

# Webinar 1: Raising Bilingual Children

Raising bilingual children can feel joyful, complicated, rewarding, and sometimes overwhelming. During this conversation, parents, educators, language advocates, and community leaders shared practical strategies for nurturing Haitian Creole in the home, building positive language associations, navigating receptive bilingualism, and helping children develop pride in both their language and culture.

Whether your child is already speaking Kreyòl, understands but responds in English, or is just beginning their language journey, we hope these insights and resources support your family's path.

**To watch the complete webinar:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqlkq2azAUs>

**To explore all Haitian Creole Children's Book Week recordings, resources, and community spotlights:**

<https://www.kreyolandbeyond.org/childrens-book-week>

**Below are some of the major takeaways from our discussion.**

To watch the complete webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqlkq2azAUs>

## **Shifting the Emotional Narrative**

- **Model with Love:** Children are highly observant and quickly deduce the value of a language based on how it is modeled. Be mindful of *when* you default to Kreyòl. If it is only used during loud political debates or when we are upset, children may associate the language with negative emotions.
- **Lead with Affection:** Intentionally speak your first words of love, praise, and comfort to your children in Kreyòl so they build a warm, positive emotional connection to the language.

## **Tackling Receptive Bilingualism**

- **Consistency Over Rigid Rules:** While strategies like OPOL (One Parent, One Language) can be amazing for infants and toddlers, real-life shifts once school starts. Don't beat yourself up if you have to switch to English for homework help. Consistency over time is a marathon, not a race.
- **The Power of "Recasting":** When a child understands your Kreyòl but responds in English, try repeating their answer back to them naturally in Kreyòl. This gentle, indirect nudge provides them with the right vocabulary without making them feel pressured or put on a spot.

- **Do Not Panic:** Receptive bilingualism is a normal phase. Many of us—myself included—didn't become fully fluent or deeply engaged in Kreyòl until our late 20s. The desire will find them, especially if their early experiences are positive.

### **Building and Expanding Vocabulary**

- **Banish the Word "Bagay":** To push developmental language skills, encourage children (and adults!) to name specific objects, verbs, and adjectives instead of using *bagay* as a universal placeholder.
- **Scaffold the Language:** Introduce concepts and multi-syllabic words incrementally based on age-appropriateness to prevent language frustration.
- **Read a Book a Day:** Reading just one book a day to a child starting around 3 months old can introduce them to roughly 300,000 words by the time they hit kindergarten.

### **Gamify the Experience**

- Tap into your child's natural competitive streak by introducing games and sensory-rich activities (arts, crafts, water play) centered around Kreyòl vocabulary.

## **The Ultimate Kreyòl Resource Library**

Here are the links and tools shared by our panelists and participants during the session:

### **Multimedia & Free Materials**

**Lakou Kajou YouTube Channel:** Educational cartoons and engaging visual content for kids.

Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@lakoukajou>

**Lakou Kajou Website:** Free digital books and interactive resources specifically curated for parents and caregivers.

Access Free Books: <https://lakoukajou.org>

**Lakou Kajou SoundCloud:** Educational songs and age-appropriate music tracks designed for younger children. Listen on SoundCloud: <https://soundcloud.com/lakoukajou>

**Jaden Timoun Spotify Playlist:** A wonderful musical resource full of great Kreyòl children's songs. Listen on Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/user/jadentimoun>

### **Books & Publishing Networks**

**Lakou Kajou Bookstore:** Physical copies of children's books available online. Browse on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/Lakou-Kajou>

**Educavision:** Features over 250 multilingual and trilingual books written and illustrated by Haitian students, including the Liv Lang Manman series from Matènwa. Visit Educavision:

<https://educavision.com>

**Starbright Books:** Publisher of hardcover bilingual English/Kreyòl books for preschool through second grade, featuring translations by our very own Josiane Hudicourt-Barnes.

<https://starbrightbooks.com>

**Patrick Sylvain's Literary Work:** For older readers and adults, check out his novel *Anba Bòt Kwokodil*, his latest English literature collections on [Arrowsmith Press](#), and his poetry collection *Habits of Light* on [Finishing Line Press](#).

## Games & Language Programs

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**Kreyòl Board Games:** Look out for games like:

- **Depale:** <https://depalehaiti.com/>
- **Makaya & Oslè:** <https://www.krikrakgames.com/product-page/makaya>
- **Creole Cards:**  
<https://www.amazon.com/First-Haitian-Creole-Flash-Cards/dp/B0CSX54372>
- **WOY! Haitian Proverb Card Game:**  
<https://www.etsy.com/listing/1362370207/woy-haitian-proverbial-card-game-wbonus>
- **How Haitian Are You?** (great for older children and adults):  
<https://howhaitianareyou.com/>

Put perfectionism aside—if you spot a minor text error, just fix it with a pen and keep playing!

**Kreyòl And Beyond Bingo:** Play Bingo Here: <https://www.kreyolandbeyond.org/bingo> -

**Jaden Timoun (NYC):** Immersive early childhood programs and community events. Check out their Pawòl Bileng First Fridays of the month or their summer session updates. Learn More: <https://jadentimoun.org>

**Haitian Creole Language Institute:** Visit Website: <https://haitiancreoleinstitute.com>

**Virtual Kreyòl Storytime:** Hosted by Suzanne Francois at 11:00 AM EST. Reach out to her directly at [Suzannefrancois35@gmail.com](mailto:Suzannefrancois35@gmail.com) to get involved. Her flyer is attached!

## Reading for Older Youth & Adults

**Woy Magazine Substack:** Fun articles and cultural commentary written in Kreyòl. Read on Substack: <https://woymagazine.substack.com>

**Ayibopost:** Exceptional journalism frequently published in Haitian Creole. <https://ayibopost.com>

**The New York Times:** The entire NYT landmark investigative series on Haiti's independence debt to France was translated fully into Kreyòl.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/ht/interactive/2022/05/20/world/americas/ayiti-lafrans-esklavaj-dat-enp-otan.html>

Mèsi anpil,

Kreyòl & Beyond *Team*

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