

# Parents, You Can Help Your Children Be Bilingual!

Keeping up your home language in a new country is not easy. You must work hard at it and not give up. Sometimes children want to speak their home language. Sometimes they do not. It depends on their interest, their personality, and their ability.

You need to have a plan. With planning and effort, you can help your children be bilingual. Your children may not appreciate this gift now, but they will be grateful when they are older. Their thanks will be a nice reward for you.

Here are some tips to keep up your family's home language:

- **Talk with your children all the time.** Talk with your children about everything that happens during the day. You can talk about what to cook for dinner. You can talk about visiting a friend on the weekend. You can talk about a book or magazine article you have read. Speak in your home language even if your children respond in English. If you keep speaking in your home language, your children will continue to understand it.
- **Have a system.** Make a rule about how your family will use your home language and English. This will help your children know what to expect. For example, you might:
  - Speak your home language at home and English at school.
  - Speak your home language at home and English outside your home.
  - Speak your home language with one parent and English with the other parent.
- **Find other people who can speak your home language with your children.** For example, you might:
  - Gather with friends and relatives who live in your community. Go to parties, religious events, or traditional celebrations.
  - Interact with friends and relatives who live in your home country. You can talk to them on the phone. You can also exchange letters and e-mail messages.
- **Watch children's TV shows and videos in your home language. Read books and magazines in your home language.** Some public libraries have children's books and videos in many languages. Ask your local librarian. You can also look for materials at ethnic markets. Organizations of people from your home country may have books, magazines, and videos to share.
- **Visit your home country.** If this is possible, it will immerse your children in your home language. After just a few days in your home country, your children will understand and speak more words in your home language.
- **Set a good example.** If you are bilingual, your children will think it is natural to be bilingual. They will be more interested in both languages.