

# Communication is Key @ P.S.153



Dear Families,

Welcome to P.S 153 Queens! As a multicultural community, we embrace students from all over the world, with a total of \_\_\_ languages spoken by our students. Many of these students are becoming bilingual. This means that in addition to their home language, they are learning English for the first time. You are your child's first and most important teachers, and we look forward to working together with you in his/her education.

Sometimes parents try to help their children learn English by using less of their first language at home. However, research shows that people learning a new language do so faster if they have a strong literacy background (reading and writing) in their first language. We suggest that you continue to involve your child in reading and writing activities in your home language. Examples of these activities are:

- Sing songs and read stories in your home language. If you don't have books for this, tell stories from your memory or imagination. Talk about the stories together, with questions such as: *Who was in the story? What happened first, in the middle, and at the end? In your opinion, what was the most important part?*
- Invite your child to help you write (in your home language) a letter to family, write a food shopping list or write a list of things to do.
- Talk at dinnertime about your child's school day. When taking a walk, talk about what you both see. After playtime, talk about what your child did first, next, and last, and what he/she liked the best. Encourage your child to speak in full sentences in your home language.
- Use words in your home language that are new to your child, and explain things that your child finds interesting.

These experiences will help prepare your child's brain for learning reading and writing skills in English.

- Also, when possible, build your child's knowledge of the world. For example, if you talk about science in your home language (such as noticing that water bubbles when it is heated on the stove) your child is gathering information he/she can use to understand his/her English-language science class at school.

It is also helpful to expose your child to English when possible, such as with:

- Computer reading games
- Read-aloud sessions at the public library
- Educational TV programs, such as those found on Channel 13

To prepare your child for school, we suggest that you:

- Check your child's folder every night.
- As much as possible, read and respond to letters if needed.
- Look at your child's homework. Ask your child about it.
- Make sure your child goes to bed at a regular time, and gets enough sleep.
- Make sure your child eats breakfast (either at home or at school) and try to make snacks healthy, such as fruit, cheese, nuts, or crackers.
- Encourage your child to drink water instead of soda and juices with a lot of sugar.

If you would like to get in touch with your child's teacher there are many ways you can communicate:

- Write a note in your home language and your child's teacher will try his/her best to get the letter translated.
- Make an appointment to speak with the teacher and bring a bilingual family member or friend. Or, ask the teacher to try to arrange an interpreter.
- Use translation websites to translate your note into English. A good one to try is <http://translate.google.com>.
- Work with another parent to write a note in English.
- Volunteer your time in the classroom. You can help in many ways, such as organizing materials, reading a book in your home language to students, or helping to teach the students some words in your home language.

The cultural and linguistic diversity of PS 153 is truly one of its greatest assets. We look forward to working with you and your child throughout the school year as your child continues to learn English and develop his/her home language. Please do not hesitate to contact the school with any questions or comments you may have.

Yours Sincerely,

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