

Strategy: Budding Bilinguals Celebrations / *Celebraciones para los estudiantes bilingües*

In 2012, California became the first state in the nation to establish a Seal of Biliteracy award to students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. The Seal of Biliteracy is a recognition of the high level of academic skill involved in biliteracy, and a statement about the value of and need for people who develop the language skills to bridge across communities. The Seal of Biliteracy was created as a way to encourage students to pursue bilingualism, to stem the tide of language loss among English Learners who leave their home language behind as they become English speaking (subtractive bilinguals), and to celebrate the attainment of multiple language proficiencies. The attainment of biliteracy is a process that takes years, and it begins in preschool. To build a pipeline towards biliteracy attainment, attention is needed to encourage children from a young age to value bilingualism, to pursue learning and using more than one language, and to prevent rejection of home and heritage language among children whose family language is other than English. For these reasons, Budding Bilinguals Celebrations begin in preschool.

The preschool years are a crucial juncture, because it is when parents make a decision about which language program to place their children in for Kindergarten. For all young children, ages 4 - 8, language attitudes are being developed that can result in prejudices and bias against bilingualism and languages other than English. It is also when attitudes can be developed that appreciate language diversity and open children to language study. For all children, the value of bilingualism should be highlighted, and budding bilingual skills should be celebrated.

Throughout preschool, children should be learning songs in various languages (at least the languages spoken in the homes of the children in the program) and learning basic phrases. The purpose of the Budding Bilinguals Preschool award is to help young children and their parents feel pride and excitement about participating in two or more languages. It is more a participation award than an attainment award. Because **all** children in the program have been engaged in some exposure to multiple languages, the celebration is for all children in any program that meets the criteria.

The celebration should include children singing songs for their families in multiple languages and presenting children with some type of recognition such as buttons or sashes that say *I am Bilingual / Yo soy bilingüe* or paper crowns that say *Bilingual / Bilingüe*. Signs should welcome families in all of the languages of the classroom. The celebration is an opportunity to provide information also about the dual language/two-way immersion and bilingual opportunities in the district.

CHECKLIST: Do we have the components in place in our preschool program to award Budding Bilinguals awards?

- Teachers actively affirm the value of bilingualism (talk about it with children, notice and positively remark on their use of two languages, express interest in learning some words in the languages of the families, etc.)
- Signs and posters are in multiple languages
- Children are routinely exposed to songs and phrases and chants in different languages of the families of the program - and to others as well
- Build families capacity on how to support dual language development and encourage families to talk to and read to their children in their home language
- Actively promote rich oral language development in the children's home language whenever possible
- Actively expose children to books with images of and about children from multiple cultural backgrounds
- Have books available in the languages spoken in the homes of the children - for those who have the language skills to be able to read to children

Notes on Strategy
