Incorporating Your Language and Culture in your Home

If you already speak a home language other than English, you are communicating thoughts, feelings, ideas and culture to your child. But perhaps you never knew the power you held! Researcher Dr. Jim Cummins reminds us “the extent to which students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success” (1986). If parents continue with home language and culture, this valuable resource helps your child develop a strong self-identity and facilitates proficiency with reading and writing. It becomes a valuable source of prior knowledge and experiences which you can use for extending learning to other subject areas. Strong oral language skills in one's first language, access to quality reading materials and a literacy-rich home environment promote successful literacy acquisition (August & Shanahan 2006). According to the California Department of Education in “A Look at First Grade in California Public Schools and the Common Core State Standards” (2011), “Students with strong literacy skills in their primary language have an advantage: They can concentrate on learning English rather than on receiving initial instruction in reading and writing.” This was further emphasized in the English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools, K-12 (2014). In this guide, home language and native language are used interchangeably.