



# Introduction

Educators that work with young children are experiencing a significant increase in the number of English language learners enrolled in their classrooms. The United States census estimates that there are approximately 13 million children from preschool through age 18 who do not speak English as their first language. These children represent over 400 different languages spoken in today’s schools. In the last ten years, the number of students learning English as a new language in the United States has increased by seventy-two percent and nearly half of all teachers in public schools now teach at least one student with limited proficiency in English.

As a result of this incredible increase, teachers are in need of targeted resource materials that promote language development and assist in quickly building vocabulary. *Building Essential Vocabulary* is an easy-to-use resource that provides teachers with over 400 reproducible photo cards, games, and activities that can be used to **teach vocabulary in any language**. The cards and games can be inexpensively reproduced and used for classroom “English” activities, while additional photo card sets can be copied and sent home with the children.

It has been well documented that children who are exposed to two languages at an early age—and simultaneously—will naturally learn both languages with fewer speech and language problems. Sending home duplicate sets of photo cards, games, and activities will provide parents with tools for increasing “home” language skills and, at the same time, reinforce what the children have learned at school. Research has also shown that it is easier for children to learn a second language while they are actively learning a first language.

As educators, we have learned that the best way for children to increase language skills and build vocabulary is to use realistic photographs, concrete objects, and to have the children work on increasing their vocabulary through fun and non-threatening activities. Some of the most successful language experiences can happen through the playing of games and practicing language in meaningful context.

All the activities provided in *Building Essential Vocabulary* are effective for all children, whether they are learning a first, second, or even a third language. The photo cards, games, and activities were designed to provide exciting, entertaining, and purposeful experiences that will help build the vocabulary that is required for effective communication.