



# Speak Your Language 1: Supporting Home Language

## Caregivers will learn:

- A child's skills in their first (home) language is an important foundation for all learning and development
- It is important for the caregiver to create interactions that help grow a child's communication in the family's native (home) language(s)
- A strong home language is related to a child's social, emotional, academic (reading and math) and cultural development, including self-confidence, learning rules, and world knowledge

## Key Messages

1. How you communicate at home matters for your child's development. Use your strongest language to create the strongest learners.
  - How you use language with your child influences how they will learn to think about the world, and how they will interact with others. Your lens on the world becomes their lens too.
  - When you use your strongest language to describe, explain, teach, narrate, ask, respond to, and empathize with your children, they will learn all of those skills for school and for life.
2. Children's best learning happens when they:
  - Have strong and healthy relationships with important adults who frequently talk, play, and show affection with them in whatever language the adults know best.
  - Have big vocabularies with many different words about people, places, things, and emotions, even if it is in a language that is not the same as the child's school or neighborhood. You can teach them by using your home language frequently, throughout everyday activities, such as shopping, getting ready, or cleaning up.
3. One of the most effective ways to support a child's communication skills is for caregivers to use their home language(s) as much as possible with the child.
  - Learning multiple languages does NOT overwhelm, confuse, or delay learning English in children.
  - A child who speaks one language well (with a big vocabulary that supports detailed conversations about feelings, problems

## For more information

### Speak Your Language! OneAmerica's Home Language Campaign

<https://www.weareoneamerica.org/speak-your-language>

### Families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds speak out

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/different\\_cultures.html/context/490](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/different_cultures.html/context/490)

### Helping Your Child Learn Two Languages

<http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/bilingual.htm>

### Bilingualism and Young Children:

<http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Articles/Bilingualism-in-Young-Children--Separating-Fact-from-Fr.aspx>

### Resources & Handouts on Kaleidoscope Play & Learn Lesson Guide CD

*Speak Your Language!*  
(25 Languages)

### Cultural Considerations

There is a wide variety in how families view being multi-

<p>and what they experience in the world) can more easily learn English or another language well later in school.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. A child’s brain is wired to learn best from people who are speaking their most fluent, comfortable, and correct language. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children need strong language models to learn the words, sounds and structure of the language.</li> <li>• Children in the first three years do not learn from recorded language (DVDs, CDs, TV, apps). They need live interactions with people to learn the sounds and words in any language.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Children’s brains can pick up languages much more quickly than adults can, and they use every cue around them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brains learn language through hearing your tone of voice, seeing your face and eye movements, your speech sounds and words, sharing your body movements, and by interacting with the objects and materials you provide.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>lingual or multi-cultural. Some may want their children to ‘assimilate’ to the surrounding culture, but may not want them to completely disregard the family heritage culture.</p> <p>Some may want English to ‘take over’ the home language, while others may prefer the family use the home language when they are together.</p> <p>Be aware of these differences and acknowledge families’ values, while supporting their understanding of the key messages.</p>
<p><b>Coordinated Group Activity</b></p> <p><b>Story Time</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share the Key Messages with caregivers and explain that today’s book is about using rich language, not about reading.</li> <li>2. Select a wordless picture book to tell a story. Emphasize that there is no ‘right or wrong’ way to tell the story, but it is important to use interesting, descriptive and engaging language. You can use one or more than one language.</li> </ol> <p>Choose from one of the books below, or another book. If it is a book with words, emphasize that families can make up their own words if it is printed in a language they do not read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hank Finds an Egg</i>, by Rebecca Dudley</li> <li>• <i>Chalk</i>, by Bill Thomson</li> <li>• <i>Goodnight, Gorilla</i> by Peggy Rathmann</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share with participants how you thought of ways to make your language interesting with descriptions, emotions, and action words. Ask them what they noticed in your story.</li> <li>• Reiterate strategies for language learning in general, such as including active body language, relating books to children’s experiences, and using new words.</li> <li>• Distribute the “Speak Your Language!” handout after Story Time or at another time that works for your group.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>Child-Directed Play Activity</b></p>	<p><b>Other Tips</b></p> <p>There are 2 Caregiver Lesson Guides as part of the Speak Your Language series. While we suggest that you start with this Caregiver Lesson Guide, you can start with any of the 3 based on what you think will work best for your group.</p> <p>Caregivers will likely have questions that relate to some of the information in the other Speak Your Language Caregiver Lesson Guides. So, we encourage you to read yourself all 3 of the Speak Your Language Caregiver Lesson Guides to help you prepare for some of these questions.</p> <p><b>School-Readiness</b></p>

### **Play & Talk Together**

Set out multiple play areas as you usually do, selecting activities that the children love and that encourage open-ended play.

Invite the caregivers to interact with the children as they play in ways that supports children's language learning. Encourage the caregivers to talk with their child in the language the caregiver feels most comfortable using. Suggest that caregivers ask questions and narrate some of the play using lots of action words and descriptions. Going back and forth between two languages is okay if that feels natural to the caregiver.

When you (facilitator) observe rich language happening, point it out and encourage more of it, and perhaps to pause to see what the child might do to imitate or join in. If they mix languages, that's ok.

After 10-15 minutes, the group might like to check-in. Ask caregivers to share:

- What words did you use that might have been new to your child?
- How did it feel to use your most rich language?

### **Caregiver Relationship-Building**

Encourage caregivers to talk about one of these questions as they play together.

- One way to support families' use of their home language is to reflect on how they feel when they use their native versus any second (or non-native) language. In which language do they feel most confident or smart? Funny or clear? In their best personality or mood?
- Invite them to reflect on what feelings they'd most wish for their children to have. For instance, if they want their child to feel smart or comfortable, then caregivers should interact using the language that THEY (caregivers) feel most smart or comfortable.
- Ask the caregivers to talk about their own thoughts and experiences about using two languages and what they'd like their child's experience to be. If they have concerns or worries about two languages, these can be safely explored. Invite them to share their questions with you so you can help them find answers.

### **Caregiver Leadership**

Invite caregivers to share how some of the information from today's group relates to their understanding, or how they might share the information with others in their community.

### **Connection**

When a child's home language and culture are preserved, there is a connection between a child's awareness of tradition and historical wisdom that is learned through playful and meaningful exchanges with family members. This supports the child's confidence, sense of belonging and personal identity that can carry through to experiences in school and throughout their lives.

### Home Activity

Invite caregivers to spend time talking with their children in their home language this week. For example, caregivers can:

- Share songs, stories, or traditions in their home language
- Use family photos to tell their own family story
- Have the child respond in whatever language comes most easily to them, and know there is no 'wrong way' to respond

### Check in for the Following Week

Ask caregivers to share any questions they had from last week. Also invite them to tell about their experiences of practicing the language learning strategies suggested for the home activity. How did the children respond to these activities? Have they noticed growth in the children's vocabulary and/or understanding of their home language?