READING #22 | Diversity and Infant/Toddler Caregiving

Janet Gonzalez-Mena and Navaz Peshotan Bhavnagri
Reprinted from A World of Difference, chapter 8, 2003

CATEGORIES:
Culture and Diversity
Infants
Toddlers
Maybe infants are highly adaptive and can easily adjust to variations of caregiving. Is it possible that variations in caregiving styles and expectations overwhelm and perhaps even harm some infants? Little specific research has been done on exactly how variations in caregiving impact development. We do not know much about the consequences of differences in caregiving as it is carried out by the parent compared to what the child encounters in child care. We do know that, even when there are no cultural differences, sensitive, responsive caregiving is far more effective than insensitive, unresponsive caregiving (Lamb & Easterbrooks 1981; Ainsworth 1993; Isabella 1993). Variations in caregiving practices come from many sources, but this article concentrates on those from cultural sources. We’re defining culture as “the values, beliefs and traditions of a particular group [from which arise] a set of rules that, to varying degrees, guide the behavior of individuals who are members of that group, whether that group is defined in terms of national origin, racial experience, linguistic experience, religious background, socioeconomic status” (Chang, Muckelroy, & Pulido-Tobiassen 1996, 19). We acknowledge that within any culture exist differences also in age, gender, and sexual orientation.

Cultural sensitivity

When sensitive caregivers meet individual needs, they also may be meeting cultural needs. However, without specific cultural information, caregivers can inadvertently use practices that undermine parents’ efforts and tread on their cultural values. For example, in a videotape (Gonzalez-Mena, Her-zog, & Herzog 1995), Akemi, a Japanese American mother tells a story about her interaction with another mother, a recent

Junior, who is new to the center, is excited when he sees a bowl of food. The baby makes happy sounds, kicks his legs, and waves his arms. But when Helen puts Junior in the high chair and places the bowl in front of him, he just sits there and makes no attempt to feed himself. He looks confused and then distressed. Finally he slumps over, a glazed look in his eyes.

His mother explains later that she has taught Junior not to touch his food. In fact, her son has never been in a high chair; he has always been fed on his mother’s lap, wrapped up tightly in a blanket to discourage him from interfering with her. Junior obviously doesn’t know how to respond to this new arrangement.

We’d like to suggest that the place to start in this situation is to look for the reasons behind the mother’s actions. Why has the mother taught her son not to touch his food? It’s easy to assume that she is obsessed with neatness or hygiene. But maybe that’s not it at all; maybe her approach to feeding has to do with a particular set of cultural beliefs or traditions.

What if Helen discovers the feeding difference stems from a cultural practice? What should she do? Is it okay if the baby encounters one set of practices at home and another in child care? Every day caregivers are faced with differentiating between negative parenting practices and positive cultural practices. We hope this article will help them do that better.

Exposure to diversity in infancy

Are we perhaps asking too much of some babies to develop a sense of who they are and where they belong and relate to caregivers who care for them differently from the way they are cared for at home? Maybe infants are highly adaptive and can easily adjust to variations of caregiving. Is it possible that variations in caregiving styles and expectations overwhelm and perhaps even harm some infants? Little specific research has been done on exactly how variations in caregiving impact development. We do not know much about the consequences of differences in caregiving as it is carried out by the parent compared to what the child encounters in child care. We do know that, even when there are no cultural differences, sensitive, responsive caregiving is far more effective than insensitive, unresponsive caregiving (Lamb & Easterbrooks 1981; Ainsworth 1993; Isabella 1993).

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For example, in a videotape (Gonzalez-Mena, Her-zog, & Herzog 1995), Akemi, a Japanese American mother tells a story about her interaction with another mother, a recent
immigrant from Asia (she doesn’t say what country). She describes how the two are having a little get-together while their babies play on the floor at their feet. Akemi expresses delight when the visiting child gets to his feet and takes a wobbly step. But his mother downplays her son’s accomplishment. She tells Akemi how clumsy and stupid her son is. She goes on to point out all the things he cannot do. Akemi is upset that this woman would put down her son right in front of him and tells her so. The immigrant mother is confused by what Akemi says.

Imagine a caregiver observing that scene. Would she realize that what she knows about self-esteem development is not universally accepted? Would she know that in some cultures humility is valued over pride and that negative comments are meant to instill a proper attitude, starting in infancy? Would the caregiver know that attitudes toward pride and humility are directly linked to cultural goals and values (Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto 1995)? The mother’s negative remarks about her son might upset a caregiver who does not understand the mother’s view of what is best for him.

The same kind of linking to culture that is true of self-esteem is also true of self-help skills, independence, dependence,manners, and respect. Values and goals show up as behaviors and become organized into practices. Any time parents’ practices tread on caregivers’ values, beliefs, and understandings, some caregivers find it harder to be sensitive and responsive to those parents. Instead of trying to understand the behavior, many just want to change it.

The issue of cultural sensitivity is more urgent now than ever before because today’s immigrants represent greater ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity than did earlier European immigrants (Grant 1995), and their caregiving practices are very different from the prevalent European American practices (Lieberman 1995). The new Americans—and even many longtime Americans—have differing customs from those of families firmly rooted in the dominant culture of the United States, although not all the people of the dominant culture are alike either. Diversity is found in every group. Diverse people not only do things differently, but they perceive things differently too. They have distinctive belief systems, perceptions of their children’s capabilities, even goals for childrearing, all of which affect their parenting practices.

**Cultural differences in childrearing practices**

Although cultural differences demand more attention today, caregivers have little training in diversity. According to a study done by Chang, Muckelroy, and Pulido-Tobiassen (1996), caregivers have neither the skills nor the knowledge to effectively address issues of race, language, and culture. Caregiver training generally neglects to make the connection between quality care and diversity. “To date, the definitions and measures of quality care are, for the most part, missing an analysis of the implications of racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity in child development and in child care” (p. 20).

A similar study in Canada (Bernhard et al. 1995) came to the same conclusions. Parents’ responses showed that “There were cases where teachers had clearly failed to appreciate cultural differences in child-rearing practices” (p. 36).

**Responding to differences**

Suppose that caregivers do have the knowledge they need to understand and appreciate cultural differences. Does knowledge alone guide response? Does sensitivity to diversity mean that caregivers must adopt the parent’s way even if it differs from program policy? No. Caregivers must not abdicate their professional responsibility but must make considered decisions with each family and child about what is best to do. And that is not easy when parents and caregivers have conflicting views.

There is no simple rule to follow when caregivers and parents do not see eye-to-eye. Standing firm on all policies and practices is too rigid, and caregivers changing what they do each and every time a parent asks them to is too flexible. Sometimes a family’s practices are in conflict with their goals for their children. Sometimes a family practice is risky or actually harmful.

When a caregiver perceives a negative consequence of a particular practice, it is his or her responsibility to help a family sort out and understand the implications. Of course, in a case of obvious harm to the child that fits the legal definition of child abuse, it is the caregiver’s responsibility to report to authorities.

When the family and the program do not agree about some practice or policy, the caregiver should ask 10 questions:

1. What is the cultural perspective of the family on this issue?
2. How do the family’s child care practices relate to its cultural perspective?
3. What are the family’s goals for the child, and how has the family culture influenced its goals?
4. In view of the goals, is the family’s practice in the child’s best interest?
5. Are there any sound research data indicating that the family’s practice is doing actual harm?
6. Is the program’s practice or policy universally applicable, or is it better suited to a particular culture?
7. Did the family choose the program because of the particular philosophy, even if it is based in a different culture from the family’s own?
8. Have I attempted to fully understand the family's rationale for its practices, the complexity of the issues, and other factors that contribute to the practices?
9. Have I attempted to fully explain to the family my rationale for my practices and looked at the complexity of the issues and at how my own culture influences my rationale and perspective?
10. What are some creative resolutions that address both the parents' concerns and my own?

Looking for a creative solution that incorporates both the parents' and the caregiver's concerns fits right in with the both/and thinking explained in NAECY's revised Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (Bredekamp & Copple 1997). Caregivers can and should avoid the polarization of either/or choices and explore more thoroughly how two seemingly opposing views can both be right. It may be hard to explore a situation in which there is a clear conflict of values between what's behind program policy or caregiver's belief and what's behind parental practices. But even in the case of a value conflict, those devoted to both/and thinking may find a win-win solution. Such solutions usually come from dialogues and often surprise those involved because neither party would have thought of the solution without the other.

Caregivers should be sensitive to differing practices and yet still be professionals and share their expertise. They must recognize that as families outside the dominant culture come in contact with it, they change. But it is equally important to realize and acknowledge that the dominant culture also changes through contact. Cross-cultural contact is a two-way process. Some old values and practices remain intact, some remain but are modified, and some are shed for newer ones. This process opens up both families and caregivers to operate flexibly in two or more cultures (Patel, Power, & Bhavnagri 1996).

**Dialogue and reflective-thinking strategies**

Dialogue between caregivers and parents works best when all concerned use what John Dewey (1933) called reflective thinking. Individuals should be encouraged to give active, persistent, and careful consideration to any apparent form of knowledge or beliefs in light of the grounds that support it and the conclusions that are drawn from it.

Schon (1987) strongly recommends that practitioners, to be effective professionals, need to systematically reflect on their actions. Lubek (1996) specifically suggests this reflective approach when working with a diverse population. She believes that reflective practitioners who learn to think deeply about the implications of their choices are more likely to tailor their practices to the diverse needs of children in a multicultural society.

How does dialogue using reflective thinking work? Let's go back to the example of Junior, who refuses to touch finger food. When Helen, the caregiver, finds out that in the mother's culture it is highly inappropriate to ever touch food with the hands, she'll want to ask more. She'll want to understand everything she can about this practice and what it's based on.

If the mother does not know about the program's view of self-help skills, Helen can explain. But if Helen does so too soon or too strongly, the effect may be to silence the mother. Helen's goal is to keep communication open, so when she meets with the mother she does more listening then talking.

Let's imagine that as the two continue to talk about their different views, it becomes clear that the mother does not value self-help skills. Helen is surprised. But if she can keep the conversation going, she may uncover the mother's fears about her child becoming too independent. And if they keep talking, Helen may discover that the mother's goal is to keep the family together—and that she believes independence threatens this goal. In many cultures, interdependence and collectivism are valued more than independence and individualism.

Whether Helen agrees or not, she's beginning to see another perspective. The program's goals of independence and individuality are just what the mother is trying to discourage in her child. The parent instead wants to emphasize the interdependence and embeddedness that are valued in her culture. She is in no hurry for her son to feed himself. She doesn't want him to become the independent individual that is Helen's ideal and a stated program goal.

The reflective-thinking process in this case could result in various outcomes. Perhaps after dialoguing, Helen and the mother agree that the child would benefit from two cultural approaches to feeding. They aim for an early bicultural goal by using one practice in child care (self-feeding) and the other (spoon-feeding) at home.

Conversely, Helen and the mother may concur that early exposure to differences creates identity issues and puts the child at risk for losing his culture. They decide for the present that this child needs to be tied as closely to his roots as possible. They agree that an early focus on independence might separate him from his people and their customs. As a result, the caregiver may consent to go along with the mother's practice of spoon-feeding.

Those are only two possible outcomes; there are others (Gonzalez-Mena 1992). The results of reflective thinking are unpredictable when both parties are truly committed to dialoguing about their differences in behaviors and practices.
Conclusion

It is time for caregivers to receive additional diversity training so they come to see that concepts of “quality care” must be put in culturally relevant contexts. More minority voices must be heard so that definitions of excellence can be mutually agreed upon.

In the face of diversity, everyone in the early childhood field must become skilled at dialoguing. Only then will infants and toddlers in child care receive what they need, which can be determined only by the trained caregiver and the concerned parent using a reflective-thinking process. It is possible for professionals to be both culturally sensitive and professionally responsible.

References


For further reading


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Cultivating Good Relationships with Families Can Make Hard Times Easier!

Linda Groves Gillespie
Reprinted from the September 2006 edition of Young Children

Categories:
Relationships with Families
Infants
Toddlers
All Ages
Supporting Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families

Cultivating Good Relationships with Families Can Make Hard Times Easier!

Judith knew today would be a hard day. Jason is 20 months old and has bitten three children in the last week. Today Judith will meet with his parents. When they arrive, Judith greets them, offers something to drink, and asks about their day. She starts the meeting by saying, “Jason has been biting quite a bit lately, and we need to figure out what we can do to help him stop.” Immediately Jason’s father reacts: “Well, he doesn’t ever bite at home, so something must be wrong here!” Judith is taken aback and doesn’t know how to respond.

Sonya, a family child care provider, has cared for two-month-old Gina for two weeks. Every day when Gina’s mother, Pilar, picks Gina up, she seems to find something wrong with the care. Today she complains about Gina not finishing her afternoon bottle. Sonya tries to explain, but Pilar is so upset she starts crying.

Those parents! This phrase echoes in many workshops and classes for infant/toddler professionals. Supporting parents of infants and toddlers can be especially challenging because they may feel guilty about leaving their child, and many parents are new to child care. Many caregivers and teachers struggle with how to talk with parents, especially about difficult topics.

Linda Groves Gillespie

Linda Groves Gillespie, MS, is a senior training specialist at ZERO TO THREE in Washington, D.C. Linda has studied and worked in the field of parent and infant development for 25 years.

You can also view this article online in Beyond the Journal at www.journal.naeyc.org/btj.

Young Children and ZERO TO THREE are pleased to introduce a new column, Rocking and Rolling: Supporting Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families. This column, authored by infant/toddler specialists, will appear in January, May, and September issues of the journal. Thank you, ZERO TO THREE, for helping to bring practical information to our readers.

— Derry Koralek, Editor

Asking questions and wondering

Asking questions to get additional information and wondering aloud are two of the easiest ways to give ourselves a moment to stop before reacting or responding. Wondering encourages an attitude of genuine interest and curiosity, opening us up to learning from families. Asking questions acknowledges that the parents are the experts on their own children, which communicates respect. More important, asking questions acknowledges that the responsibility for finding a solution is shared by both the parents and the early childhood professional.

In the first scenario, instead of saying that they need to figure out how to stop the biting, Judith could have asked, “I wonder what could be causing this change in his behavior?” or “Could you help me figure out what might be causing this behavior?”

Active listening

Active listening means giving our undivided attention when someone seeks us out for conversation. Rather than using only our hearing, active listening requires the use of
our intellect, feelings, and physical responses to attain information about an interaction. The four steps in active listening follow:

**Stop**—Stop what you are doing and pay attention. This lets parents know you are focused on them and you consider what they have to say to be important.

**Look**—Face parents and make eye contact. Look for nonverbal cues (facial expressions and body language) that may tell you something about their thoughts and feelings.

**Listen**—Listen to what parents are saying, and pay special attention to their words and tone of voice. Realize that they may be communicating several messages (some unspoken).

**Respond**—Throughout the conversation, use eye contact, nods, “mmm-hmms,” smiles, or even a touch to confirm your attentiveness. After parents finish speaking, reflect on what has been shared in order to reinforce your understanding of the situation. Let the family know that not only have you been listening, but also you have understood them as well (Parlakian 2001).

In the first scenario, Judith could have responded to Jason’s father, “It sounds like you believe the problem could be related to something going on at the center.”

**Empathy**

Empathy is a relationship-building strategy that early childhood professionals can use in their everyday interactions to help parents feel understood, valued, and cared for. Empathizing means imagining how the other person might be feeling and what the person’s emotions, thoughts, or circumstances might be—all without trying to fix the problem.

Sonya, in the second scenario could empathize with Pilar by saying, “It’s so hard leaving such a young baby with someone you don’t know well. I remember the first time I left my daughter, and I wasn’t sure the child care provider would take care of her as well as I do.”

**Pointing out the positive**

To strengthen relationships and build trust, focus on the things that are going well. These may be small or major, but often they are the things that are taken for granted. Offer positive remarks to parents for **being** (show acceptance of them as human beings) as well as for **doing** (note parents’ actions or statements).

In the second scenario, Sonya could say, “It’s clear you are an attentive mother by the way you make sure that Gina is getting the nourishment she needs.”

**Not knowing**

Sometimes we do not know the answer to a parent’s question. Acknowledging this is a sign of self-awareness and skill, showing that we recognize our own professional limits. Say, “I don’t know. I’ll have to find out and get back to you”; then be sure to do so.

“Not knowing” can also be a self-calming strategy, a way of giving yourself time to consider how to respond. For example, when a parent shares a situation that you find overwhelming or upsetting, saying, “I don’t know what to say. This sounds really difficult,” communicates how tough the situation is and gives the parent feedback that genuinely reflects your thoughts and feelings.

Effective communication with families is a skill worth cultivating. Conflicts that arise out of caring for other people’s children are inevitable. “Parents are irrational lovers. How do we communicate with an irrational person?” (Jim Greenman, pers. comm.) Child care professionals need to be the rational side of that conflict, because parents cannot be.

Clearly, communication isn’t easy, but it is necessary. If, as early childhood professionals, we can strengthen the parent-child relationship by strengthening our relationship with the parent, we will have influenced that child’s future for much longer than the time he or she is in our care.

Using these strategies won’t alleviate every issue with families. However, communication strategies can help you build positive relationships with parents, and provide them with confidence in themselves as parents and in your role as a partner in their child’s caregiving.

**THINK FIRST:**

Think about a family with whom you may be struggling. As you review the above strategies, is there one that you could try that might help you connect better with this family? Now think about a family with whom you have a good relationship. Can you identify strategies you are already using that contribute to that strong relationship?

**TRY IT:**

Communication is like any other skill; it takes practice. Select a strategy you haven’t used before and practice it with a colleague. Trying a new way of communicating can feel uncomfortable at first, but with practice you can make any of these strategies work for you.

Explore the different resources offered on page 55. The more knowledge you have, the more confident you will feel, and when you feel confident, parents are more likely to have confidence in you.

Reflect—take time to talk about strong feelings you may have about families. Find a trusted person in your program, and set up regular times to discuss difficult issues as they arise. Sometimes just talking through a situation will help you see it in a new light.
Reference


The strategies listed in this article are adapted from ZERO TO THREE’s curriculum, Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: Parent/Provider Partnerships, forthcoming from Zero to Three Press.

 Resources for Cultivating Good Relationships with Families


Pawl, J., & M. St. John. 1998. How you are is as important as what you do . . . in making a positive difference for infants, toddlers, and their families. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.


Young Children. 2006. Supporting and involving families in meaningful ways. Cluster theme for issue. 61 (1).

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Handout 1.3

Using Self-Awareness, Careful Observation, and Flexible Response in Our Work: A Vignette

Lisa, a child care provider, was surprised to hear the mother of 9-month-old Sunil explain that she had begun potty-training her son. Lisa’s immediate reaction was that 9 months was too early! She felt that potty training should begin at 2, at the earliest. This is what Lisa learned in her classes and training. And it’s what she did with her own kids.

But Lisa also knew that this family was from a culture different from her own. Sunil’s parents had recently moved to the U.S. from India. She knew this might mean the family used child-rearing strategies that were different from the ones she had learned.

Lisa wondered what Sunil’s mother meant by “toilet training.” Lisa learned from Sunil’s mother that “toilet training” for her meant she held him over the toilet several times during the day. Then she made a “pssshhh” sound. This gently encouraged him to urinate. She made clear that Sunil is relaxed and enjoys being held comfortably by his mother when she does this. She never held him over the toilet once he showed signs of being restless. She also never worried about it if he did not urinate. Sooner or later, she explained, Sunil would learn to go when he was held over the toilet. She wanted Lisa to try this at the program as well. She offered to show Lisa exactly how she uses this technique. Lisa agreed.

Lisa said that she was worried about this taking a lot of time. She thought that on some days, it might be hard for her to take this time with Sunil. They agreed to try things out for a week and then talk about how it was going. Lisa also offered Sunil’s mother information on the Western approach to toilet training. Sunil’s mother and Lisa talked about how they each have learned a different way to help children get ready to use the toilet. At the same time they both agreed that children should not be forced to use the toilet before they are ready.

Continues on next page
QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Directions: Underline where you see Lisa using self-awareness, careful observation, and flexible response. Then respond to the following questions.

1. How did these three steps help Lisa in working with Sunil and his mother?

2. How do you think Lisa’s response affected her relationship with Sunil and his family?

3. When do you think the “right” time is to start potty training? What experiences in your life might have influenced your thinking about this issue?
Pathways to Cultural Competence

Programs

4 Underlying Principles

1. **Teacher Reflection**
   A) Reflect on how the setting of program policies and practices are influenced by the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of program administrators.
   B) Reflect on how program staff’s individual values and practices regarding children’s learning are influenced by their cultural and linguistic background.

2. **Intentional Decision-Making and Practice**
   A) Identify shared childrearing goals with families; align your program decision-making and policies with these shared goals.
   B) Plan ahead to address potential language or cultural barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.

3. **Strength-Based Perspective**
   A) Acknowledge that programs can learn from families.
   B) Recognize that diversity enriches and provides depth to the overall program.
   C) Understand that different does not mean dysfunctional.
   D) Respect and support the preservation of children and families’ home languages, cultural backgrounds, and childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices.
   E) Incorporate aspects of children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds in program’s curriculum. Highlight strengths that exist across cultures.

4. **Open, Ongoing, Two-Way Communication** between programs and families.
   A) Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs regarding their policies and practices. Families should not solely be recipients of information.
   B) Plan ahead to address language barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.
### Program Checklist

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<tr>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
<th>Concept 1: “Children are nested in families.”</th>
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<td>Review and discuss Concept 1 of <em>Teacher Checklist</em> with teachers in the program.</td>
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<td>Know the primary caregivers for the children in your program and do not assume they are mothers and fathers.</td>
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<td>Encourage two-way communication with families by (a) coordinating informal gatherings at the program, (b) utilizing drop-off and pick-up times as opportunities to communicate, (c) agreeing upon effective modes of communication (e.g., notes, phone, email), (d) developing a family or parent council, or (e) hosting family-themed events (e.g., Carnival Night, Pancake Breakfast).</td>
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<td>Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs (i.e., they should not solely be recipients of information). Plan ahead to address language barriers.</td>
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<td>Coordinate with classroom teachers to provide families with information and resources about topics the children are investigating in the program.</td>
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<td>Welcome all interested family members to meetings, program events, and activities regarding the child.</td>
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<td>Give teachers the time and resources necessary to conduct home visits, if families are comfortable. This will allow teachers to learn from families about children’s home environments, interests, early language experiences, preferred learning styles and integrate this information into classroom learning activities.</td>
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<td>Greet all families at drop-off and pick-up throughout the year using non-verbal and verbal communication.</td>
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<td>Create space and opportunities for families to visit, spend time, and exchange information about their children.</td>
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<td>Concept 2: “Identify shared goals among families and staff.”</td>
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<td>Review and discuss Concept 2 of <em>Teacher Checklist</em> with teachers in the program.</td>
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<td>Communicate to staff and families that the goal of the program is to develop a partnership in which each party can learn from the other.</td>
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<td>Require teachers to identify families’ short and long term goals for their children and to align them with classroom objectives and developmentally appropriate practice. Encourage teachers to incorporate families’ goals into classroom learning activities where appropriate.</td>
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<td>Discuss with family members differences in childrearing beliefs and identify strategies for negotiating different approaches. Involve classroom teachers in these discussions.</td>
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<td>Include families in making decisions related to their children’s well being and education, both at the program and classroom level. Encourage teachers to include families in decisions related to their children’s educational experience in the classroom.</td>
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<td>Explore and support meaningful ways in which family members can contribute to the learning in the program.</td>
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<td><strong>Concept 3: “Authentically incorporate cultural traditions and history in the program.”</strong></td>
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<td>Review and discuss Concept 3 of <em>Teacher Checklist</em> with teachers in the program.</td>
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<td>Highlight the presence of all families and children in the program. Example strategies include hanging pictures on the walls of children and families or highlighting their presence in program-wide activities.</td>
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<td>Invite family members to share information about their cultural backgrounds in the program (e.g., history, traditions, and home language).</td>
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<td>Equip the program and classrooms with educational materials (e.g., books, posters, utensils, kitchen &amp; apparel items) that reflect value for diverse languages, ethnicities, and cultures.</td>
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<td>Encourage families to share artifacts, music, stories, or other culturally-relevant information with the program and with their children’s teachers. Ensure that teachers are inviting and working with families to incorporate these resources in the classroom.</td>
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<td>Represent relevant historical events and traditions of children, families, and their communities in the program.</td>
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<td>Incorporate into your program’s curriculum nursery rhymes, songs, extended vocabulary, and early literacy skills that originate from and are commonly practiced in the cultures represented in your program and community.</td>
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1 = Adapted from “Are We Supporting Diversity? A Tool for Reflection and Dialogue” Work/Family Directions, Inc. and California Tomorrow, Copyright 1999, Revised 2006 by Hedy N. Chang. ©naeyc 2010
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<th><strong>Concept 4:</strong> “Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child’s life (e.g., school and home).”</th>
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<td>Review and discuss Concept 4 of <em>Teacher Checklist</em> with teachers in the program.</td>
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<td>Invite families to define their ethnicity or culture; do not assume based upon appearances.</td>
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<td>Equip classrooms with appropriate instructional resources such as books and toys that expose children to role models from their own and other cultural backgrounds.</td>
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<td>Recruit role models from diverse cultural backgrounds to visit or volunteer in the program. Role-models may come from the community or may be family members of children in the program.</td>
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<td>Establish relationships in the community that are mutually beneficial (e.g., programs help community efforts; community leaders participate and serve as role models to children in programs).</td>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Concept 5: “Individuals and institutions’ practices are embedded in culture.”</th>
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<td>Review and discuss Concept 5 of <em>Teacher Checklist</em> with teachers in the program.</td>
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<td>Encourage staff, families, and children to learn about each other’s racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds by having a variety of year-round, program-wide activities. Activities could be coordinated with children’s teachers and could include developing a program-wide international cookbook or hosting musical and dance performances that represent the diverse backgrounds of families in the program.</td>
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<td>Provide teachers the time and resources necessary to interact with children and families outside of the program setting and in the communities where they live.</td>
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<td>Ask families for input and feedback on program policies and use this information to modify policies as appropriate.</td>
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<td>Establish a language policy that embraces children’s home language and determines a set of goals for children (e.g., bilingualism for all children, etc).</td>
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<td>Ensure staff and families are familiar with the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting children’s home languages. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.</td>
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<td>Use children’s home language for multiple learning purposes, not just in giving directions or managing behavior.</td>
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<td>Provide translational and interpretation resources to program staff.</td>
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<td>Find ways to communicate with children and families in their home language.</td>
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<td>Encourage children to speak their home language to other children, staff, or parents from the same backgrounds.</td>
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<td>Provide opportunities for children to learn in their home language (e.g., book reading, small groups, and personal stories).</td>
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<td>Correctly pronounce and know how to spell each child’s name.</td>
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<td>Make available in the program books, tapes/CDs, songs, print, and other materials in children’s home languages to staff, children, and families.</td>
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<td>Concept 7: “Ensure policies and practices embrace and respect families’ cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs toward learning.”</td>
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<td>Review and discuss Concept 7 of <em>Teacher Checklist</em> with teachers in the program.</td>
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<td>Identify families’ short and long term goals for their children in collaboration with teachers. Align families’ goals with curricula and developmentally appropriate practice. Incorporate families’ goals into program curricula where appropriate.</td>
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<td>Make clear to staff and families the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting diversity and addressing bias. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.</td>
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<td>Share strategies and ideas with staff on how the program can support children’s identity, honor home language, and address issues of bias. Use your staff as a resource for ideas on how to address issues of race, language, and culture in the program.</td>
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<td>Work together with staff to create program activities that integrate appreciation and respect for diversity (e.g., songs, stories, finger plays, rhymes).</td>
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<td>Collaborate regularly with staff and families on developing a center environment that reflects an appreciation for diversity. Examples include (a) developing a collage of heroes from cultures represented in the program, (b) display flags of all countries represented in the program, or (c) creating learning settings used by different cultures.</td>
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<td>Review all forms and documents with a group of diverse staff and family members to ensure they are free from bias. For example, the program may develop a committee of family, staff, and community members whose responsibility is to ensure that the program’s environment, forms, policies, and practices are culturally-sensitive and reflect a value for diversity.</td>
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<td>Include the diverse range of families your program serves in the discussion and decision-making of program policies and practices.</td>
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<td>Concept 8: “Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping and bias through intentional teaching.”</td>
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<td><strong>Review and discuss Concept 8 of <em>Teacher Checklist</em> with teachers in the program.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Provide professional development opportunities to staff on countering stereotypes and bias through intentional teaching.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Invite role models across various language, cultural, and racial backgrounds to lead program activities with children. It is important for children not to associate one single language, race, or culture as the most powerful.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Guide staff in recognizing stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups; correct if applicable any misperceptions staff may have toward other groups.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Encourage staff to help children recognize stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups; support staff in helping children dispel if applicable any misperceptions they may hold toward other groups.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Intervene if a staff member or child displays a biased response to another staff member or child. Ask staff to intervene if children in their classrooms display a biased response to another child or staff member.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Encourage staff to support each other and themselves in face of bias. Assist staff in teaching children how they can support one another in face of bias.</strong></td>
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References


Pathways to Cultural Competence

Teachers

4 Underlying Principles

1. **Teacher Reflection**
   A) Reflect on how teachers’ individual values, beliefs, and practices regarding children’s learning are influenced by aspects of their own personal culture and linguistic experience.
   B) Reflect on how the programs within which teachers work are influenced by culture and language.

2. **Intentional Practice**
   A) Identify shared childrearing goals with families; align your classroom decision-making and practices with these goals.
   B) Plan ahead to address potential language or cultural barriers.

3. **Strength-Based Perspective**
   A) Acknowledge that teachers can learn from families.
   B) Recognize that diversity enriches and provides depth to the overall learning experience.
   C) Understand that different does not mean dysfunctional.
   D) Respect and support the preservation of children and families’ home languages, cultural backgrounds, and childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices.
   E) Incorporate aspects of children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds in daily learning activities. Highlight strengths that exist across cultures.

   A) Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to teachers. Families should not solely be recipients of information.
   B) Plan ahead to address language barriers.

**Teacher Checklist**

Concept 1: “Children are nested in families.”

- Know the primary caregivers for the children in your program and do not assume they are mothers and fathers.
- Take time to learn about each family’s aspirations for their child.
- Encourage two-way communication with families by (a) scheduling regular conference sessions or informal gatherings, (b) utilizing drop-off and pick-up times as opportunities to communicate, and (c) agreeing upon effective modes of communication (e.g., notes, phone, email).
- Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to teachers (i.e., they should not solely be recipients of information). Plan ahead to address language barriers.

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• Provide families with information and resources about topics the children are investigating during the day in your classroom.
• Welcome all interested family members to meetings, program events, and activities regarding the child.
• Conduct home visits, if families are comfortable, and learn from families about children’s home environments, interests, early language experiences, and preferred learning styles. Integrate this information into classroom learning activities.
• Greet all families at drop-off and pick-up throughout the year using non-verbal and verbal communication.
• Create space and opportunities within the classroom for families to visit, spend time, and exchange information about their children.

Concept 2: “Identify shared goals among families and staff.”

• Communicate to families that your goal is to have a partnership with them in which each of you can learn from each other.
• Identify families’ short and long term goals for their children. Align their goals with classroom objectives and developmentally appropriate practice. Incorporate families’ goals into classroom curriculum where appropriate.
• Discuss with family members differences in childrearing beliefs and identify strategies for negotiating different approaches.
• Include families in making decisions related to their children’s education.
• Explore and support meaningful ways in which family members can contribute to the learning of the class.

Concept 3: “Authentically incorporate cultural traditions and history in the classroom.”

• Highlight the presence of all families and children in the classroom. Example strategies include hanging pictures on the walls of children and families or highlighting their presence in classroom activities.
• Invite family members to share information about their cultural backgrounds (e.g., history, traditions, and home language).
• Equip classroom with educational materials (e.g., books, posters, utensils, kitchen & apparel items) that reflect value for diverse languages, ethnicities, and cultures.
• Encourage families to share artifacts, music, stories, or other culturally-relevant information in the classroom.
• Represent relevant historical events and traditions of children, families, and their communities in classroom daily activities.
• Teach nursery rhymes, songs, extended vocabulary, and early literacy skills that originate from and are practiced in the cultures represented in your classroom and community.
• Incorporate into the curriculum cultural artifacts and music that reflect the cultures of the children served by the program.
Concept 4: “Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child’s life (e.g., school and home).”

- Invite families to define their ethnicity or culture; do not assume based upon appearances.
- Use a variety of appropriate resources such as books and stories to expose children to role models from their own and other cultural backgrounds.
- Ask role models from diverse cultural backgrounds to visit or volunteer in the classroom. Role-models may come from the community or may be family members of children in the program.

Concept 5: “Individuals and institutions’ practices are embedded in culture.”

- Encourage co-workers, families, and children to learn about each other’s racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds by having a variety of year-round activities. Activities could include sharing songs, stories, finger plays, and dandling rhymes, or creating international cookbooks with the families represented in the classroom.
- Interact with children and families outside of the school setting in the communities where they live.
- Ask families for feedback on classroom activities, policies, and materials. Use this information to modify classroom practices where appropriate.

Concept 6: “Ensure decisions and policies embrace home languages and dialects.”

- Use children’s home language for multiple learning purposes, not just in giving directions or managing behavior.
- Find ways to communicate with children and parents in their home language (e.g., translators, interpreters, gestures).
- Encourage children to speak their home language to other children, staff, or parents from the same backgrounds.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn curriculum in home language (e.g., book reading, small groups, and personal stories).
- Correctly pronounce and know how to spell each child’s name.
- Make available books, tapes/CDs, songs, print, and other materials in children’s home languages.

Concept 7: “Ensure policies and practices embrace and respect families’ cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs toward learning.”

- Understand the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting diversity, addressing bias, and communicating with families in their home languages. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for families and colleagues.
• Share strategies and ideas with colleagues about how they can support children’s identity, honor home language, and address issues of bias. Use your colleagues as resources for addressing issues of race, language, and culture.
• Work together with colleagues to create daily classroom activities that integrate appreciation and respect for diversity (e.g., songs, stories, finger plays, rhymes).
• Collaborate with colleagues on ideas for ensuring that the classroom and center environment reflects an appreciation for diversity Examples include (a) developing a collage of heroes from cultures represented in the program, (b) display flags of all countries represented in the program, or (c) creating learning settings used by different cultures.

Concept 8: “Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping and bias through intentional teaching.”

• Invite role models across various language, cultural, and racial backgrounds to lead classroom activities with children. It is important for children not to associate one single language, race, or culture as the most powerful.
• Guide children in recognizing stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups. Correct- if applicable- any misperceptions that children in your class may have toward other groups.
• Intervene if a child displays a biased response to another child or staff member.
• Teach children how they can support each other and themselves in face of bias.
• Self-reflect on any potential discomfort or stereotypes you may have toward other language, racial, and cultural groups.
References


Action plan for:

Name: ____________________________

Center: ____________________________

Goal 1:

In next 30 days:

In 6 months:

Goal 2:

In next 30 days:

In 6 months: