

Use dual-language books to boost your child's literacy

For parents of students in primary and junior grades

Is English your second language? Learn about the many benefits of dual-language books. Find out how you can use your first language to boost your child's English reading and comprehension.

How does knowledge of first language help my child learn English?

- continued development of the first language supports linguistic and cognitive development in English; some experts warn that students who stop developing their first language before they have become fluent in the second may not have enough proficiency in either language to perform academic tasks
- it allows students to think, talk, read and write at a higher level than if they were limited to using English only
- students who already have knowledge of one language have a useful tool when learning a new language

If my child continues to use his/her first language, will that affect his/her identity?

- students' first language is an important part of their identity and a source of cultural pride
- cultural identity may be lost if students are encouraged to move away from their first language and culture and be more a part of the dominant culture
- self esteem may be affected if they are encouraged to use English only

How can I use my first language to help with my child's education?

- parents can help by creating a rich first-language home environment e.g. telling stories and reading to children in the first

- language, participating in first-language community events, watching and discussing current affairs programs on TV, reading first language newspapers
- enroll children in international language classes
- discuss homework and/or explain subject matter in first language if that helps your child better understand what he/she is expected to do/learn

Why should I read dual language texts books with my child?

- children who can already read in their first language do not need to rediscover the principles of reading when they learn another language e.g. concepts of rhyme, figurative language, verb tenses, etc.
- it expands your child's knowledge of the first language, which helps the learning of English
- it enhances your child's self-esteem and their status as they demonstrate their skills and show their talents
- by helping your child create his/her own dual-language stories, you are able to take an active role in your child's education
- children may be able to show their understanding of an age appropriate story more clearly than if he/she were limited to English only books

How do I use dual-language books with my child?

- together with your child, choose books that are high interest, and that reflect your cultural values
- if your child cannot yet read then you can read both versions of the story to promote both languages

- if your child cannot fluently read in the first language, then he/she can read the English version and you read the first language version
- ensure they are understanding the story by asking questions and discussing the story in your first language during and after you read
- use dual language books, as you would use English only books, to support the reading program established by the classroom teacher

Where can I find more dual language resources?

- many Canadian publishers create dual-language books which are available at your school or public library
- the following are some websites that showcase dual language books/projects:

<http://www.pkp.ubc.ca/multiliteracies/>

<http://www.multilingual-matters.com/>

Multilingual Matters is an international independent publishing house, with lists in the areas of bilingualism, second/foreign language learning, sociolinguistics, translation, interpreting and books for parents. They also publish peer-reviewed academic journals, and a newsletter for parents, The Bilingual Family Newsletter.