Supporting Dual Language Learners: Teacher Plan-Do-Review in the Preschool Classroom

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The number and percentage of children who are growing up speaking two or more languages is steadily increasing in the United States. According to the most recent Federal statistics, the number of school-age dual language learners (DLLs) in the US has doubled in the last 30 years (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015). Eighty-five percent of Head Start classrooms have at least one child who is a DLL (Office of Head Start, 2014). And there is a great likelihood that a growing number of early childhood educators will teach in classrooms with multiple children learning multiple different languages. With these facts in mind, early education teachers would be wise to enhance their skills and build up their store of intentional strategies in order to work effectively and compassionately with DLLs and their families.

Plan-do-review for success

Plan-do-review is an integral component of the HighScope Curriculum. The process of children engaging daily in planning, carrying out plans, and then recalling what they did often drives more complex play and learning over time. Teaching teams working with DLLs can benefit from this same cycle.

Consider the *plan* part of the plan-do-review process to be the preliminary work teachers do to learn more about each DLL in order to match their support to the strengths and needs of individual children. The *do* part of the process includes the specific teaching strategies used to support and scaffold DLLs. And the commitment to reviewing and analyzing data collected as DLLs engage in classroom activities and routines is the *review* part. As with plan-do-review for children, the review component can drive more information gathering, generate plans that match children's development in a timely way, and encourage continuous reflection in an ongoing cycle.

Teaching teams should consider a variety of strategies for each part of the plan-do-review process to support DLLs in English language and home language skills, as well as other areas of learning and development. Using a variety of strategies ensures that teachers are attending to the specific needs of individual DLLs.

> Teachers can use the plan-do-review cycle themselves when working with dual language learners.

Plan: Understanding Children's Experiences, Strengths, and Needs

In the planning phase, teaching teams seek to optimize their understanding of background information and capitalize on the linguistic and cultural experiences of DLLs. They can begin to plan ways to support communication based on the strengths and needs of individual DLLs. The following strategies are useful in the *planning* phase:

- PLAN to establish ongoing partnerships with families. Find out the family's preferred communication method (e.g., text, e-mail, phone call, written, face-to-face).
- PLAN to interview or survey family members (possibly with the help of an interpreter, if necessary) to establish a basic understanding of the child's past language experiences. (Sample questions: How many languages is your child growing up with? Tell me more about how English fits into your child's experiences. Has your child always been exposed to more than one language [simultaneous]; one language at an early age and then another later [sequential]? Which language does your child use more often? Tell me more about how and when your child uses English.)
- PLAN to interview or survey family members to learn specific information about each DLL. (Sample inquiries: What are your child's favorite activities, materials, toys, and interests? What are some past experiences your child might enjoy talking about at school? What books or stories does your child enjoy? What does your child sometimes worry about? What type of play does your child often enjoy?)
- PLAN to learn some basic words and phrases the child and family use to refer to routines, areas, materials, processes, and basic needs. (Sample inquiries: How does your child refer to bathroom; food or meals; sleep or nap; mom, dad, sister, brother; play, outside, blocks, doll, books, etc.?)
- PLAN regularly scheduled and consistent weekly/monthly communication protocols with each family. As issues, celebrations, and questions arise, regular communication helps

teams PLAN to calibrate their teaching to unique DLL needs and also strengthens school-family partnerships.
- PLAN specific strategies to both support and extend opportunities for DLLs in all areas of learning. Insert these strategies into lesson plan forms as reminders.
- PLAN to observe DLL students carefully, documenting language and action in order to support new and emerging skills in all areas of development.

Do: Scaffolding Early Dual Language Learning

The DO part of plan-do-review signifies the action teachers can take to support and extend learning opportunities for DLLs. The following are some strategies that teachers have successfully used by applying them to the developmental levels and needs of individual DLLs:

- DO encourage all forms of communication (verbal, nonverbal, sign language, home language, code-mixing, attempts at English, writing, and drawing).
- DO support DLLs in expressing their understandings by using questioning facial expressions and body language along with a few key phrases, such as "Why did that happen?" and "I wonder..." in the child's home language.
- DO accept nonverbal responses and responses in the home language, English, or a combination of both.

The DO part of plan-do-review signifies actions teachers can take to support and extend DLLs' learning.

Record responses that you may not understand for later translation.
- DO employ the use of nonverbal cues, clear demonstrations, gestures, and visual supports to help DLLs understand what is communicated in English.
- DO provide artifacts and print examples throughout the environment that reflect the language and culture of individual DLLs.
- DO engage in team discussions based on observational data that target specific strategies to use with a particular DLL during various parts of the daily routine.
- DO promote and encourage peer-to-peer communication and interaction.
- DO provide opportunities for DLLs to write, and accept use of both languages in their writing.
- DO structure the daily routine to be consistent and predictable. Provide a posted daily routine with supporting, clear visual cues.
- DO speak clearly, and at a rate that matches the child's ability to comprehend. Pair some words in the home language with the same word in English.
- DO concentrate on nouns and actions that can be concretely demonstrated. Use the actual word instead of pronouns (e.g., *Jake* rather than *him*; *pass the carrots* rather than *pass them to me*).
- DO partner English speakers with DLLs for activities and tasks.



Provide books and other print materials that reflect the language and culture of the children.

- DO provide books and other literacy materials in English and other languages.
- DO provide brief and explicit English language instruction based on the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children.

Review: Reflecting and Further Planning

Teaching teams often collect, discuss, and REVIEW observational data for individual children. Specific anecdotes and summary reports (as provided in COR Advantage 1.5) become a springboard for reflection and further planning as the cycle continues. The following strategies support the final part of the plan-do-review process:

> **Planning informs what you do and, in turn, your review of what you did informs further planning.**

- REVIEW anecdotes and reports for individual DLLs to determine developmental levels in English language learning and other areas.
- REVIEW and revise support and extension plans based on pertinent and timely observations.
- REVIEW observational data reports (e.g., COR Advantage Developmental Summaries) to determine gaps in data for each DLL. Then focus on using specific collection strategies to gain important information. Some strategies may include:
  - Determine if a DLL could demonstrate understanding of a particular concept or skill in a nonverbal way. Decide which content-specific words you, as a teacher, might need to learn to recognize and speak in the child's language to determine understanding (e.g., numbers, names of shapes, colors, etc.).
  - Define who, besides the teaching staff, might know more about a child's development in a particular area and reach out to that person.
  - Devise ways to use technology or a translator to support your understanding of what a child knows and can do.
- REVIEW your observations with families often. Their insights and knowledge can support a PLAN for your next move in scaffolding your DLL student.



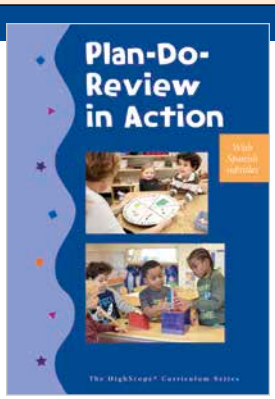
This teaching team uses specific anecdotes to determine how best to support the DLLs in their classroom.

Remember that each step is part of a cycle. The planning that your team does informs what you do — the actions that you take — and in turn, your review of those actions informs further planning. Just as the plan-do-review process provides a way for preschoolers to accomplish something important to them, the same process can be used by their teachers to problem solve and approach the learning of DLLs with a sense of purpose. ■

References

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2015). *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2015*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

Office of Head Start (2014). *Program information report, 2013–14*. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.



Plan-Do-Review in Action DVD

Make play both fun and intentional! This DVD presents the three components that make up the plan-do-review process and how they encourage purposeful play. Explore more at highscope.org.

P1432 $39.95 40 minutes (2 discs), English and Spanish subtitles, viewer guide included.