

My best 10...

Ways to make your students' home languages an asset

Celebrate students' home languages with these top 10 practical tips from five teachers



2 HOME LANGUAGE HOMEWORK

Use homework projects to involve children and their home language in the classroom: to revitalise weekly homework, set children a project which celebrates their home language – for example, a Geography unit exploring different countries can encourage children to write about another culture. Children can share this with the class – they will love learning new vocabulary in another language!

3 Create learning environments

Build a learning environment: integrate children's home languages into classroom displays, provide them with translations for key vocabulary and use bilingual books in the reading corner. This encourages reluctant readers and allows parents to read stories with their child at home. All children will feel included in their learning environment.

4 MAKE PUPILS THE EXPERTS

Encourage children to share their language and experiences with the class: this will build confidence and knowledge by allowing children to share stories with their peers. This allows even the most introverted child to be an 'expert' and gives the other children the chance to learn about another culture.

Biographies



Ann Horton

After many years teaching languages, Ann joined Lambeth Academy in September 2005 as a teacher of German and Spanish. Since September 2007, she has been the EAL coordinator there.



Salome Campos

Salome has been teaching at Wyvil Primary School since 2004. She teaches a Year 1 class, is the subject leader for Modern Foreign Languages and a Community Liaison and Pupil Voice leader.



Lucy Mathieson

Lucy has been teaching at Wyvil Primary School for four years. She is currently teaching a Year 2 class and is also the subject leader for Phonics. She has also participated in a British Council multi-lateral Comenius Project.



James Marsh

James is currently in his NQT year. He is teaching a Year 2 class. He has knowledge of French, Classical Greek and Latin and is enjoying making languages an integral part of his pedagogy.



Stephanie Stevens

Stephanie has been at Wyvil Primary School for two years and currently teaches Year 1. She is the subject leader for Religious Education, and part of her role is to ensure the school celebrates all communities and cultures.

1 Stories, music and dance

Plan the curriculum around children's experiences and languages: when teachers plan to use a child's home language in the classroom it can deepen understanding in a range of other subjects. Why not retell traditional tales that children would be familiar with as part of a language unit, or share a wide range of traditional and modern music from other countries? You will be surprised at how even the quietest children can excel in the music and dance of their home culture!



James with his Year 2 students at Wyvil Primary School



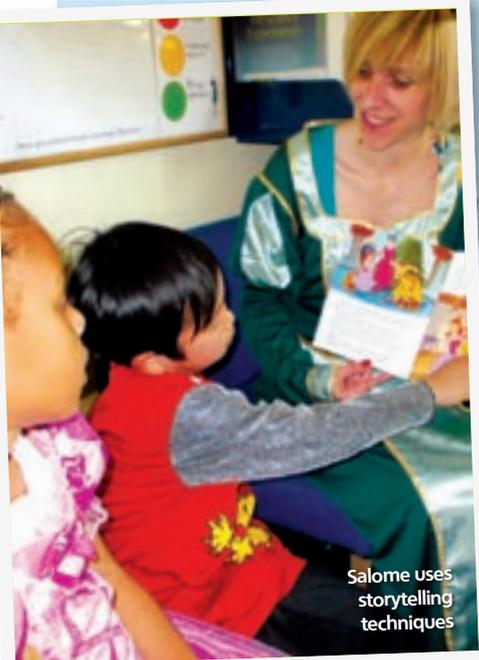
Portuguese at Lambeth Academy

5 Show you value pupils' languages

Value home languages and develop skills in those languages: provide children with opportunities for community language classes, to strengthen and develop their knowledge of their own language and community. If possible allow for accreditation. Get your students to sit a GCSE in their home language. (See page 22 for more ideas).

7 Cultural contexts

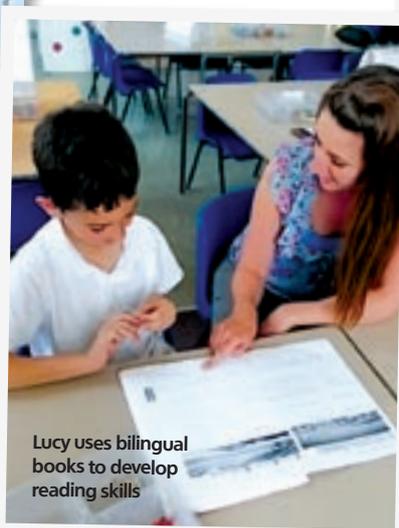
Research events celebrating different cultures in your area: encouraging children to be a part of a wider community will aid social cohesion in class. Make a point of making children aware of events happening in and around the locality of the school.



Salome uses storytelling techniques

6 Explore other cultures

Celebrate multi-cultural holidays: finding out about important holidays around the world gives children the chance to explore and celebrate other cultures. This will strengthen and develop their citizenship skills.



Lucy uses bilingual books to develop reading skills



Stephanie uses role-play to engage students

8 Bring people together

Organise international events: these celebrate diversity, and encourage people to get together. If a child and their parents' second language is English, try to get them to converse with other families at such events – this can encourage them to speak with confidence and help their children by modelling good English.

10 Tell pupils to 'Keep it up!'

Encourage students to use their own language often in school, and not to let it drop because "it's more important to speak English". Keeping their first language active will help them with their English, and can also be really helpful for new arrivals. Students who are developing both languages can discuss lessons with new arrivals in their own language, helping them to understand what is taught.

9 Pupils as teachers

Encourage children to teach others: on the European Day of Languages this year, why not ask your students to teach their home language to other students? You can even invite students from other local schools to join in! Students can set up language "stalls," and students can move around in an organised carousel activity. When we have run this activity, it has always been a very successful and enjoyable day for all, and you may discover some unexpected budding language teachers!