

Dear Parents,

Your child is very fortunate to have the opportunity to learn two languages during the preschool years! We adults who only speak one language know how much easier it would have been for us to learn a second language during our early years!

#### Advantages

- Many colleges require students to learn a second language--your child will have already met that requirement (*if* you follow the note below).
- Research has shown that, overall, people who know more than one language do better in math than those who only speak on language.
- People who understand more than one culture are likely to be understanding of people who are different than they are--our society today and the society of tomorrow need understanding people.

#### Ways That Family and Friends Who Speak Child's Home Language Can Help

- Show pride in your culture, and who you are as a family. Life can be difficult, but it is important for children to have fun times with their family.
- At some point during the year, share something about your culture the children in your child's Head Start classroom. Young children learn much more effectively from real life examples--and will be impressed by what your child knows!
- Speak your home language at home--it's O.K. if your child responds in English. Talk a lot and use wide vocabulary with your child. Teach them about your world--talk about cooking, about repairing your car, about your cultural celebrations.
- Read to your child in your home language--even if the words in the book are in English. As your child becomes interested in the written word:
  - Request that your local library and Head Start help you locate books in your home language.
  - Write simple messages in your home language to your child.
  - Encourage your child to write words in your home language.
  - Do your child's Head Start reading homework in your home language (and then, if possible, translate it for your child's teacher).
- Let your child know how impressed you are with his or her progress in learning English.
- As your child becomes older, find someone to teach your child the grammar of your home language. There is no reason for children to be illiterate in their home language.

Research summarized in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* has found:

- Children who develop a sound foundation in their first language are more efficient in learning the second language.
- Concepts and skills that are learned in the first language will transfer to the second language.

Finally, teach us more about your culture and ways that we can help your child have a great year in Head Start. We feel fortunate to have your child in our program!

Your truly,