

Chapter Four: Language and Bilingualism

Handout 4-D for Parents

How to Maintain Your Home Language **By Dora Pulido-Tobiassen and Janet Gonzalez-Mena**

It sometimes feels very hard to help your child maintain your home language. Remember that the benefits are immense. Do not be discouraged when you face negative attitudes. Following are some ideas for activities to do with your child:

- Read and sing songs to your child in your language. Look for book stores that carry children's books in other languages. Some of the larger book and music stores carry limited selections. Look for book and music stores in ethnic communities close to you. The Internet may be useful in finding books, music, and children's software in other languages.
- Make a list of your favorite foods, colors, and places to go, in your home language.

Create your own materials

- Record your own stories and songs for your children. Share fairy tales and songs that you heard as a child. You can bring these to your child care program for staff to play while you are away.
- If you can't find your child's favorite picture book in your home language, maybe you can translate it yourself. Write the translation right on the page of the book for a bilingual edition. Or write on a label and cover up the English.

Work with your child's teachers

- Many schools and child programs label objects and areas in the classroom. Volunteer to write the labels in your home language. If you have a flexible work schedule, perhaps you could conduct a "circle time" in your language- telling stories, reading books, or singing songs.
- Ask teachers in the child care program to help you connect with other families who speak your language.

Work with other parents

- Get together with families who speak your language on a regular basis. Only speak your home language while you are together.
- Meet with other parents to talk about strategies, share materials, and resources. Remember that most importantly, children need to know that their language is valuable and useful.

Remember

- Do not criticize your child's grammar. If children are using language improperly, model proper usage. As they hear, children will learn to modify their speech.
- Delight in your child's bilingualism. Don't let anyone make you believe that bilingualism is a problem. Bilingualism is an asset!