



## Family Engagement in PN-3 Programs Through Respect for Home Culture and Language



**Case Study:** Juan Pablo is a new father with big dreams for his baby's future success. He knows that education will play an important role in their child's life. He is hearing mixed messages about whether or not he should be speaking Spanish, their home language, to their child, and wondering when she should be exposed to English.

### **Latino Infant Initiative: Policy Goal #3**

Support family engagement that acknowledges the historical legacy of language suppression and respects home language(s).

### **What This Goal Means**

Help families access early childhood programs that understand and value the benefits of their culture and home language in their children's growth and development.

### **Key Points**

**Historical context:** Historically, immigrant families have faced policies and systemic discrimination that devalue their home language and culture, often leading to experiences of feeling like an outsider.

### **Why does this matter for Latino family engagement in early childhood programs?**

- For generations, Latino families have been urged to abandon their home language. However, scientific evidence shows that home languages do not hinder children from learning English or school success.
- Keeping a child from using their home language can negatively affect their well-being.
- Family home language and culture form the foundation of a child's identity, social-emotional development, and language acquisition, impacting their future learning and well-being.

**Respect for Home Language and Culture Matters:** Early childhood programs must show genuine respect for a family's home language and culture as a foundation for building trust and encouraging their participation. This includes acknowledging for families the value and assets of multilingualism.

### **Why does respect for home language and culture matter for Latino family engagement?**

- Recent research indicates that infants can develop and thrive in two languages.
- When educators and institutions demonstrate respect for a family's language and culture, it creates a sense of trust and rapport, making families more likely to participate in their children's education.
- Maintaining a child's home language helps preserve family communication patterns and access to intergenerational wisdom.



## Celebrate bilingualism

Teachers can promote the value of bilingualism and multilingualism as assets. For example, publicly display signs, materials, and artwork in multiple languages, and celebrate cultural diversity through classroom themes, activities, and events.

**Bilingual early childhood education matters: Significant benefits are emerging in current research. What does the research-based evidence say?**

- Brain development: The brain is most receptive to language learning during early childhood, making it an ideal time to learn multiple languages.
- Cognitive benefits: Studies show bilingual children often perform better on tasks than their peers who speak only one language.
- Language skills: Learning multiple languages early can strengthen a child’s overall language skills in both languages, including reading and writing abilities.
- Cultural awareness: Bilingual classrooms can promote cultural understanding.

## Learn and Engage

**Parent leaders may want to explore what kinds of support can aid a young child’s language development.** *An example of an app that can help families includes Vroom Brain Building Moments - Vroom helps parents boost their child’s learning during the time they already spend together. Vroom meets parents where they are, through the people they already trust and the places they already go. Vroom brain building tips for families can be accessed in English and in Spanish via the Vroom app, by text or by Alexa.*

**What programs can help build parents skills to guide their young child’s learning?** *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors (AP/OD) is an evidence-based parent leadership program for Latino parents with children aged birth to five. This 10-session curriculum works with parents and children to build parent leadership skills and promote positive outcomes for children. Available in Spanish and English, the curriculum covers topics like brain development, early literacy, bilingualism, math, technology, and civic engagement. Each session is grounded in a “dicho” or popular saying. Independent evaluations have validated the program’s impact, demonstrating significant growth in parenting practices that promote school readiness.*

Home visiting programs offer crucial support to Latino families, providing guidance on child development and health in the comfort of their homes. Research shows that families who participate in evidence-based home visiting programs experience improvements in parenting skills. *Are you aware of any home visiting programs in your community? Are they supportive of home language?*



## LEARN MORE

[Latino Infant Initiative](#)

[Abriendo Puertas / Open Doors](#)

[Parent Self-Advocacy: Supporting Intentional Responses to Misinformation About Early Bilingualism](#)

[Informing Culturally Responsive Training for Home Visitors: Supporting Dual Language Learners](#)

[Latino Infants: A Continuing Imperative](#)

[Crucial Conversations: Discussing Early Dual Language Development with Speech/Language Therapists](#)