



Helping Bilingual Students to learn English Language: Tips for Parents

Bilingual Students are children who can speak two languages with some degree of proficiency. In Alger SS we have growing number of students who learnt to speak a language other than English at home (their first language) and are learning to communicate in English at school (their second language). It is natural for children to grow up speaking more than one language as it is for them to grow up speaking one. The parents of bilingual students face a dilemma when their child starts school in Australia:

- When they speak to their child- should they speak in their Home Language which comes naturally and fluently to them or should they switch to English Language so their child becomes proficient in English?

While families can practise English Language with each other, it is **extremely** important that the child also uses his First Language. The student needs to use his First or Home Language for:

- **Academic Achievement:** Studies suggest that if children build a strong foundation in their home language, they will learn to speak, read and write English even better and can further extend their cognitive development while learning to speak a second language.
- **Emotional expression:** An individual's First Language resides deep within him/her. It is a fountain of personal experiences. To connect with children parents should use words which have depth of meaning for them.
- **Connections:** When parents speak to their child in their Native Language they are simultaneously conveying to him/her that they value and are proud of their culture, history and family which will give the child an increased sense of self-worth and belonging.
- **Opportunities:** Being bilingual opens more doors to diverse career opportunities later in life.

To ensure that the child is repeatedly and consistently exposed to his First and Second Language one of these options can be chosen:

- **One Parent- One Language:** One parent speaks one language while the other speaks the other language to the child.
- **One Place-One Language:** One language is spoken at home while the other is spoken at school.
- **One Activity- One Language:** Both parents speak one language during the day and speak the other language in the evening or one language is used at home but the other is spoken during a short timed activity in the community (e.g. English story hour at the library once a week).

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