

WHY BILINGUALISM? Two Languages Are Better Than One

Our world has changed dramatically over the last few decades and is becoming fully interconnected. Succeeding in the 21st century will require new ways of thinking, strong language skills and an open mind.

Bilingualism carries concrete advantages and improves abilities for children who grow up speaking a second language.

Learning another language is a step towards joining the global community. When more than half the world's population is bilingual, mastering a second language teaches ways of interacting with the world.

Cognitive

- **Bilingualism increases mental flexibility** for children. Bilinguals will have two or more words for a single object, concept or idea.
- Bilingual children are **more willing and able to learn a third language, and show an increased analytical orientation to language.**
- Children who study a second language **score higher on verbal standardized tests** conducted in English. Bilingual children also perform better in math and logic skills than children with just one language.
- Learning a second language helps children build **self-esteem, creativity, problem-solving skills, and math ability.**

Social/emotional/interpersonal

- Bilingual children maintain a **strong sense of their own identity** while developing **sensitivity towards other people and cultures.**
- Since bilinguals need to be aware of which language to speak in which situation, **a bilingual child is more aware of the needs of the listener.**

Professional

- Being taught in two languages gives children **a head start in competition for universities and jobs.**

Benefits of Early Immersion

In order to reap the full benefit of bilingualism, exposure to the second language should begin as early as possible. The chances of achieving full fluency in another language are much higher if study is begun during early childhood, since the human brain is wired to learn language during this critical period.

Immersion duplicates the conditions in which we all learn our first language—extended contact with a community of fluent speakers—and is by far the most effective method of language teaching.

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