The following information has been excerpted from pages 10-11 of the *Transitional Kindergarten Implementation Guide: A Resource for California Public School District Administrators and Teachers,* ©2013 by the State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care.

TK provides a tremendous opportunity for teachers to support young English learners by building on their rich cultural and linguistic resources.

As they ease students’ transition into a school setting and help make instruction more comprehensible for English learners, teachers can incorporate various techniques and strategies into classroom routines.

## Building Connections

The strategic use of the student’s primary language can be used to help them make connections to new content and build background knowledge and conceptual understanding. Explaining new ideas and school routines in a language that students readily understand will help provide a context for what they will learn in English, and it fosters their full participation in school experiences. Their primary language can be drawn upon in various ways. For example, teachers can pre-teach key vocabulary words and phrases before students listen to a story or expand students’ understanding of new concepts through bilingual books. Additionally, teachers can provide parents and caregivers with ideas for how they may be able to expand on and reinforce the ideas being studied outside of school.

## Comprehensible Instruction in English

TK teachers can enhance English learners’ comprehension of information in English by regularly using visuals such as pictures, diagrams, charts, and realia so that students can understand new ideas while they are learning English (Espinosa, 2010). At the beginning (emerging) stage of learning English, students can use physical responses to show that they understand what is being taught. For example, he or she can point to objects as requested or give one-word answers in response to questions by referring to a picture or chart. As students’ language development progresses, they will be able to use longer phrases and expanded sentences with more details in English. Teachers can differentiate the level of support provided for each lesson, depending on the complexity of the academic task and the student’s English proﬁciency level.

## English Language Development

In addition to designing lessons that focus on English language development, TK teachers also play an important role in planning and supporting interactions with English-speaking peers who are valuable language models. Planning for activities in which English learners can interact with students who speak English will provide them with multiple opportunities for repetition of new language and additional practice in using English for a variety of purposes. To make the most of these opportunities, English learners should first be organized into small groups and explicitly taught the language they will need to perform the tasks. For example, key vocabulary can be introduced along with sentence stems that will help them to use new words (e.g., “I like to \_\_\_\_\_” or “May I use the \_\_\_\_\_?”). These strategies will foster students’ confidence in using the language that they have had the opportunity to practice when interacting with peers in the classroom or on the playground. The day-to-day interactions and communication with peers during learning-area time and more structured small-group and whole-group experiences provide students with extended language development in natural settings.

English learners will have a successful TK experience when their linguistic and academic skills are supported and enhanced throughout the program. TK teachers have the opportunity to build the foundation for these students to experience success in school as they progress through the grade levels.