

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.

What can I do?	What are some examples of this?	Why should I do it? It . . .
If you don't speak children's home languages, learn 10–20 "survival words" in the each child's language and use them from the children's very first day.	<p>Conversations with the family can help identify terms and phrases important to children; for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottle • Milk • Eat/Hungry • Drink/Thirsty • Stop • Hurt • Help • Bathroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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



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<p>Bring language and literacy activities familiar to children from their homes into classroom activities.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p>Consider and incorporate the traditions, values, and practices of children's families and cultures when choosing themes to explore in the classroom.</p>	<p>Choose a theme that could be relevant to many cultures. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps children make connections between the knowledge they gain in the classroom and the knowledge they have learned at home 