

Your Child's First (Home) Language

- Each child's first (home) language reflects identity, culture, and family background.
- Continue to use your first language with your child.
- A well-developed first language will help your child learn a new language more easily.
- Your child will learn to adapt to the language being used at home, in school or in the community.
- Knowing more than one language allows for flexible thinking and on-the-spot language choices.
- Your child may mix words between languages. This shows that language flexibility is growing and developing naturally.

Strong Language Models are Important

- Children learn to use the language they hear. This is true of the language used both at home and at school. Provide opportunities for your child to hear other children speak in full sentences, comment on play and ask questions.
- Accept language errors as a natural part of your child's language development. When responding, use full sentences and say words correctly so that children can hear the difference.
- Allow time for repetition of words and phrases. Make sure to build in 'wait time' so that your child has the opportunity to practice speaking in full sentences.
- Your child asks questions to figure out how the world works. Talk about what makes your child curious to encourage a deeper understanding of ideas.
- Early literacy skills develop more quickly when a child can play, laugh, sing, move and talk freely about the day's events with family. These important conversations can take place in your home language.
- Don't be discouraged if your child is hesitant to share the day's experiences. Keep the conversations going by remaining interested and enthusiastic about school.

When to Use Your First (Home) Language

- Talk with your child often. Ask questions. Explain the meaning of new words.
- Read books, magazines or first language materials online.
- Look for interesting and age-appropriate multilingual books at your local public library. Books in many different languages are shared among all libraries in the province.
- Take time to have short conversations with your child as you carry out daily tasks such as cooking, going for a walk, putting on clothes, tidying up or organizing tools.
- Sing songs, recite poems, rhymes or chants or play word games as often as possible.
- Share stories that relate to special memories, family history or cultural celebrations.
- Encourage story-telling using family photos, props, picture books or cultural artifacts.
- Help your child feel proud of knowing more than one language when you attend events or celebrations at school and in your community.