

Gathering Community Information: Reflecting On and Using What You Learn

Educators can use this tool as a guide to (a) gather community information; (b) reflect on what they are learning about the multilingual learners they serve, along with their families and communities; and (c) use what they learn in the classroom environment and instruction.

Suggested Activities

Use these suggestions to consider how you might gather community information:

- Identify and visit the communities and neighborhoods where the multilingual learners you serve live.
- Identify community locations for field trips.
- Collaborate with your students and their families to create a physical map of the community, highlighting places, people, and events that your classroom, program, or school can use and share with families.
- Go on a walk with your students; observe and take photos and notes. (If the multilingual students' neighborhood is not close, visiting their neighborhood as part of a field trip may be an option. Likewise, if the area is more rural, you may wish to visit the town center as a group. These could be activities where families are also invited to participate and guide the activity.)
- Collect artifacts from the community that demonstrate language use and learning practices common in the community that you can use as part of your classroom instruction (e.g., bus schedules in various languages, notices at the supermarkets and libraries, food items, murals and artwork).
- Invite multilingual families and community members into your classroom, program, or school to talk about how they use their languages and other assets day to day.
- Involve your students and their families in creating culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments both within your classroom and school and in the community (e.g., play areas, library and community center resources, classroom resources, units of study, exploratory units).

Reminders

Consider these reminders as you gather community information:

- **Collaborate.** Partner with multilingual learners and their families, colleagues, and community members to ideate and create a community portrait, physical map, or other resources.
- **Get out and about.** Meet families where they are; explore places and events, visit neighborhoods, and listen to how language is used.
- **Be inquisitive and respectful.** Observe and listen; remember, if you don't live within this community, you are a learner and a visitor.
- **Enact a can do approach.** Focus on strengths; remember, diverse cultural and linguistic practices are assets.
- **Check for personal bias.** Reflect to check on possible assumptions, deficit thinking, or judgments you may be applying to your observations.
- **Plan for action.** Use the information you gather to inform your language observations, formative assessment practices, and instruction.
- **Revisit, revise, and update.** Continually gather and incorporate new information.

Reflection Questions

Use these questions to reflect on what you are learning about the multilingual learners you serve and their families and communities:

- What am I learning about the multilingual learners I serve and the opportunities they have to use language in their community?
- What am I learning about my beliefs and practices around language development and language use, and how are they different from or the same as the beliefs and practices around language development and language use I observe in the community?
- What am I learning about community members and how they use language with each other, including with multilingual children and youth?
- What am I learning about the community and the community resources available to support multilingual learners' language practices used at home and in the community?
- How might I collaborate with community members to utilize community language resources to help me create learning opportunities that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive?
- What am I learning about community language practices that challenge stereotypes and deficit-thinking?

Community Resources Inventory

Use this table as a guide to record information you are gathering about the language interactions that happen in the communities and neighborhoods of the multilingual learners you serve.

Community/Neighborhood		Who Live Here	
Activities, locations, and resources central to the community	Ways adults interact and communicate with children, youth, and each other in the community	Ways children and youth interact and communicate with others in the community	Community members with whom I may wish to connect and collaborate/for what purpose

Reflections, Notes, Next Steps

How will I incorporate this information into my environment and instruction? (For example, identify a unit or lesson around an area in the community, incorporate photos or artifacts from the place in the classroom, gather more information.)

We invite you to use this space to record your reflections, notes, and next steps.