



Maintaining your relationship with families when you don't share a language

Working with third parties can promote communication and supports building safe, respectful and reciprocal relationships between you and multilingual families.

Interpreters and community language workers are an invaluable resource when maintaining partnerships with multilingual families. When using a third party for language support with families it is important to use the resource as a tool for facilitating strong reciprocal relationship with families.

Developing and maintaining reciprocal relationships

The VEYLDF Practice Principle Guide Partnerships with Families (2017) clearly articulates the importance of building effective partnerships with families for successful and sustained engagement in early years services. Early Childhood Professionals want families to have a sense of belonging and lead the decision making in their child's learning and development. This can be successful when using a third party to facilitate reciprocal conversations with the educator and the family throughout their journey with a service. This additional resource should not be used only for delivering or collecting information about the child, but also to understand the family's story, their perspectives on their child and their goals.

It is important for the service to welcome the interpreters or community language workers in building a relationship with the family and the service. Involving them in the conversation where they can share their experiences and memories will make for a more authentic and natural relationship between the three parties.

Selecting the right support

Support:	Interpreter	Community Language Worker	Translator
Purpose:	Formal conversations such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sensitive conversations about the child's development or second year of kindergarten funding – Conversations with the service, family and other professionals, i.e. allied health – Kindergarten information sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Facilitating a relationship between the child and teacher, child and peers, child and environment – Supporting children's transition to the service or/and to school – Understanding family context – Informal conversations about the program and child's learning and interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Translating service documents in family languages, i.e. Newsletters, permission forms, enrolment forms, allergy plans etc.

How to engage in meaningful conversations when using an Interpreter or Bilingual Worker

Communicate openly and clearly: Create a space where everyone's input is valued. Regularly ask for parents' input through questions that require embellishment (not just yes/no answers), and check in with them frequently to ensure that they understand what's happening.

- *"How does your child learn best?"*
- *"When is your child most talkative?"*

Affirm families' competencies: Look for ways to identify and build on families' strengths.

- *"What do you and your family enjoy doing at home?"*

Make mutual, joint decisions: Have conversations that include parents as equal participants, and agree together on goals, priorities, strategies, or plans regarding the child's learning and development.

- *"So we are going to encourage him to use more language at meal times, what are some ways we can do that?"*

Share information and resources: Making suggestions, sharing your experience or knowledge of the child will give the family an opportunity to hear you know their child and are there to support their learning and the family.

- *"Your child was always very talkative at meal times, they used this routine to connect with their friends, do you find the same at home?"*

Use observations and data: The family will have important observational information to share, including the child's skill levels and progress toward developmental goals.

- *"How did you go at meal times, did the strategies encourage any new language?"*

Model and suggest ways to extend learning at home.

- *"What is something you do as a family every day?"*
- *"To help with your child's goal around language and numbers you could sing a number song at bath time"*
- *"1, 2, 3, 4, 5, once I caught a fish alive"*
- *"Do you think this is doable?"*

Use pauses and simple language: This will allow the interpreter to clearly understand your message and the family to identify with some of the language.

For further support in engaging actively with multilingual families, get in touch with fkaCS:

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References

Foundation House: Working Effectively With Interpreters to Support Families from Refugee Backgrounds.

NAEYC, 2019. Five Tips for Engaging Multilingual Children in Conversation.

fka Children's Services: What are your Language Support Needs?

fka Children's Services: The Role of the Bilingual Worker.