

I Can See Myself

Creating classroom learning environments that reflect children's cultures and languages

By including first language and culture in the classroom, you create a welcoming, safe space for dual language learners to take risks, learn, and develop in both languages. Here's how...

Welcome children and families with greetings in their first languages and visuals of their home cultures.



Hang a poster by the door with pictures of each child and the phonetic pronunciation for hello in their language as a prompt to use regularly. The entrance of the school or center is a good place for greetings in first languages, too!



Add greeting signs in different languages in the morning meeting area to prompt teachers to include in daily greeting song.



Include images from families' countries/cultures in the classroom. Consider including different buildings from various places in block area to inspire play. Classroom family trees with pictures of children's families are a welcoming addition.

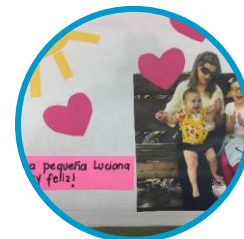
Include books in the first languages of the children in your classroom, as well as books with characters that look like them and their families.



Place books in the children's languages in the book area. If you do not read the books with the children yourself, ask families and volunteers to share them with children.



Select books that include characters that represent the children and their families in varied, positive ways.



Encourage families to make family books. All about me books made collaboratively by children and families can help everyone get to know each other.

Include items and props from the children's cultures in different areas of the classrooms. Ask families to send in cultural items (food packaging, kitchen tools, clothing, musical instruments, etc.)



Julie enjoys corn husk tamale wraps and a tortilla warmer in dramatic play. Families know best about what items children will most connect with!



Families provide clothing for a classroom display.

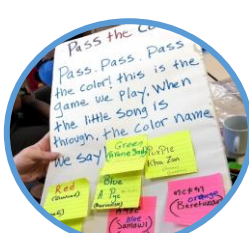


Teachers demonstrate an Ethiopian coffee ceremony with authentic items.

Make frequent and consistent connections between first language and English throughout the day.



Learn key words in the children's languages and use them throughout the day. In this photo, frequently used words like build, tall, and short are written out in various first languages and gathered on a ring for the block area. Families are great resources. They can help you learn key words to use throughout the day. They can also record themselves saying words on an audio file, and text it to you to help you learn the right pronunciation. The document "Sharing My Language with You" from the Cox Campus Resource Library can be helpful.



In this classroom, teachers wrote out a favorite song and added reminders of the different colors in the various first languages represented in the classroom so they can use these languages during the song/game.



Highlight cognates in a cognate chart. Cognates are words in different languages that have a common root. Cognate charts can support connections between children's first language and English.