

# It is important to keep your first language



**If you speak another language at home or in your family, it is a good idea to help your child learn to speak and read in your home language, as well as in English, from as early as possible.**

Building literacy skills in that first language will help your child's literacy in English. Skills gained in one language are useful for other languages.

Students who maintain their home language tend to

- have a better idea of how language works
- benefit from similarities in words, pronunciation, spelling or grammar. Even where the language is very different from English, there can be useful similarities such as sounds and word order.

This boosts children's general confidence with language. So they are likely to

- join in more actively in the classroom
- understand or guess words much faster
- make more use of a dictionary and be more organized in note taking
- seek out extra or new information

**Two languages are better than one**



**Students will usually only maintain their home language through effort from them and their family.**

This does not need both parents to be fluent in both languages, nor to translate each word they say from one language to the other. A good plan is for one parent to speak and read with the child in English, and the other parent to speak and read in the home language, so the child becomes used to operating equally in both languages - one with each parent.

Students who maintain their home language tend to

- become proud of knowing and using it
- be interested in maintaining their heritage
- gain a broader interest in languages generally - and in learning about different cultures.

Students who gain skills and confidence in two languages will often be keen to try a third language later on. The skills they have already gained will make this easier for them.

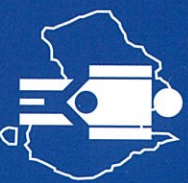
Research shows that learning languages in early childhood helps children in their other school work and in their personal development.

It will also benefit their later work opportunities. Parents who help their children develop and maintain a language other than English help give them wider career choices whether in business, diplomacy, education, journalism, commerce, tourism or many other areas.

Language skills help build an understanding of people from other countries and cultures, which also contributes to a better society and a more peaceful world.

ACSSO

Australian Council  
of State School  
Organisations Inc.



Australian Parents Council Inc.

AU 5489

For more information call 1 800 85 085  
or visit [www.acssso.org.au](http://www.acssso.org.au)