



NAEYC PATHWAYS TO CULTURAL COMPETENCE PROJECT

Key Concepts

1. "Children are nested in families"
2. "Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child's life."
3. "Authentically incorporate cultural traditions & history in the classroom."
4. "Individuals & Institutions' practices are embedded in culture."
5. "Identify shared goals among families & staff."
6. "Ensure policies & practices embrace & respect families' cultural values, attitudes, & beliefs toward learning."
7. "Ensure decisions & policies embrace home language & dialects."
8. "Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping & bias through intentional teaching."

KEEP IN TOUCH!

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Thank you for completing the checklists and surveys!

Thanks to all of you for participating in this project. Through the checklists and on-line survey, NAEYC is hoping to gauge to what degree early childhood programs are addressing the cultural and linguistic needs and preferences of the children and families they serve. The intent is not to add one more thing for you to do, but to help guide you in improving upon your use of culturally-competent practices as you plan program activities & staff development. The Early Childhood Project is committed to going along with you, as you embark on this journey of discovery to determine individual and collective strengths and areas for growth. We will be in touch at least once a month to share resources and celebrate accomplishments.

We completed the survey. Now what?



- First of all....this is not a sprint, but a marathon...take it as slow as needed. Cultural competence starts with yourself.
- ★ • Reflect on your own family culture, values, belief systems, & attitudes. Where did you acquire them? How do they effect the way you respond to colleagues, children & families in your program? This might be a good discussion to have with staff and/or colleagues.
- If you haven't already, choose one concept (listed on the left) that you would like to work on over the next few months & decide what your first step/activity/action will be.
- Let me know what concept you are working on; I may be aware of or able to locate resources to help you.
- If you have something that has worked well in your program that might be helpful to others; please feel free to send it to me and I will pass it on.
- Over the next few months, you will receive a carefully selected book to help you on your path toward cultural competence as well as other resources.
- Go to page 2 for some definitions and pitfalls to watch out for.

Glossary of terms

- **Culture : (there are many definitions—here is one):** the customs, skills, beliefs, values arts, language, and other interrelated learned behavior patterns of a people that set them apart as a distinct group or society and the ability to transmit this pattern to succeeding generations: (**Culture is what we live everyday and *what we bring with us to the workplace***)
- **Cultural Competence:** an acceptance and respect for a difference, a continuing self-assessment regarding culture, and engagement in ongoing development of cultural knowledge.
- **Assimilation:** to assume the cultural traditions of a given people or group.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Understanding the needs and emotions of your own culture and the culture of others.
- **Ethnicity:** refers to selected cultural and sometimes physical characteristics used to classify people into groups or categories considered to be significantly different from others. Commonly recognized American ethnic groups include American Indians, Latinos, Chinese, African Americans, European Americans, etc. In some cases, ethnicity involves merely a loose group identity with little or no cultural traditions in common. This is the case with many Irish and German Americans. In contrast, some ethnic groups are coherent subcultures with a shared language and body of tradition. Newly arrived immigrant groups often fit this pattern.
- ***Race: There are many different beliefs about the definition of race and what race means within social, political and biological contexts. The following 3 definitions are representative of these perspectives: 1)** a tribe, people, or nation belonging to the same stock; a division of humankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent & sufficient to characterize a distinctive type. **2)** Race is a social construct used to separate the world's peoples. **3)** Evidence from the Human Genome Project indicates that the genetic code for all human beings is 99.9% identical; there are more differences within groups (or races) than across groups.

* taken from Tawara D. Goode, Georgetown University Child Development Center, Center for Child Health & Mental Health Policy, University Affiliated Program, 1997, Revised 2000.

A Few Common Pitfalls

- **Viewing “cultural” as an “add on”:** Using a multicultural approach is not something that is added on top of other teaching. It is about understanding and integrating. An approach that makes all learning experiences more complete, accurate, and sensitive. It ties the learning experience of children to their everyday world of family and community.
- **Reinforcing differences and stereotyping:** Stereotypes can be reinforced by focusing on differences between cultural groups. For example make broad comparisons between Asians and Americans or African Americans and Latinos, can lead to assumptions about individuals within a cultural group. Instead, a multicultural perspective reinforces learning *about individuals and families and their unique cultural experience.*
- **Taking a Tourist Approach:** This approach offers a limited view where children “visit” a culture for a special occasion, rather than on integrating cultural perspective into everyday learning—which may include how families celebrate holidays.
- **Thinking the curriculum is in place:** Implementing a multicultural approach is never complete. Keeping families involved in their child’s education and understanding their unique cultural perspective is essential and is an ongoing part of everyday learning.