



Information for Families and Staff

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Teaching Children to Understand and Value Diversity

Do you think of cultural, racial and ethnic diversity as a melting pot, a mosaic or tapestry, tossed salad, vegetable soup, or some other equally picturesque description? All of these descriptions are pleasant and colorful reminders of the richness that comes from differences. Unfortunately, the differences among people also spark name-calling, bullying and violence, even by young children. How can we teach children to understand and genuinely value people who look, sound and act different?

To help people who work with young children and their families in early learning centers, the National Center for Cultural Competence developed a self-assessment checklist that gives specific examples of things you can do to create an environment where diversity is valued, modeled and taught. A few examples:

Display pictures, posters and other materials that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of children and families in your center

Select books, movies and other media that reflect diverse cultures; screen all media for negative cultural or ethnic stereotypes

Include props for dramatic play and housekeeping that are culturally diverse (dolls, clothing, furniture)

Provide opportunities for children to cook or sample a variety of foods served by different ethnic groups

For children and families who speak languages other than English, learn and use key words in their language

Recognize that "family" is defined differently in different cultures

Recognize that families of different cultures may have different expectations about developmental milestones (walking, toilet-training, feeding, etc.) and different approaches to discipline

Remind children that certain words hurt others and don't allow them to use racial and ethnic slurs

Consider celebrating not only traditional holidays but also ones that are unique to specific children in your setting

Even if all the children in your center are from the same cultural or ethnic group, create an environment and plan activities that reflect the diversity in the larger society

Resources

- "Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Competency," Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Services and Supports in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Settings, National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University; <http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/documents/ChecklistEIEC.pdf>
- "Preparing Children for a Multicultural World," Children's Advocate; <http://tinyurl.com/444gck9>
- Related FOCUS on ECMH factsheets: "Bullying in Preschool" (#25) and "Moral Development: Raising Caring Kids" (#27)



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2nd page is
designed as a
handout for
Parents.

Infant Toddler Tidbits are located in the Infant Toddler newsletter found in the Director's Notes section.

Spending Time Outdoors with Your Child

Add a short walk to your evening routine. After dinner and dishes, hit the pavement. Look up at the stars, keep an ear out for sounds of the night, tell a story about when you were young, and listen while your child tells you about his or her day.

Plant, tend, and harvest flowers or vegetables. You can plant seeds or plants in a container (pot, window box, bucket, or even a trash can) in your yard or a neighborhood garden plot. Your preschooler will enjoy digging, weeding, and watching the plants flourish. You could grow salad—cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and lettuce—or plant flowers that grow to different heights, like marigolds and sunflowers.

Enjoy all kinds of weather. Try to go outdoors, regardless of weather conditions. Plan short activities when it is very cold or hot; enjoy more outside time when the weather is fine. Preschoolers love walking in the rain; just be sure to wear waterproof boots and hooded raincoats. Layers are important on cold days—as you get warmer you can take off a jacket, hat, or mittens. In summertime be sure everyone wears a sun hat and sunscreen and drinks plenty of water.



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Tell us about the fun and learning you and your child enjoy outdoors.
We will share your ideas with our classroom community.

A message from your child's teacher

Our class goes outdoors as often as possible. The children run, swing, climb, ride trikes, pull wagons, go for walks, and kick and throw balls. They also do many of the activities we enjoy inside, like reading, painting, doing puzzles, eating snack, and making music. We believe that almost anything children do indoors can be an outdoor activity too. Family time outdoors benefits children and parents.

Play games. Share the games you played when you were a child, like hopscotch, jacks, Simon Says, and charades. Play board games on a picnic table or blanket. Introduce skills preschoolers will one day use to play sports, such as kicking or dribbling a ball or hitting a foam ball back and forth using light rackets.

Enjoy the nature all around you. Whether they live on farms or in apartments, children need experiences in the natural world. Point out the nature all around you—new leaves on trees in the spring, bugs living under a rock or in a decaying tree stump, birds flying from bush to bush. Go strawberry or apple picking or visit a park, nature center, or farmers' market. Bring along nature guides, paper, crayons, measuring tools, containers, a magnifying glass, and binoculars so you can help your child become an enthusiastic nature investigator.

