“Eliciting Funds of Knowledge”

These are different activities that can be used for eliciting funds of knowledge. There are many ways to do this, although the traditional way has been to visit homes.

1. Develop a survey to send home with your students. This could be a general survey about practices in the home, a student-developed survey, or a survey specific to a theme in your classroom.
   1. For a general survey, you may want to start by asking about what the students do at home for fun, what their parents do for work, or what they help with around the house. You can expand the survey to ask parents about their hobbies, extended family resources, or cultural histories.
   2. Sometimes students have a vested interest in getting to know their own families and histories. This serves the role of teaching students survey design and can be a great science, social studies, or language arts activity. For example, perhaps the students may decide to survey their parents and community members about food. They could develop a survey about cooking, shopping, recipes, nutrition, attitudes toward nutrition, and so forth. Now they are engaged in data collection and analysis! Furthermore, they get to be actively engaged in seeing different types of cooking and food.
   3. In your class, you may be getting ready to study earth science. It would be a great idea to develop a survey of the students’ families to see who has experience living around different landforms. So, perhaps many families have moved from a mountainous region of Central America. How can drawing on their experiences bring your unit alive? What about a student whose father grew up in a fishing town in Maine? What about a student who immigrated from a desert or grasslands in Northern Africa? What about a student who visited her grandparents near a river in India?
2. Develop a table walk. Put large sheets of paper around the room with different topics. These could include things like “family,” “community,” “hobbies,” “pets,” and so forth. Let the students walk around to different tables and write what they know about these topics or about specific knowledge of the topic. It may look like semi-chaos at first, but think about what you will learn from the students!
3. Visit the students’ homes or community settings. There may be some limitations in professional standards, community perceptions, and safety issues, but this could draw out a wealth of knowledge of your students’ cultural practices and funds of knowledge.
4. Develop a cookbook. This is one activity that could be done at a grade level, school-wide, or in one class. Have each student bring in a recipe from home; something that they feel represents their family. On one page include a family story or origin of the dish. On the other page include a picture and the recipe. Make sure students learn to respect each other’s dishes!
5. For older students, create PowerPoints, websites, or include other digital literacies to display funds of knowledge.
6. Have students collect oral narratives from their grandparents, family friends, or parents. This will help them develop questions, think about historical concepts, and will give you deep insight into their lives as well. For some, this may be the first time they have heard about their own family histories.