LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE, LANGUAGE, & FAIRNESS

Chapter 5
What is Culture?

- How particular groups of people live. It includes the language they speak, the religion they practice, the clothing, housing, food and rituals/holidays.
- Dominant culture – groups of people who hold the social, political, and economic power in the society

Discussion questions - group work  p. 57
Children’s Early Experiences and Understanding of Culture

- Children become aware of society’s attitudes toward their family’s cultural way of being — they first develop their self-concept within their family and then other social identities.

- Children struggle with cultural continuity and discontinuity — when an early childhood program’s ways of eating, talking, disciplining, nurturing, and playing are similar to the children’s home ways, the children experience *cultural continuity.* When the practices differ between the home and the program, children experience *cultural discontinuity.*
Children start forming attitudes about other cultural ways of living – by preschool age, children begin to absorb stereotypes and attitudes about other ethnic/cultural groups from their family and the larger society. Teachers need to provide accurate information to avoid children’s bias remarks.

Children begin to use cultural/ethnic terms and try to sort out what they mean.
Attend to Differences Between the Early Childhood and Home Cultures

Examples of practices commonly found in early childhood programs in the United States that conflict with the practices of some cultures:

- Early childhood practice has tended to promote children’s independence, autonomy, and initiative.
- Many early childhood teachers make a practice of acknowledging individual children for their efforts and achievements as a motivation technique.
- Early childhood practice tends to focus on individual “rights.”
- Early childhood teachers typically expect that a child will speak directly to them, look them in the eye, ask questions freely, and freely express thoughts or desires.

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Respecting All Children’s Home Languages and Developing Bilingualism

- Learning English and Continuing Development in the Home Language
- Bilingualism for children whose home language is English
- Home language support – Challenges and concerns
- Find resources to support children and families from different linguistic backgrounds

Discussion questions – group work p. 65
Make Cultural Sameness and Difference Real

Principals for planning activities:

- Connect cultural activities to concrete, daily life experiences – talk about similarities and differences among children’s everyday experiences.
- Be intentional about including the cultural life of all families in your activities.
- Avoid saying “we” or singling out children when talking with children about cultural practices.
Activities to Get Started

The many people in our families:

- Bulletin board of the “The People in Our Family” label each picture with the name and the relationship to the child

- Make a class book about “Our Families.” Make a page for each child and each teacher about who lives with them and what work their family members do
The many people in our families (cont.)

- Create a family shelf for families to take turns displaying objects they use in daily life and on special days
- Read children’s books about families that are reflective of the ethnic groups in your class
- Tell persona doll stories
The many ways our families speak:

- Have labels, children’s books, signs in children’s languages
- If your group speaks only English, introduce language that the children are likely to hear in their community
- Ask somebody who speak other languages to teach you simple songs
The many ways my family eat:

- Cooking activities
- Do not stereotype “this is what African American people eat,” instead say, “this is one of the things that Selena eats at home with her family”
- Teach children ways to decline food without disapproving it
- The many ways our families sing, dance, and make music
- The many important people in our communities

Class work – Make persona dolls