

Guidelines for Culturally Responsive Educational Practices

In early learning environments, culturally responsive practice in curriculum, instruction, and assessment might be characterized by the following:

1. Reflection of care and connectedness (Nilles & Rios, 2009);
2. Integration of cultural and linguistic knowledge that defines ELLs' self-identity into educational practice (Quintero, 2004);
3. Respect and acknowledgement of family and community values and belief systems related to child development and learning from other non-western groups (Lynch & Hanson, 2006);
4. Demonstrated understanding about the unique challenges that ELL children and families encounter in American society (Orozco, 2007);
5. Incorporation of dynamic and process-oriented strategies that build upon the cultural and linguistic contributions of each young ELL brings to the early learning environment (Quintero, 2004) and are aligned to standards.
6. Use of culturally appropriate formal and informal assessment strategies or authentic performance-based assessment (Brice, 2002; McLean, 2002) to evaluate developmental progress and achievement (i.e., child and family interviews, work sampling, observations).

Literally hundreds of books and journal articles have been developed to provide early learning professionals with detailed educational strategies that reflect the characteristics listed above:

1. Organizing and hosting family get-togethers in school, where ELL families and children can share food, literature, stories, and art from their cultures with other families, either during evenings or weekends when family schedules allow;
2. Asking ELL families about child-rearing practices and beliefs about child development and learning, and finding ways to incorporate these into curricular/instructional/assessment activities;
3. Meeting with ELL families and children in familiar community-based settings for orientation or other meetings;
4. Integrating other cultures and languages into literacy activities, such as asking children how particular vocabulary words are said or written in their languages;
5. Having the class read, discuss, and reflect upon their own cultures, languages, and experiences through a multicultural literature; and
6. Engaging in multilingual/bilingual instruction within the educational setting and utilizing L1 to help young ELLs learn basic concepts and ease L2 acquisition.