**Including Children’s Home Languages and Cultures**

Learning, talking, and engaging with children in their home languages and about their cultures can become a rewarding and important part of classroom life.

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| If you don't speak children's home languages, learn 10–20 “survival words” in each child's language and use them from the children's very first day. | Conversations with the family can help identify terms and phrases important to children; for example:  
  - Bottle  
  - Milk  
  - Eat/Hungry  
  - Drink/Thirsty  
  - Stop  
  - Hurt  
  - Help  
  - Bathroom | • Helps children to feel more comfortable  
  • Helps children begin to communicate basic needs |
| Invite families and other speakers of the home languages into the classroom to actively use their languages. | • Babies hear lullabies, rhymes, or songs in their home language.  
  • Older children hear stories, songs, rhymes, or read-alouds in their home language.  
  • Children of all ages have “conversations” with families or other speakers—from a baby babbling back and forth with an adult to an older child asking and answering questions about the class garden, for example.  
  • Children of all ages interact with a speaker of their home language while engaging in classroom activities, including looking at books and objects, participating in center activities, or joining dramatic play. | • Demonstrates respect for children's and families’ home languages  
  • Helps children who are dual language learners feel more included in the classroom  
  • Helps families understand what is happening in the classroom  
  • Strengthens home-center connections  
  • Exposes children who do not speak a family's home language to a new language and culture |
What can I do? | What are some examples of this? | Why should I do it? It . . .
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Bring language and literacy activities familiar to children from their homes into classroom activities. | • Learn about the ways children's families use language and writing in their homes and cultures—for example, by making music, storytelling, sharing nursery rhymes, and sending greeting cards or thank-you notes.  
• Find ways to incorporate these practices into your room, including during circle time, storytelling, or center activities and any time while conversing with the children.  
• Invite families to help choose and lead language and literacy activities by, for example, showing a small group of children how to do calligraphy or leading a cooking demonstration of a traditional, cultural dish. | • Demonstrates respect for children's and families' cultures and traditions  
• Helps children who are learning dual languages feel more included in the classroom  
• Exposes children who do not speak the home language to a new language and culture  
• Supports language and literacy learning by building on children's background and funds of knowledge

Consider and incorporate the traditions, values, and practices of children's families and cultures when choosing themes to explore in the classroom. | Choose a theme that could be relevant to many cultures. For example:  
• If dance is important in your Irish-American community, explore “dance” rather than “Irish step dancing.”  
• If singing is an important cultural practice to many families, explore songs from many different cultures and languages.  
• If many children's families work in construction or in restaurants, explore that area and invite families to share their experiences. You could also propose an exploration of jobs. | • Helps children make connections between the knowledge they gain in the classroom and the knowledge they have learned at home

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