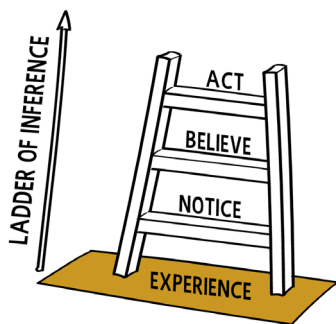**HANDOUT** | **EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT**

Partnering with Families in Assessment: *Observing Through a Cultural Lens*

THE LADDER OF INFERENCE IN OBSERVATION

To help us think intentionally about culture when assessing young children, we can use a tool called the ladder of inference. Making interpretations about what you observe is like climbing a ladder. Moving up the rungs of the ladder illustrates how we move from observation to assumptions to action.

During observation, we STOP and ask ourselves some key questions to cautiously climb the ladder of inference:

- What **assumptions** am I making about this child's behavior?
- What **interpretations** am I making based on my own expectations?
- In what ways is **my cultural background** influencing what I see?
- How might this **child's family** help me improve my understanding and make more culturally appropriate decisions about what I observe?

Follow along as the facilitator reads the vignette below:

Tiana observes that Farah, a 5-year-old dual language learner in her classroom, has been quiet throughout the children's exploration of caterpillars. Tiana invites children to ask questions and share their observations while they stand around the caterpillars. Unlike most of her peers, Farah has not asked any questions, but has silently watched the caterpillars.

Tiana has noticed that in group situations like this, Farah typically remains observant, yet silent. However, Farah is usually responsive in one-on-one experiences with a peer or teacher. Tiana thinks to herself, "Farah doesn't feel comfortable participating because she's developing two languages. I need to work on vocabulary development with Farah."

Spend a few minutes with a partner and discuss the following question:

Where is Tiana on the ladder of inference?

Choose <u>one</u> of the four key questions from above that Tiana might ask herself to move back down the ladder and gain a cultural perspective of what she is experiencing.

Write down one way you will use the ladder of inference in your practice:

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