

Bilingual Storytimes

Including two or more languages in storytime

You can facilitate bilingual storytimes even if you are not fluent in more than one language! Learning even one song or rhyme in another language signals storytime participants that storytime is open to and accepting of people from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, bilingual learning benefits all children regardless of their home languages. Bilingual storytime participants may be English speakers learning a new language, or they may be there to learn English. Either way, bilingual or multilingual storytimes bring community members together and can be a celebration of the language, culture, and diversity.

Things to try

- If you are not fluent in another language, you may want to find a storytime partner to act as a co-facilitator. You may be able to find a bilingual volunteer, parent, or employee who can take turns reading and singing with you during storytime.
- You can read a book (or sing a song) completely in one language and then switch and repeat the activity in another language, or you can alternate languages while reading page by page. Choose the method that works best for you and your participants.
- Look for books that include words or phrases in other languages but are not fully bilingual. These will help children learn vocabulary based on context. Switching back and forth between two languages (called code switching) also helps children learn to recognize different languages and builds phonologic awareness.

Book Suggestions:

The following list includes books that are fully bilingual as well as books that include words and phrases in other languages.

- *I Love Saturdays y Domingos* by Alma Flor Ada
- *Fire! Fuego! Brave Bomberos* by Susan Middleton Elya
- *Hairs: Pelitos* by Sandra Cisneros
- *Uno Dos Tres: One Two Three* by Pat Mora
- *What Can You Do With a Paleta?* by Carmen Tafolla
- *Niño Wrestles the World* by Yuyi Morales

Getting Started:

- Be a listener. To include other languages and cultures, get ideas and feedback from parents at your storytimes.
- Seek out volunteers and parents from the community you wish to serve. You may be able to find someone who is bilingual to help you lead your storytimes.
- Build a multilingual collection. Track the demographics in your community to learn the languages spoken and build a collection that reflects those languages.
- Partner with organizations that serve those that speak other languages in your community.