

# Your Child – Learning English

- ✓ **Every child must have access to a good education. This is every student's right in the United States.**
- ✓ **Every child in the United States must learn English fluently enough to participate fully in school and society. This is every student's right in the United States.**
- ✓ **Every parent should become involved in their child's education. This is every parent's right in the United States.**

## **Children cannot wait until they know enough English before they can learn math, science and social studies.**

Children who are taught in a language they know, do as well or better than their peers whose first language is English. In addition, numerous research studies have demonstrated that students who participated in a good bilingual education program are less likely to drop out of school later. Some parents have heard that bilingual education slows the learning of English and other subjects. But the opposite is true.

There is a connection between keeping the home language and educational achievement. Research suggests that the better developed the children's use of their home language is, the more successful they will be as students of English. Validating the home language supports children's learning and interaction with their parents and grandparents, and reinforces a positive self-concept, both for the children and the family.

## **Children learn English better and faster when they are strong in the language they use at home.**

National polls confirm that non-English speaking parents want their children to learn English and want to speak English themselves. They know that learning English is vital to their success.

Research has shown that the best way to teach English to children who speak another language is through a good bilingual education program. Bilingual education is simply the use of two languages in the classroom. In the United States, it is the use of English and another language and has been practiced here for more than 200 years. Today, there are many different types of bilingual education models in schools that help children learn English and their other subjects.

## **Children learn when they can understand and talk to the teacher.**

You cannot learn concepts in a language you do not know. Often, children are quick to learn the conversational English used on the playground, but normally they need several years to learn English used in the classroom. It takes four to seven years to learn English well enough to really be able to learn main school subjects in English.

School children have been using their home language since they were babies. This is a resource the school can build on. If the school ignores this foundation and tries to build a new one in place of it in English, children can fall behind when they could be learning math, science and other subjects in the language they already know at the same time.

Your child has the right to be taught in the language he or she understands. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that schools must help students understand the curriculum in their home language.

## **Children learn reading, math, science and social studies when they understand, feel respected and are challenged.**

Bilingual education teaches English to children and gives them a chance to practice it while they learn their other subjects. Children do not have to waste time in class or wait until they learn English well to

begin learning about numbers or about what plants need in order to grow.

In order to have a strong education, children must learn basic subjects like reading, math, science and social studies. If these subjects are taught in a language the child does not understand, that child will be far behind his or her peers from the beginning.

For students to learn to read, they must first learn to read in their home language and then apply that to their second language of English. Once children have mastered one language, it is easier for them to learn other languages. Children can learn two languages.

### **Children feel they belong and do better when parents and schools work together.**

Parents play key roles in the education of their children. They are their children's first teachers and pass on many gifts to their children, including their home language. Parents speak up for their children to make sure that their children get a good education.

Bilingual education builds on the resources that families offer. Children learn from their parents and teachers, and they have a natural ability to use several languages.

Many families are very happy with the education their children are receiving in bilingual programs. Bilingual programs can improve when parents speak up for well run programs with trained and prepared

teachers who have high expectations of the students, sufficient materials, etc. When teachers recognize the assets parents bring – including insights and knowledge that they alone have about their children – parents can be a tremendous aid to teachers.

### **Definitions**

**Bilingual education** – A school program that teaches English and other subjects at the same time. Teachers use the students' home language in order to better teach English and other concepts, math, science, social studies and other subjects.

**Dual language or two-way bilingual education** – A school program in which English-speaking students and students whose first language is other than English work together to learn each other's language while also learning other school subjects.

**English as a second language** – A school program that teaches English to non-English-speaking students. It is often used with older students. All instruction is in English.

**English language learner** – A term used to describe a student who speaks a language other than English.

**Limited English proficient (LEP)** – A term used to describe a student who speaks a language other than English.

### **Where to go for more information**

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