

  Head Start Policies	<b>TELAMON CORPORATION</b> Transition Resources Corporation	
	<b>Title:</b>	Use of Language in Early Childhood Education Classrooms
	<b>Originating Office:</b>	Corporate, Raleigh, NC
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Telamon believes that, as parents are a child's first teacher, it is essential that the culture and language of a child's family be supported. Telamon provides a language rich program that creates a multi-cultural environment and supports the child's home language AND helps children learn English. By supporting the home language in the classroom, the program strengthens relationships and respect for families, and helps each child feel more secure and develop a strong sense of self-identity. In addition, Telamon recognizes that children develop better cognitive and analytical skills later in life when they learn more than one language as a young child.

Telamon believes a child is better able to understand new ideas when they are expressed in his/her home language and is better able to understand a second language if s/he has stronger language skills in his/her home language. At the same time, an important part of preparing children to be successful in Kindergarten and beyond is helping them to understand and speak English. All children should be exposed to a language rich environment.

Telamon early childhood program staff shall be trained in strategies that can be used in the classrooms to facilitate language use and development. Every effort will be made by program managers to staff classrooms with caregivers who speak the home language and are sensitive to the home culture of the enrolled families. Staff will also be encouraged to pursue second language skills, either Spanish or English, in accordance with Telamon's Language Skills Policy.

Below is a list of strategies Telamon programs may choose to follow, as appropriate for the individual characteristics of the program:

### **Classroom**

1. Regardless of the language spoken, all staff should speak with children often, including infants and toddlers.
2. When possible, one caregiver/volunteer should speak in the children's home language, and another caregiver/volunteer should speak in English.
3. Have consistent routines in the classroom. This will help children who do not understand the predominant language feel comfortable and secure.
4. Utilize a variety of resources: books, music, computer program and other resources in both the home language and English.

5. Create 'buddies,' pairing a child who speaks English with a child who speaks different language, for play, when appropriate.
6. When speaking to a child in his/her second language, adults should:
  - Use expressive, verbal and nonverbal communication such as gestures, pointing and modeling that correspond to the meaning of what is being said and help children figure out meaning without translating;
  - Speak clearly and use simple words to express meaning;
  - Emphasize the important words in a sentence;
  - Discuss events and ideas that are real to the children;
  - Repeat important words in a sentence;
  - Wait for a child's response, allow the child to fully process and understand your words;
  - Speak one language to express an idea fully: Do not mix words from different languages into one sentence or expression.
7. Labeling items and areas of a room, always use one color to write labels in English, and a second color to write labels in the home language. Use these colors consistently throughout the room.
8. Make sure all written language is spelled correctly.
9. Read a book in English one day, and in the home language a second day. Do not read the book in the two languages consecutively, and do not translate the words.
10. Involve parents and extended family members in classroom activities, by inviting them to share favorite songs, games, stories, and other language based activities in their home language.
11. Staff should speak in a conversational tone and volume with children.

### **Families**

12. Help parents understand the value of home language as a foundation for a second language, and the importance of continuing to speak their home language at home.
13. Telamon's philosophy of language development shall be included in parent education activities.
14. Encourage parents to read, look at pictures, and create stories and activities by using books and speaking with children in their home language.
15. Encourage staff to learn regional phrases and vocabulary from parents.
16. During Parent Committee meetings, devote time for parents, children and staff to engage in a family literacy activity together. As an example, begin the Parent Committee meeting with singing a song or reading a book together in their home language.
17. Participate in programs that give books to children, such as Reading is Fundamental, Inc.

### **References:**

Head Start Act, US Department of Health and Human Services, as amended, October 27, 1998.

Head Start Revised Performance Standards, US Department of Health and Human Services, November 1996.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (NAEYC) *Position Statement: Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education*. November 1995.

Tabors, P. What early childhood educators need to know: Developing effective programs for linguistically and culturally diverse children and families. *Young Children* (November 1998), 20-26.

Tabors, P. (1997) One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Preschool Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

### **Other Resources:**

International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Joint Position Statement, May 1998: *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children*.

*Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs*, US Department of Health and Human Services, 1992.

National Head Start Association Position Paper: *Reading and Writing Now! Promoting Language and Literacy in Head Start*, April 1999.