

10 Research-Based Facts About Maintaining Home Language in Early Childhood Settings

1. Home language builds the foundation for future academic success.

When children develop strong skills in their first language, they build cognitive structures that support later learning in English. (Espinosa, 2020; NAEYC, 2024b)

2. Bilingualism enhances brain development.

Children who grow up with two or more languages show stronger executive functioning, including better attention, memory, and task-switching skills. (Barac et al., 2014; Bialystok, 2011)

3. Language is central to identity.

Hearing and using one's home language helps children feel connected to their families and proud of who they are. (Hurtado, 2023; Tabors, 2008)

4. Children do not get confused by learning two languages.

Code-mixing is a normal and healthy part of language development—not a sign of delay or confusion. (Uccelli, 2023; Tabors, 2008)

5. Encouraging English-only use at home can harm development.

When families try to speak English instead of their strongest language, conversations often become less rich, reducing language growth overall. (Espinosa, 2020; Uccelli, 2023)



INDIANA INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc

6. Children learn more when they feel emotionally safe.

Hearing their home language in the classroom helps DLLs feel secure and included, which supports learning and behavior.
(Hurtado, 2023; NAEYC, 2024b)

7. Multilingual classrooms benefit all children.

Monolingual children exposed to linguistic diversity develop greater empathy, perspective-taking, and social awareness.
(Fan et al., 2015)



8. Supporting home language strengthens family partnerships.

When educators affirm a family's language, they build trust and open communication between school and home.
(Espinosa, 2020; Zepeda et al., 2011)

9. Multilingualism supports literacy development.

Skills like storytelling, rhyming, and vocabulary transfer between languages—supporting early literacy in both languages.
(Castro et al., 2011; Tabors, 2008)

10. Early exposure to multiple languages is a window of opportunity.

The early years are the most effective time for developing multiple languages. Delaying exposure reduces the chance of full fluency.
(Conboy & Kuhl, 2011; Uccelli, 2023)



Funded by the Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning.
Created by the Early Childhood Center, 2025



INDIANA INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc