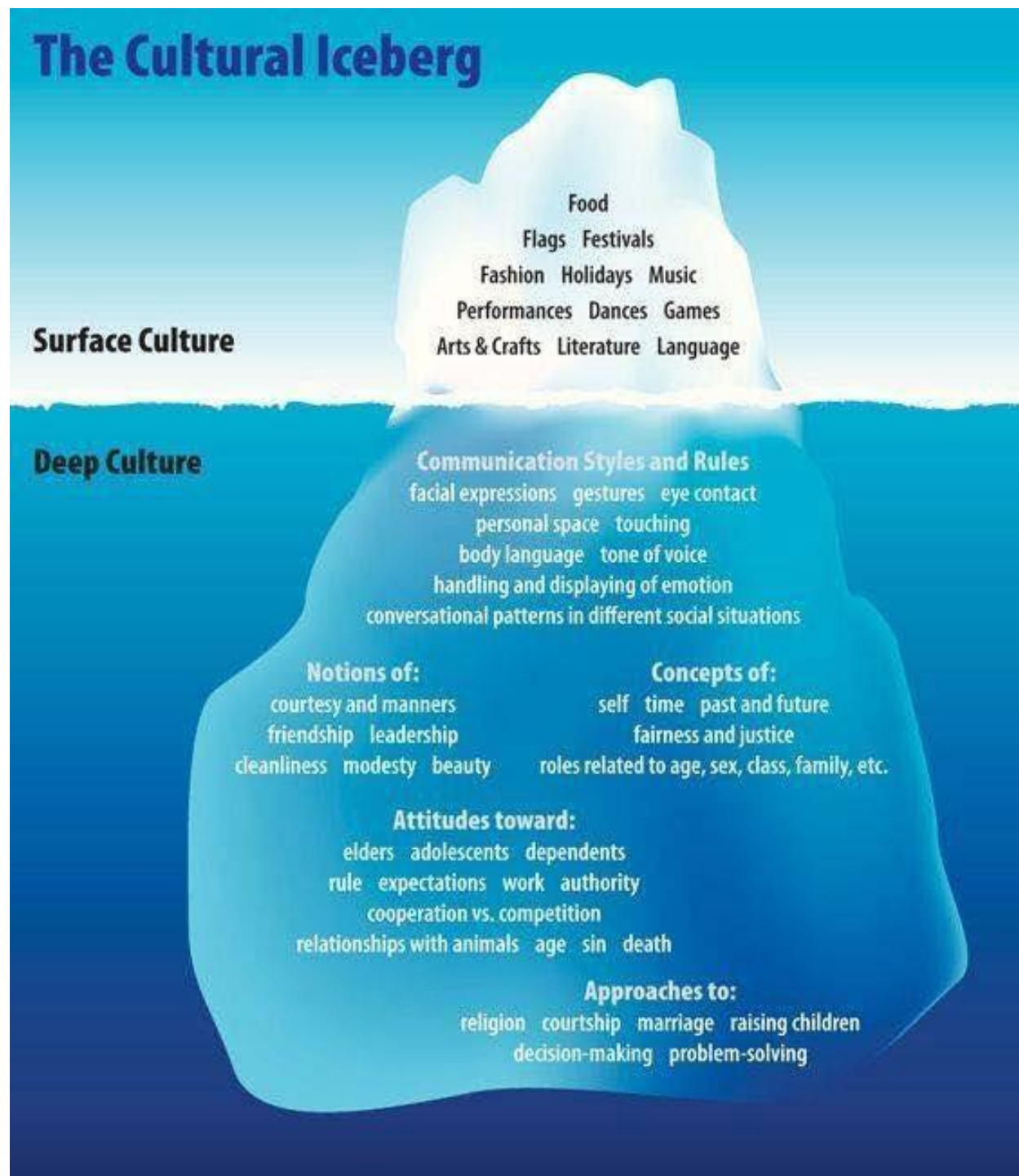**Learning only happens with a Felt Sense of Safety**

A felt sense of safety is when a person feels accepted, respected, and connected.

- Who I am is good

- I contribute to my community (I matter)

- I have value and am valued

For the Optimal Learning and Development of All Children, Educators Must Be Willing to:

Accept	accept the legitimacy of children's home language,
Respect	respect (hold in high regard) and value (esteem, appreciate) the home culture
Promote and encourage	promote and encourage the active involvement and support of all families, including extended and nontraditional family units.

WE START CREATING A FELT SENSE OF SAFETY THROUGH SURFACE CULTURE.

The Cultural Iceberg

Surface Culture

Food
Flags Festivals
Fashion Holidays Music
Performances Dances Games
Arts & Crafts Literature Language

Deep Culture

Communication Styles and Rules
facial expressions   gestures   eye contact
personal space   touching
body language   tone of voice
handling and displaying of emotion
conversational patterns in different social situations

Notions of:
courtesy and manners
friendship leadership
cleanliness modesty beauty

Concepts of:
self time past and future
fairness and justice
roles related to age, sex, class, family, etc.

Attitudes toward:
elders adolescents dependents
rule expectations work authority
cooperation vs. competition
relationships with animals age sin death

Approaches to:
religion courtship marriage raising children
decision-making problem-solving

EDWARD T. HALL'S CULTURAL ICEBERG MODEL

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SURFACE CULTURE IS SIGNIFICANT, NOT SUPERFICIAL

Surface culture "is the sacred visible component of a culture; a collective community of customs which were built from prior generations. Heartfelt memories and fragile emotions adhere to our family's history and ethnic roots. When we expose students to many surface cultures, we are creating an atmosphere of unbiased understanding and compassion with one another." – Melissa Campesi

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

1. Connect through Surface Culture
   a) **Display** letters, words and numbers in the children's **native languages**, along with English letters, words and numbers.
   b) **Include** books in the children's **native language** in your classroom library.
   c) **Encourage** parents, staff, or other speakers of the children's native language to read books in the child's native language, provide information on classroom content in that language, and link English to native language vocabulary.
   d) **Use** the child's native language to provide support for new topics whenever possible.
   e) **Include** the children's language and culture in the classroom – including the alphabet, books, stories, songs, food, dance, and whichever aspects of culture the parents are willing to share.
   f) **Learn** a few selected words in the child's language to show a willingness to take risks like those asked of children as they learn a second language.
   g) **Use** images in the classroom of the children and their families, teachers, and staff as well as images of various cultural groups, ages, and abilities doing everyday activities.
   h) **Use** images in the classroom that counter stereotypes, reflect diversity in gender roles, and show diversity of family styles and configurations.

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2. Connect through Supporting Social and Emotional Needs
    a) **Use a predictable** classroom routine with **predictable** activities, so that children can participate in the classroom even if they do not understand what is being said.
    b) Provide a **safe haven** in the classroom where children spend some time in quiet activities to give them a break from challenging interactions if they get overwhelmed (a Safe Place, a puzzle area, some manipulatives)
    c) **Explain** to English-speaking peers that dual-language learners use different words when they are at home, so they begin to understand why the child is not communicating in English.
    d) **Provide** English-speaking peers with strategies for interacting with DLL peers (inviting the child to play, using gestures, using words the child knows).
3. Connect through Using Impactful Instructional Practices
    a) **Gesture** and use other types of nonverbal communication
    b) **Talk** about what is happening, narrating classroom events ("I am going to open this box." "Tommy is eating pizza.").
    c) **Simplify** your language when speaking to beginning speakers (and use gestures along with the language).
    d) **Repeat** key words in a sentence.
    e) **Link** what children know to what they do not know using **individualized** interactions.
    e) **Encourage** English-speaking and DLL peers to interact by having them sit next to each other, creating a buddy system, or giving them shared activities.
    f) **Explore** rich and **engaging content** in your classroom, especially science, math and social studies topics.
    g) **Choose curricular topics** that are meaningful and that children can explore in **hands-on** activities **Identify instructional goals** that are individualized to the child's developmental level and are connected to meaningful content.
    h) **Use manipulatives** that children can touch and explore.
    i) **Teach content multiple ways** including through language, touch, and movement.

j) **Reread** books with a specific purpose for each reading, emphasizing accessible language rather than sticking strictly to the book's text, and in an engaging manner.
k) **Read** books with predictable text.
l) **Incorporate** gesture and movement into read-alouds, along with chanting of important words in the book.
m) **Involve** parents by informing them of curricular topics and encouraging them to introduce vocabulary and do activities on those topics both at school and at home.
n) **Support** outdoor play, using predictable routines.
o) **Provide** explicit vocabulary instruction (DLLs can't take advantage of learning words through conversation and instruction until they are proficient in the new language).
p) **Provide** focused, small group activities (DLLs need additional exposure to words and concepts in the new language).
q) **Use** hand puppets and games to show concepts in action and to engage children physically.
r) **Use** materials with familiar content to promote comprehension and learning of new concepts and skills.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Google Translate (just type "translate" or "translate English to Spanish" in the Google search bar)
2. Specific Strategies to Support Dual Language Learners (DLLs) When Adults Do Not Speak Their Language: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/specific-strategies-support-dual-language-learners-dlls-when-adults-do-not
3. Language Castle: http://www.languagecastle.com/

REFERENCES

Engaging Dual Language Learners in Head Start Preschool Classrooms
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/workshops-families-dll-preschool.pdf

"Surface Culture: The Visible Gateway to Deep Culture" by Melissa Campesi
https://www.schoolrubric.com/surface-culture-the-visible-gateway-to-deep-culture/

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STAGES OF LEARNING AND USING A NEW LANGUAGE

Language Use	Examples	Social-emotional results
Use of home language exclusively	Only uses home language	Child may be feeling isolated, may need some quiet time away from the group, as well as opportunities to be included and interact with the group.
Nonverbal period	Showing, requesting, protesting, imitating, spectating, rehearsing, experimenting with sounds	Child may be realizing no one understands him/her yet, need for quiet should be respected, while the child is also included in activities nonverbally (clapping, movement, etc.).
New language use	Speaks single words or phrases in new language	Child needs encouragement and opportunities for interaction – may be nervous about communicating.
Productive language	Can use the new language to form new sentences	Child may be excited to use new language, but also get nervous sometimes. Still needs both nonverbal and verbal supports.
Social language fluency	Uses the new language fluently in social settings	Child may be uncomfortable speaking with strangers or in new situations, may need help with new teachers and students
Full language fluency	Uses varied and comprehensive vocabulary, fluent language use in varied settings	Child can participate fully if the child's cultural and linguistic background are respected

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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY:

EXAMPLES FROM A MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM

Assim and Clara attend Alicia and Sebastian's preschool classroom. Assim has been very quiet and withdrawn since he arrived in the classroom; no one else speaks or understands his language, Arabic. Assim sits alone and sometimes mutters quietly to himself. His parents explain through an interpreter that he is active and social at home, though he has become more quiet since the move. Clara speaks a different dialect of Spanish than anyone else in the class. Sometimes she is able to make her needs known through a combination of English and Spanish. Her parents hope to see her continue to be bilingual, and say that at home she is active and well-behaved, helping with the new baby. Alicia and Sebastian are proud of how quickly Clara seems to be learning English, however she can become very frustrated and agitated. Alicia has noticed that this frequently happens when she has to sit for a long time for circle time or read-alouds. In fact, Alicia has noticed that many of the dual-language learning children become very distracted during sitting times. They start to whisper to each other, or try to move out of the circle, or just look away. Sebastian has noticed that free play is also very challenging. Assim tends to sit in one place by himself, while Clara moves very quickly through activities and has begun shoving and acting out. Alicia and Sebastian have also noticed that the other children who speak and understand English well seem unsure of how to interact with the children who don't speak English.

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are Assim.	Imagine you are Clara.
How are you feeling?	How are you feeling?
What is your language use in the classroom?	What is your language use in the classroom?
What are your social-emotional needs in the classroom?	What are your social-emotional needs in the classroom?
What strategies might Alicia and Sebastian try to support you?	What strategies might Alicia and Sebastian try to support you?