

# Celebrating International Mother Language Day

February 21<sup>st</sup> 2014



## What Is International Mother Language Day?

International Mother Language Day is a United Nations sponsored worldwide celebration of the 6000 heritage/home languages spoken throughout the world. It encourages us to learn and use our own mother language(s) and other world languages with the goal of maintaining the immense knowledge and cultural practices that are woven into language.

### Pinoleville Native American Head Start Program's 2013 Celebration!



Last year, staff and families at Pinoleville Native American Head Start (Ukiah, CA) celebrated International Mother Language Day with traditional songs and dance from the Northern Pomo Indians, lessons in Guamanian culture and language, and lessons in Spanish language. Children in the program learned about native plants of the Pomo people through hands-on experiences. A staff member from the Philippines shared information about Filipino language, communication styles, and traditional garments. A multicultural meal showcased foods from the diverse cultures of the children, families and staff. The event was such a success last year that the program plans to make Mother Language Day an annual event.



### TELL US HOW YOU ARE CELEBRATING

*International Mother Language Day and allow us to share with others. Email to let us know at [NCCLRinfo@edc.org](mailto:NCCLRinfo@edc.org).*

### ABOUT HEAD START

**FACT** | 30% of the children in Head Start have a non-English primary/home language.

**FACT** | 88% of the families in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs speak Spanish as their primary home language.

**FACT** | 4% of the families in American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start speak native North American or Alaska Native languages as their primary language.

**FACT** | Many AI/AN programs, in collaboration with their Tribes, have language immersion and preservation efforts.

**FACT** | Refugee families enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start speak many diverse languages from their countries of origin. For more information: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/us-map-refugee-2012.pdf>

LANGUAGE FACTS



## AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) AS A HOME LANGUAGE

Claire Koch, a 5-year-old kindergartner, was recently in the news and on social media sites for honoring her parents, who are deaf, by using sign language during a school holiday concert. Claire wanted them to enjoy her performance. She is an example of the thousands of young bilingual ASL/English speakers.

Many children of deaf adults (CODAs) are simultaneous



dual language learners who are learning both sign language and spoken language. CODAs are considered both bilingual and bicultural. ASL is the primary language of as many as 500,000 people in the United States (Wilcox, 2006).

## 5 Ways to Celebrate!

### International Mother Language Day

- 1) Gather ideas from families about ways to celebrate Mother Language Day.
- 2) Encourage families and staff to write children's names in their home languages.
- 3) Create a list of the languages spoken by families (including grandparents), elders, and staff in the program. Post on the program website, on bulletin boards, and in newsletters.
- 4) Organize a family night to celebrate
- 5) Invite elders, families, community members, and staff to share favorite rhymes, chants, songs, and stories in their home languages. Send printed copies of the words or music with photographs of the event to families, community organizations, and local media.

International Mother Language Day. Create a 'word' poster by writing the same 'word' in different languages. Let children draw pictures on the posters.

## HELPFUL NCCLR RESOURCES



**The Importance of Home Language Series** This series of handouts provides staff and families with basic information on topics

related to children learning two or more languages. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/center/home-language.html>



**Head Start Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness Resource Catalogue, Volume One: Dual Language Learning**

**Edition (First Edition)** This volume features resources that identify the unique factors that contribute to linguistic and school readiness skills of young children who are learning two or more languages. The articles offer strategies for families and teachers that support home and English language development. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/center/HeadStartCultur.htm>



**Head Start Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness Resource Catalogue, Volume Two: Native and Heritage Language**

**Preservation, Revitalization, and Maintenance (Second Edition)** This volume includes resources and practices on topics such as early childhood language nests, the use of technology in language learning, immersion preschool programs, and culturally responsive curricula. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/center/HeadStartCultur.htm>

**COMING SOON! Home Language for School Success** This short animation explains why supporting home language in Early Head Start and Head Start is important to school success.

**FIND MORE WAYS TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY ON THE ECLKC:**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/center/mother-language.html>