Mother Language Day

Allowing children to learn from a very early age in their mother tongue, and then in national, official or other languages, promotes equality and social inclusion. —UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova

February 21, 2015

Join the Office of Head Start and the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness and celebrate International Mother Language Day on February 21!

What is it? International Mother Language Day, sponsored by the United Nations, honors the diversity of languages that exist globally and emphasizes the importance of maintaining a multilingual society.

Why celebrate? A society that celebrates and supports mother/heritage/home languages nurtures cultural identity and benefits from the rich diversity of its members.

How can children participate?

- Have children help create banners and posters commemorating the day.
- Help children create a graph of the languages spoken in their classroom or home-based group.
- Teach children to say "hello" in all the languages in their classroom or home-based group.
- Teach children a simple song in each of the languages spoken in your classroom or home-based group.
- Sing or play recorded songs and lullabies to babies and toddlers in the different language spoken in your program.
- Ask children to share stories, songs, and rhymes in their mother/heritage/home language (including English) and record them for the children to take home.
- Read or tell stories to teach words or simple phrases in the different languages spoken in the classroom, such as animal names.
- Make up or adapt children's games using words from different languages, such as playing Pato, Pato, Ganso instead of Duck, Duck, Goose.