

The Whistle Stop



About Language Express

Language Express provides free speech and language assessment and therapy services for children from birth to school entry in Lanark, Leeds, and Grenville counties. If you have concerns about your child's speech and language, don't wait and see! We can help your child and provide useful ideas for you and your child's caregivers.

When To Get Help:

- If your child is not meeting all of the communication milestones for their age.
- If your child is stuttering.
- If your child's play or social interaction seems different from other children the same age.
- If your child's voice doesn't sound right.
- If your child has a diagnosis such as hearing loss, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or developmental delay.

Language Express accepts referrals for children from birth until Sept. 1 of the year they start school.

Visit our [milestones page](#) or complete the [Language Express Communication Checkup](#) to see if your child's development is on track and to make a referral. You can also call us for more information or to make a referral.

1-888-503-8885

Bilingualism

Across the world, many children are raised learning two languages, or even more! In Canada, 12.7% of the population uses primarily a language other than English or French at home, and more than 40% of Canadians can conduct a conversation in more than one language¹.

When children learn more than one language, it happens in one of two ways:

Simultaneous Acquisition: occurs when a child is raised learning two languages from birth, or when the second language is introduced before the age of three. For example, a child may learn to use English with their English-speaking parent and use American Sign Language (ASL) with their ASL-using parent from birth.

Sequential Acquisition: occurs when a second language is introduced after the first language is well-established (usually after the age of three). For example, a child may speak Tagalog at home and then be introduced to English when they start school.

¹[The Daily — While English and French are still the main languages spoken in Canada, the country's linguistic diversity continues to grow \(statcan.gc.ca\)](http://www.statcan.gc.ca)

Language Milestones for Bilingual Children

When young children learn two languages at the same time, they go through the same developmental stages as children learning one language. Research shows that bilingual children may say their first words slightly later than monolingual children, but still within the expected age range (8-15 months)². A bilingual toddler's vocabulary in each individual language may be smaller than average, but their total vocabulary across both languages will be at least the same size as a monolingual child³.

²Meisel, J. (2004). The Bilingual Child. In T. Bhatia & W. Ritchie (Eds.), *The Handbook of Bilingualism*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

³Paradis, J., Genesee, F., & Crago, M. (2011). *Dual Language Development and Disorders: A handbook on bilingualism & second language learning*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.



Did you know? Research has shown many benefits to bilingualism, including advantages in creativity and problem solving³!

Learning Two Languages when there is a Language Delay

Raising your child in a bilingual environment does not cause delays in their language development³. If your child has been identified as having a difficulty with language development, you can expect that they will need support in learning both of their languages. Like all bilingual children, your child will need frequent, rich exposure to both languages in order to become bilingual.

You do not need to stop using your heritage language with your child when there is a language development concern.

How to Support your Bilingual Child

- Children learn best from people who are fluent in a language, so you should use the language that feels most comfortable to you. Playing together, singing, and telling stories all provide rich language models for your child.
- Give your child lots of opportunities to experience and interact in their languages in daily routines, with extended family, and in the community.
- Don't worry if your child mixes their languages - this is a normal part of becoming bilingual.
- Keep going! If your heritage language is important to your family culture, continue to use it at home as much as you can - even if your child has a difficulty with language development.



How Language Express can help you if your family's first language is not English:

If you have concerns about your child's language development in their first language, we can help!

While Language Express services are provided in English, we focus on teaching you strategies that you can use at home with your child in any language.

Our focus is on first language development. If your child's skills in their first language are developing appropriately but you are looking for support with a second language, we can provide information and direct you to resources in the community.

Let's Read About It!

Here are some books you can read with your child that feature bilingualism or are written in two languages:

Dylan's Birthday Present, by Victor D. O. Santos

Kiss by Kiss/Ocêhtowina: A Counting Book for Families, by Richard Van Camp (Plains Cree & English)

My Snow Day / Ma journée de neige, by Ally Nathaneil (French & English)

Mina's Scavenger Hunt, by Katrina Liu (Traditional Chinese, Pinyin, & English)

Resources:

The Hanen Centre: [Bilingualism in Young Children: Separating Fact from Fiction](https://www.hanen.org/Bilingualism-in-Young-Children-Separating-Fact-from-Fiction) (hanen.org)

[Can children with language impairments learn two languages?](https://www.hanen.org/Can-children-with-language-impairments-learn-two-languages?) (hanen.org)

SAC: [Position Statement Learning an Additional Language in the Context of Language Disorder EN.pdf](https://www.sac-oac.ca/Position-Statement-Learning-an-Additional-Language-in-the-Context-of-Language-Disorder-EN.pdf) (sac-oac.ca)

