

Q&A

Instilling good values and encouraging bilingualism at home.

Q How do I inculcate good values in the children I teach and foster in them personal values and virtues such as integrity, responsibility, respect, courtesy and compassion?

Alicia Lim: Adult role modelling is the most effective approach. Children are good observers and have a tendency to mirror what they see, even as early as in infancy. The way an adult interacts and responds to a child has a direct impact on the child's behaviour.

As adults, we have to exhibit behaviours that reflect the values or virtues which we want children to learn — instead of just telling them what is expected. Be consistent and clear in the messages and virtues you wish to foster in children. Acknowledge good behaviours inspired by virtues, and gently guide and correct inappropriate ones.

For example, when a child does not respond to a greeting despite being prompted, adults usually brush the matter aside by saying “He/she is shy”, without realising that it is a missed

opportunity to seize the teaching moment.

Instead, we can guide the child gently and say, “You need to respond politely by saying Hello”. This sends a clear message to the child on what courtesy is about. The child may not respond immediately, but with constant reminders, he or she will respond when ready. It is also necessary for adults to acknowledge the virtue and good behaviour by saying, “You are being polite by greeting Auntie Sue.”

Apply this approach to all virtues and values that you wish to inculcate in children. Remember, it takes time and patience to bring virtues to life.

Q How can I create a conducive home learning environment to foster bilingualism in my child?

Dr Connie Lum: There are many opportunities to facilitate bilingualism at home, whether it is through daily conversations or formal instruction. For children to cultivate a habit of speaking two languages at home, it is important to engage them consistently in meaningful and interactive activities.

You can use daily routines to create a stimulating bilingual environment. For instance, you may prepare Asian or Western breakfasts on alternate days and discuss with your children what their favourite food is. When it comes to speaking Mandarin, for example, children often encounter

for parents



READ BOOKS IN BOTH LANGUAGES — YOUR CHILD WILL FIND IT MORE EXCITING TO GET INVOLVED IN ROLE PLAY USING MOTHER TONGUE DURING SUCH SESSIONS.

//Dr Connie Lum

difficulties in using words of measurement, e.g. 条。During dinner, ask your child to bring you 一条香蕉(a banana). You can also ask your child to bring you 一条毛巾 (a towel) before you enter the bathroom.

It is also helpful for children to associate their mother tongue with culture. You can urge your children to use chopsticks during meals, or serve Chinese tea at home to guests. Most importantly, be a role model by speaking your mother tongue at home and in public places.

Another effective method is to expose children to both English and mother tongue songs at an early age. Play these songs at home daily, and sing along to rhymes of both languages with your children. Set aside time every day to read them books in both languages too. Your children will find it more exciting to get involved in role play using mother tongue during such sessions. ♥

for professionals



Ask The Experts!



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