

How Can I Help My Foreign Language Student?

Some ideas to support your DLI and foreign language learner at home



• Support your home language

- “Give them all of the support you can in their first language and don’t worry about their second.”¹

Read to your child in YOUR strongest language (or have your child do personal reading) to encourage development of the home language and to model fluent reading.

Literacy in a native language is an advantage when one is learning to read in a second language.

Multilingual Children’s Association says, “Frequent book reading leads to more advanced language skills.” It does not matter in which language the books are read.

Talk about the books with your child. Talk about the characters, plot, and what they liked or didn’t like. Encourage conversation in the home language.

• Positive attitude & perseverance

- Be positive about the language and encourage the student to persevere during difficult times.
- Show enthusiasm for learning and the language. Have a positive attitude about the language class.
- Children who do well in language programs are those who have learned to continue with a task even though it is difficult. Parents can model this behavior and help children learn how to continue and persevere.

• Follow up at home

- Encourage the child by following up with homework, class work, and providing time and materials for the work.
- Ask questions about the homework so the child explains about the assignments in his/her first language.
- Check the child’s folder, watching for newsletters or other ways the teacher communicates with parents.
- Provide a quiet space and ample time to do homework. When possible provide dictionaries in both languages.
- Set up “homework buddies” for the language class. When your child may not understand an assignment, you can contact the buddy for help. If many students are confused, communicate with the teacher. Remember homework should be skills that were taught in class and should be able to be completed independently.

• Encourage use of the language

- Interact with native speakers
- Attend cultural events
- Check out books in the language from the local library. Request additional books from library staff or donate a book on your child’s birthday to the library.

¹ Angelina Saenz, M.Ed., lead teacher for the Aldama Elementary Dual Language Program in LAUSD

- Allow your child to visit parent-screened web sites in the target language.
- Watch your student's favorite DVD with the target language audio track and subtitles turned on.
- View or participate in music and dancing reflective of the countries who speak the target language.
- Explore topics of interest to the child in countries that speak the language (for example, athletic teams, dancers, instrumentalists, artists, singers, historical events, etc.).

- **Strengthen the home-school connection**

- Volunteer in the classroom or to help teachers
- Share with students aspects of the culture (i.e., dance, art, food, music, etc.)
- Set up or participate in dual language family social gatherings
- Contribute to the school newsletter items regarding dual language immersion
- Serve as chaperones for class field trips and other school events
- Become involved with the school community council.



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