

Information to be aware of when caring for culturally and linguistically diverse children during the early childhood years.

Culture: Learn as much as you can about the cultural norms of the family that participates in your early childcare setting.

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The differences among cultural constructs between mid-Western American and any other culture are too numerous to address in this space. However, it is important to keep in mind that one of the first roadblocks to developing a good working relationship with families/children from other cultures and/or language groups can be carefully overcome by learning just a little about the culture of the family/child. One instance where cultural differences may negatively impact the regular child-care provider's schedule is cultural differences in sleeping practices. For example, a 15 month old from a Southeast Asian culture lay screaming in a crib in a child care center; this child had never slept alone in her life, but entered a child care center, where all babies were put down for a nap in a crib. This baby was experiencing cultural shock (*culture shock is defined as the result of a series of disorienting encounters that occur when an individual's basic values, beliefs, and patterns of behavior are challenged by a new or different set of values, beliefs, and behaviors. Individuals in culture shock may exhibit frustration, anger, depression, exhaustion, withdrawal, aggression, or illness*). (Gonzalez-Mena, J. 2005). Taking into consideration the specific cultural practices of a child/family from a different cultural background will help ensure that every child's needs are met and may help prevent culturally-affronting actions on the part of the child care provider. Suggestions to consider when welcoming children/families from diverse cultural backgrounds: 1)learn about the family's culture 2)interview the family and visit with them about the detailed routine practices of the child care center 3)ask the family about any concerns they may have, regarding the child care center's practices that may be contrary to their cultural constructs 4)problem solve this issue with the help of the family, and seek outside professional advice when appropriate.

Language Development/ 2nd Language Acquisition: Have an awareness that children from diverse language backgrounds may not hear standard English in their home. It is more important and more appropriate to support the child/family's first language (L1) development by encouraging speaking and reading in the (L1) at home.

It is important to support the child/family's first language (L1 or native language) in the home. Child Care providers can foster L1 by encouraging the family to use their L1 at home. Suggest that parents spend some time daily, reading to the child in their native language and simply through communicating with the child in their native language about events, activities, etc. that occur everyday.

There are "free of charge" resources available from: www.familyeducation.com ; the United States Department of Education 1-800-USA-LEARN

Websites with literacy information for families and child care providers: www.ed.gov; www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites; www.ed.gov/pubs/compactforreading; www.enchantedlearning.com; www.familit.org; www.ipl.org/youth; www.pbskids.org; www.reading.org; and www.rif.org

In addition to supporting language development, which directly impacts future success in reading and writing in English, supporting developing math skills are early ages impacts future success in math.

A Brief List of Games to support developing math skills in children age 3 to 6: Candy Land, Chutes and Ladders, Hi Ho! Cherry-O; Yahtzee Jr.

A Brief List of Books to support developing math skills in children age Birth-6: 1,2,3, by Tana Hoban; Anno's Counting Book, by Mitsumasa Anno; Count! by Denise Fleming; Counting Cranes, by Mary Beth Owens; Fish Eyes: A Book You Can Count On, By Lois Ehlert; Animals On Board & Elevator Magic, by Stuart J. Murphy; & Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed, by Eileen Christelow