



### **Knowledge from Home is the Foundation for Learning at School**

- It is very important for teachers to build upon children’s cultural home knowledge because this home knowledge forms the foundation for their understanding of new content.
- Children build their knowledge and language skills through interactions with their family and community members.
- During these home language interactions, children learn the linguistic code (such as words, sentences, phrases) of their language or dialect.
- Some families may speak a different language than what is spoken in school, such as Spanish or Chinese. Other families may speak a different dialect than what is used in school, for example African American English (AAE), Haitian Creole, or Jamaican Patois.
- Children learn the social rules of communication during home language interactions, such as how to adjust their language based on the speakers’ knowledge, how to ask questions, and how to tell a story.
- Children bring these unique social rules for communication into the classroom as well. It is your job to provide instruction that helps them build upon the knowledge they have been developing at home. The way that you can help children build upon their home knowledge is by engaging in culturally relevant instruction.

### **Conversations as Culturally Relevant Instruction**

- You can think of culture and language as being two strands of a rope that are twisted together. You cannot have one without the other because human beings use language to pass on their culture.
- Culturally relevant instruction means teachers intentionally incorporate children’s cultural knowledge, traditions, and home language into instructional practices and classroom conversations.
- Families pass on their culture by teaching children their home language—the language(s) or dialect(s) that the family uses at home.



- CALD learners might be learning two languages/dialects at home. Some children might even speak three or more! Still others might speak English at home but it may be a special version of English called a dialect. It is critical that teachers create a classroom language environment where children feel comfortable speaking their home language at school.

### **Diverse Conversation Styles**

- Even though the act of conversing is basic to our human nature, the determination of what it means to be a good conversation partner is not based on an objective standard that is consistent across all groups of people (Collier, 1988). In fact, many cultural groups differ on their beliefs about what makes a conversation enjoyable or informative, and what makes a speaker a good conversationalist.
- Everyone will approach a conversation from a different perspective because the act of conversing is based on the social rules, cultural values, and communication traditions of people's home language background, their social circles, and their individual personality differences.