



## How Parents Can Help Young Children Learn More Than One Language

- 1) Speak in the language that is most natural and comfortable for you, and that you can sustain over a long period of time. Use the language in which you can maintain natural social interactions with your child.
- 2) Your child learns a language best from a person who is fluent in that language. You are most fluent in your first language, so you are the best model for your child in that language.
- 3) Give your child a strong first language and the second will follow. Research shows that children who have a stronger foundation in their first language before starting school learn a second language easier and perform better academically, when they are older, than they otherwise would.
- 4) Read and sing to your child in your first language. You can also use the language in daily interactions, set up play-dates with other children who speak your first language, read/say nursery rhymes, play games, visit a place where that language is spoken, etc.
- 5) Be as consistent as possible in the way that you expose your child to the two languages. Use one of the following models: (a) one person one language (e.g., mother speaks French, father speaks English); (b) one location one language (e.g., home is Portuguese and school or daycare is English); or (c) one time of day one language (e.g., during the day is one language, at dinner and in the evening is another language).
- 6) Do not mix words and/or grammar from two different languages in one sentence when speaking with your child.
- 7) Continue to speak your first language so your child will not lose it. Once a language is gone, it can be difficult to get it back.
- 8) Do not assume that language delays are caused by exposure to two or more languages as that is a myth. Children who are language delayed in their first language will also be language delayed in other languages they learn. When children are older, they will eventually be bilingual with consistent exposure to both languages regardless of whether or not they are language delayed.