

# Maintaining Native Language and Culture: Education for Families

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# Introductions

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Why we believe it is important to support families'  
maintenance of native language and culture.

# Language & Loss of Culture Video

What are the implications for us as educators?



# Oregon Department of Education Strategic Plan

Statewide Vision for ELs: “Businesses move to Oregon to hire multilingual ELs to fill top positions.”

# Oregon Department of Education Strategic Plan

## Value Statement:

- “It is important to demonstrate acceptance and appreciation for all the cultures and languages”
- “Multilingualism will strengthen our educational programs and prepare our students to compete in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economy.”
- “Parent Education and the partnerships are essential component of education.”

# Oregon Department of Education Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan, Goal 3: School districts engage and involve families and communities as equal partners in order to support and enhance programs designed for English Learners.

# The Bilingual Brain

- Bilingualism is related to increased cognitive and linguistic abilities.
- Brains are wired for learning multiple languages.
- Increased cell-to-cell connections (synapses).
- Bilinguals are better at reasoning, at multi-tasking, and at grasping and reconciling conflicting ideas.
- Bilinguals retain cognitive faculties longer, often delaying the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

(Klueger 2013)

# The Bilingual and Multilingual Reality

## Subtractive Bilingualism:

- The loss of a first language when a second language is acquired.
- Subtractive bilingualism is not a universal phenomenon, but occurs most often in societies where linguistic or ethnic diversity are not valued.
- Caused by perceptions of social differences.
- “... there is a connection between native language loss and the educational difficulties experienced by many language-minority-background children.”

(Wong Fillmore, 1991) \*



# De-valued Languages

What is the message that speakers of minority languages are receiving from our society at large?

**Are you speaking English?**

**ENGLISH  
ONLY  
PLEASE**

**Please respect our English Only Policy.**

**Speak English while you are  
in the school.**

**Thank you for your cooperation.**



# The Importance of Native Language

“a subordinate language is the only means by which subordinate speakers can develop their own voice, a prerequisite to the development of a positive sense of self-worth.” (Macedo, Dendrinis & Gournari, 2003)

# The Importance of Native Language

- Language = most defining characteristic of ethnic identity (Kim & Chao, 2009)
- “Studies on adolescents find that strong ties to their ethnic group are related to indicators of positive self-regard, such as higher levels of self esteem and self confidence.” (Kim & Chao, 2009)

## How schools can encourage the maintenance of native language

“Our insistence on seeing English skills as a prerequisite for, rather than an outcome of, a meaningful school experience is costing ELLs valuable time they need to close the academic learning gap.” (Boals, 2011)

# How schools can encourage the maintenance of native language

1. Where resources allow, implement dual immersion or late-exit bilingual program models.

All schools with English Language Learners can:

2. Establish relationships with families.

- home visits
- intentional invitations to school

3. Group students by native language in classrooms.

4. Post signs and labels in English and native languages.

# How schools can encourage the maintenance of native language

5. Communicate with parents in native language.
6. Encourage parents to speak and read to children in native language.
7. Provide library books in students' native language.
8. Recognize students for excellence in native language.
9. Implement enrichment programs that focus on native language and cultural development.



# Natalya Gritsenko



## Educating families on language loss

“Parents need to be warned of the consequences of not insisting that their children speak to them in the language of the home. Teachers should be aware of the harm they can do when they tell parents that they should encourage their children to speak English at home, and that they themselves should use English when they talk to their children.” (Wong Fillmore, 1991)

# Educating families on language loss

- Benefits of bilingual brains, including increased cognitive and linguistic abilities.
- Research shows that use of native language aids in English acquisition and literacy. (Krashen & Biber 1988)
- Long-term support in native language is more effective than early-exit. (Thomas and Collier 1997); therefore, bilingual classrooms should not be viewed as remedial or compensatory. (Boals 2001)

# Educating families on language loss

- If there is not a purposeful effort made to maintain the native language, it is often lost when English is learned. (Wong Fillmore 1991)
- Younger siblings in families are more susceptible to language loss than their older siblings. (Wong Fillmore 1991)
- Consequences of language loss include impaired social, emotional, cognitive and educational development. Additionally, the integrity of the family can be impaired as well. (Wong Fillmore 1991)

# Educating families on language loss

## Loss of family integrity.

- Language and cultural shifts can result in the breakdown of parental authority and of the children's respect for their parents. (Wong Fillmore 1991)
- Deferential language.
- “They (parents) ask, ‘How can children lose their language?’ But they do. And by the time the parents realize what is happening, it is usually too late to do anything about it.” (Wong Fillmore 1991)

# Local Resources for Families

- Salem Chinese Academy
- Portland Japanese School: Shokookai of Portland
- Punjabi School: Dasmesh Darbar Sikh Temple, Salem
- Korean School: Korean Church of Salem
- Russian language and culture: ABC Studio, Four Corners Elem., Salem-Keizer School District
- Video on language loss: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFhQoPR4g4>

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