



NAEYC PATHWAYS TO CULTURAL COMPETENCE PROJECT

The California Department of Education, Child Development Division would like to invite you to participate in a pilot phase of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Pathways to Cultural Competence Project. California is the eleventh state participating in this project.

The project is composed of eight concept areas related to cultural competency practices. Each participating program may select a number of concept areas to participate in the project. Teachers and child care providers are encouraged to journal about their process in completing the teacher guidance criteria. It is expected that program directors and teachers have conversations about the reflective process for teachers (by concept area). The project program guidelines include overall program areas and will be completed by the program director. The goal is for staff to reflect upon the program's use of culturally-competent practices and determine areas of enhancement.

Participating programs in the Cultural Competence Project will voluntarily address how the program and teacher criteria were met. An online survey will be provided to complete the process. NAEYC will be providing online resources and technical assistance upon completion of the project.

For questions regarding your interest in participating in the NAEYC Cultural Competence Project, please contact Luis Rios, Consultant, Quality Improvement Office, by phone at 916-445-4820 or by e-mail at lurios@cde.ca.gov.

Welcome to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Pathways to Cultural Competence Project!

The goal of NAEYC's Pathways to Cultural Competence Project is to give early childhood programs that are participating in their state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) two checklists to help guide them in reflecting and improving upon their use of culturally-competent practices. The Pathways to Cultural Competence Project is funded by the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation.

You may have questions about what we mean by "cultural competence" or "culturally-competent practices" as well as how you should go about handling this process of reflecting upon culturally-competent practices in your program. We will answer below those two main questions: What do you mean by "culture" and "cultural competence?" and What process should early childhood programs use to reflect upon their level of cultural competence?

What do you mean when you talk about "culture" and "cultural competence"?

NAEYC believes that "[f]or optimal development and learning of all children, educators must **accept** the legitimacy of children's home language, **respect** (hold in high regard) the home culture, and **promote** and **encourage** the active involvement and support of all families, including extended and nontraditional family units" (NAEYC 1995, 2). Since all children are rooted in their families we see a child's family structure and all that it entails as the core of their family's culture. This structure can include family socioeconomic status, family composition, parent's level of educational attainment, abilities of children and family members, family's immigration status, family's religion, family's home and preferred languages, parent's sexual orientation, and the way that a family classifies its race and ethnicity.

Hedy Chang (2006) has written that culturally-competent early childhood programs are those that have skilled and effective teachers, low teacher-child ratios and appropriate group sizes, age-appropriate curriculum, engaged families, well-designed facilities, linkages to comprehensive services, culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment, and available and accessible bilingual education and services.

And so, for the early childhood field, cultural competence translates into a commitment to engage in an ongoing process of learning and developing multiple and various solutions that yield effective practices. Teachers can work "to make the most of children's potential, strengthening and building upon the skills they bring when they enter programs" (NAEYC 1995, 3). As Copple and Bredekamp state: "When young children are in a group setting outside the home, what makes sense to them, how they use language to interact, and how they experience this new world depend on the social and cultural contexts to which they are accustomed. A skilled teacher takes such contextual factors into account, along with the children's ages and their individual differences, in shaping all aspects of the learning environment" (NAEYC 2009, 10).

Also as a part of this process, program directors can:

- recruit and retain a diverse teaching staff
- provide leadership and professional development opportunities for themselves and staff that support culturally competent practices
- ensure that they and their staff access the proper training to provide guidance and strategies for working toward a higher level of cultural competence beyond what QRIS criteria may dictate
- create a culture of intentionality around increasing their program's level of cultural competence so that it is understood that cultural competence is an integral part of providing a high-quality program
- take the lead in creating an environment that promotes equity, learning, growth and development for children, families, and teaching staff

What process should early childhood programs use to reflect upon their level of cultural competence?

The Project is using two separate but connected checklists for early childhood programs – one that is a daily checklist for teachers and one that program directors will complete with teachers to assess how culturally-competent practices are being used in the program.

It is hoped that participating programs will use the checklists in two ways – teachers will use the teacher checklist for a specific amount of time to reflect upon their classroom practices and then discuss these practices with their program director. Some teachers may want to drill down on certain practices from the checklist and journal about their experiences as they reflect on their use in the classroom. The program director will then use the information from conversations with staff, as well as observation, to reflect upon overall program practices and complete the program checklist. The goal is for staff in early childhood programs to reflect upon the program's use of culturally-competent practices and determine areas in which they can improve.

Resources will be made available to participating early childhood programs after they have completed their first reflection to make a plan for increasing their level of cultural competence in those areas that they have identified. Participating early childhood programs will be asked to document this process in a short survey, and then will work on increasing their use of culturally-competent practices. Then, in 2011, it is hoped that programs will complete this process again, focusing on how they have increased their level of cultural competence and their progress, and identifying any barriers encountered in this work and how they overcame these obstacles. We hope that early childhood programs will look at this process as an opportunity to reflect upon and increase their use of culturally-competent practices in an authentic way.

The checklists are arranged by the concepts of cultural competence that were developed by a group of nationally-recognized experts in 2008. The summarized concepts are:

Concept 1: “Children are nested in families.”

Concept 2: “Identify shared goals among families and staff.”

Concept 3: “Authentically incorporate cultural traditions and history in the classroom.”

Concept 4: “Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child’s life (e.g., school and home).”

Concept 5: “Individuals and institutions’ practices are embedded in culture.”

Concept 6: “Ensure decisions and policies embrace home languages and dialects.”

Concept 7: “Ensure policies and practices embrace and respect families cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs toward learning.”

Concept 8: “Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping and bias through intentional teaching.”

The most important thing that you can do while you use these checklists is to see this as an ongoing process. We know that some of these concepts and practices on the checklists may seem overwhelming, but it’s important to remember that you are committing yourself to taking part in a process of reflection and quality improvement (based on cultural competence) over time. For **Program Directors and Teachers**, there are four principles to keep in mind when beginning this process of reflecting upon culturally competent practices in the classroom.

For Program Directors:

Teacher Reflection

- A) Reflect on how the setting of program policies and practices are influenced by the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of program administrators.
- B) Reflect on how program staff’s individual values and practices regarding children’s learning are influenced by their cultural and linguistic background.

Intentional Decision-Making and Practice

- A) Identify shared childrearing goals with families; align your program decision-making and policies with these shared goals.
- B) Plan ahead to address potential language or cultural barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.

Strength-Based Perspective

- A) Acknowledge that programs can learn from families.
- B) Recognize that diversity enriches and provides depth to the overall program.
- C) Understand that different does not mean dysfunctional.
- D) Respect and support the preservation of children and families’ home languages, cultural backgrounds, and childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices.
- E) Incorporate aspects of children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds in program’s curriculum. Highlight strengths that exist across cultures.

Open, Ongoing, Two-Way Communication between programs and families.

- A) Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs regarding their policies and practices. Families should not solely be recipients of information.
- B) Plan ahead to address language barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.

For Teachers:**Teacher Reflection**

- A) Reflect on how your individual values, beliefs, and practices regarding children's learning are influenced by aspects of your own personal culture and linguistic experience.
- B) Reflect on how the program where you work is influenced by culture and language.

Intentional Practice

- A) Identify shared childrearing goals with families; align your classroom decision-making and practices with these goals.
- B) Plan ahead to address potential language or cultural barriers.

Strength-Based Perspective

- A) Acknowledge that you can learn from families.
- B) Recognize that diversity enriches and provides depth to the overall learning experience.
- C) Understand that different does not mean dysfunctional.
- D) Respect and support the preservation of children and families' home languages, cultural backgrounds, and childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices.
- E) Incorporate aspects of children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds in daily learning activities. Demonstrate strengths that exist across cultures.

Open, Ongoing, Two-Way Communication between teachers and families.

- A) Ensure that families have opportunities to give you input. Families should not solely be recipients of information.
- B) Plan ahead to address language barriers.

Pathways to Cultural Competence

Programs

4 Underlying Principles

1. Teacher Reflection

- A) Reflect on how the setting of program policies and practices are influenced by the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of program administrators.
- B) Reflect on how program staff's individual values and practices regarding children's learning are influenced by their cultural and linguistic background.

2. Intentional Decision-Making and Practice

- A) Identify shared childrearing goals with families; align your program decision-making and policies with these shared goals.
- B) Plan ahead to address potential language or cultural barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.

3. Strength-Based Perspective

- A) Acknowledge that programs can learn from families.
- B) Recognize that diversity enriches and provides depth to the overall program.
- C) Understand that different does not mean dysfunctional.
- D) Respect and support the preservation of children and families' home languages, cultural backgrounds, and childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices.
- E) Incorporate aspects of children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds in program's curriculum. Highlight strengths that exist across cultures.

4. Open, Ongoing, Two-Way Communication between programs and families.

- A) Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs regarding their policies and practices. Families should not solely be recipients of information.
- B) Plan ahead to address language barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.

Program Checklist¹

Met	Not Met	Concept 1: “Children are nested in families.”
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 1 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Know the primary caregivers for the children in your program and do not assume they are mothers and fathers.
—	—	Encourage two-way communication with families by (a) coordinating informal gatherings at the program, (b) utilizing drop-off and pick-up times as opportunities to communicate, (c) agreeing upon effective modes of communication (e.g., notes, phone, email), (d) developing a family or parent council, or (e) hosting family-themed events (e.g., Carnival Night, Pancake Breakfast).
—	—	Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs (i.e., they should not solely be recipients of information). Plan ahead to address language barriers.
—	—	Coordinate with classroom teachers to provide families with information and resources about topics the children are investigating in the program.
—	—	Welcome all interested family members to meetings, program events, and activities regarding the child.
—	—	Give teachers the time and resources necessary to conduct home visits, if families are comfortable. This will allow teachers to learn from families about children’s home environments, interests, early language experiences, preferred learning styles and integrate this information into classroom learning activities.
—	—	Greet all families at drop-off and pick-up throughout the year using non-verbal and verbal communication.
—	—	Create space and opportunities for families to visit, spend time, and exchange information about their children.

¹ = Adapted from “Are We Supporting Diversity? A Tool for Reflection and Dialogue” Work/Family Directions, Inc. and California Tomorrow, Copyright 1999, Revised 2006 by Hedy N. Chang.

Met	Not Met	Concept 2: "Identify shared goals among families and staff."
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 2 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Communicate to staff and families that the goal of the program is to develop a partnership in which each party can learn from the other.
—	—	Require teachers to identify families' short and long term goals for their children and to align them with classroom objectives and developmentally appropriate practice. Encourage teachers to incorporate families' goals into classroom learning activities where appropriate.
—	—	Discuss with family members differences in childrearing beliefs and identify strategies for negotiating different approaches. Involve classroom teachers in these discussions.
—	—	Include families in making decisions related to their children's well being and education, both at the program and classroom level. Encourage teachers to include families in decisions related to their children's educational experience in the classroom.
—	—	Explore and support meaningful ways in which family members can contribute to the learning in the program.

Met	Not Met	Concept 3: “Authentically incorporate cultural traditions and history in the program.”
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 3 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Highlight the presence of all families and children in the program. Example strategies include hanging pictures on the walls of children and families or highlighting their presence in program-wide activities.
—	—	Invite family members to share information about their cultural backgrounds in the program (e.g., history, traditions, and home language).
—	—	Equip the program and classrooms with educational materials (e.g., books, posters, utensils, kitchen & apparel items) that reflect value for diverse languages, ethnicities, and cultures.
—	—	Encourage families to share artifacts, music, stories, or other culturally-relevant information with the program and with their children’s teachers. Ensure that teachers are inviting and working with families to incorporate these resources in the classroom.
—	—	Represent relevant historical events and traditions of children, families, and their communities in the program.
—	—	Incorporate into your program’s curriculum nursery rhymes, songs, extended vocabulary, and early literacy skills that originate from and are commonly practiced in the cultures represented in your program and community.

Met	Not Met	Concept 4: “Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child’s life (e.g., school and home).”
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 4 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Invite families to define their ethnicity or culture; do not assume based upon appearances.
—	—	Equip classrooms with appropriate instructional resources such as books and toys that expose children to role models from their own and other cultural backgrounds.
—	—	Recruit role models from diverse cultural backgrounds to visit or volunteer in the program. Role-models may come from the community or may be family members of children in the program.
—	—	Establish relationships in the community that are mutually beneficial (e.g., programs help community efforts; community leaders participate and serve as role models to children in programs).

Met	Not Met	Concept 5: "Individuals and institutions' practices are embedded in culture."
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 5 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Encourage staff, families, and children to learn about each other's racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds by having a variety of year-round, program-wide activities. Activities could be coordinated with children's teachers and could include developing a program-wide international cookbook or hosting musical and dance performances that represent the diverse backgrounds of families in the program.
—	—	Provide teachers the time and resources necessary to interact with children and families outside of the program setting and in the communities where they live.
—	—	Ask families for input and feedback on program policies and use this information to modify policies as appropriate.

Met	Not Met	Concept 6: “Ensure decisions and policies embrace home languages and dialects.”
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 6 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Establish a language policy that embraces children’s home language and determines a set of goals for children (e.g., bilingualism for all children, etc).
—	—	Ensure staff and families are familiar with the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting children’s home languages. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.
—	—	Use children’s home language for multiple learning purposes, not just in giving directions or managing behavior.
—	—	Provide translational and interpretation resources to program staff.
—	—	Find ways to communicate with children and families in their home language.
—	—	Encourage children to speak their home language to other children, staff, or parents from the same backgrounds.
—	—	Provide opportunities for children to learn in their home language (e.g., book reading, small groups, and personal stories).
—	—	Correctly pronounce and know how to spell each child’s name.
—	—	Make available in the program books, tapes/CDs, songs, print, and other materials in children’s home languages to staff, children, and families.

Met	Not Met	Concept 7: “Ensure policies and practices embrace and respect families’ cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs toward learning.”
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 7 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Identify families’ short and long term goals for their children in collaboration with teachers. Align families’ goals with curricula and developmentally appropriate practice. Incorporate families’ goals into program curricula where appropriate.
—	—	Make clear to staff and families the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting diversity and addressing bias. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.
—	—	Share strategies and ideas with staff on how the program can support children’s identity, honor home language, and address issues of bias. Use your staff as a resource for ideas on how to address issues of race, language, and culture in the program.
—	—	Work together with staff to create program activities that integrate appreciation and respect for diversity (e.g., songs, stories, finger plays, rhymes).
—	—	Collaborate regularly with staff and families on developing a center environment that reflects an appreciation for diversity. Examples include (a) developing a collage of heroes from cultures represented in the program, (b) display flags of all countries represented in the program, or (c) creating learning settings used by different cultures.
—	—	Review all forms and documents with a group of diverse staff and family members to ensure they are free from bias. For example, the program may develop a committee of family, staff, and community members whose responsibility is to ensure that the program’s environment, forms, policies, and practices are culturally-sensitive and reflect a value for diversity.
—	—	Include the diverse range of families your program serves in the discussion and decision-making of program policies and practices.

Met	Not Met	Concept 8: “Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping and bias through intentional teaching.”
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 8 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Provide professional development opportunities to staff on countering stereotypes and bias through intentional teaching.
—	—	Invite role models across various language, cultural, and racial backgrounds to lead program activities with children. It is important for children not to associate one single language, race, or culture as the most powerful.
—	—	Guide staff in recognizing stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups; correct- if applicable- any misperceptions staff may have toward other groups.
—	—	Encourage staff to help children recognize stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups; support staff in helping children dispel- if applicable- any misperceptions they may hold toward other groups.
—	—	Intervene if a staff member or child displays a biased response to another staff member or child. Ask staff to intervene if children in their classrooms display a biased response to another child or staff member.
—	—	Encourage staff to support each other and themselves in face of bias. Assist staff in teaching children how they can support one another in face of bias.

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Pathways to Cultural Competence

Teachers

4 Underlying Principles

1. **Teacher Reflection**

- A) Reflect on how teachers' individual values, beliefs, and practices regarding children's learning are influenced by aspects of their own personal culture and linguistic experience.
- B) Reflect on how the programs within which teachers work are influenced by culture and language.

2. **Intentional Practice**

- A) Identify shared childrearing goals with families; align your classroom decision-making and practices with these goals.
- B) Plan ahead to address potential language or cultural barriers.

3. **Strength-Based Perspective**

- A) Acknowledge that teachers can learn from families.
- B) Recognize that diversity enriches and provides depth to the overall learning experience.
- C) Understand that different does not mean dysfunctional.
- D) Respect and support the preservation of children and families' home languages, cultural backgrounds, and childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices.
- E) Incorporate aspects of children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds in daily learning activities. Highlight strengths that exist across cultures.

4. **Open, Ongoing, Two-Way Communication** between teachers and families.

- A) Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to teachers. Families should not solely be recipients of information.
- B) Plan ahead to address language barriers.

Teacher Checklist¹

Concept 1: "Children are nested in families."

- Know the primary caregivers for the children in your program and do not assume they are mothers and fathers.
- Take time to learn about each family's aspirations for their child.
- Encourage two-way communication with families by (a) scheduling regular conference sessions or informal gatherings, (b) utilizing drop-off and pick-up times as opportunities to communicate, and (c) agreeing upon effective modes of communication (e.g., notes, phone, email).
- Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to teachers (i.e., they should not solely be recipients of information). Plan ahead to address language barriers.

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- Provide families with information and resources about topics the children are investigating during the day in your classroom.
- Welcome all interested family members to meetings, program events, and activities regarding the child.
- Conduct home visits, if families are comfortable, and learn from families about children's home environments, interests, early language experiences, and preferred learning styles. Integrate this information into classroom learning activities.
- Greet all families at drop-off and pick-up throughout the year using non-verbal and verbal communication.
- Create space and opportunities within the classroom for families to visit, spend time, and exchange information about their children.

Concept 2: "Identify shared goals among families and staff."

- Communicate to families that your goal is to have a partnership with them in which each of you can learn from each other.
- Identify families' short and long term goals for their children. Align their goals with classroom objectives and developmentally appropriate practice. Incorporate families' goals into classroom curriculum where appropriate.
- Discuss with family members differences in childrearing beliefs and identify strategies for negotiating different approaches.
- Include families in making decisions related to their children's education.
- Explore and support meaningful ways in which family members can contribute to the learning of the class.

Concept 3: "Authentically incorporate cultural traditions and history in the classroom."

- Highlight the presence of all families and children in the classroom. Example strategies include hanging pictures on the walls of children and families or highlighting their presence in classroom activities.
- Invite family members to share information about their cultural backgrounds (e.g., history, traditions, and home language).
- Equip classroom with educational materials (e.g., books, posters, utensils, kitchen & apparel items) that reflect value for diverse languages, ethnicities, and cultures.
- Encourage families to share artifacts, music, stories, or other culturally-relevant information in the classroom.
- Represent relevant historical events and traditions of children, families, and their communities in classroom daily activities.
- Teach nursery rhymes, songs, extended vocabulary, and early literacy skills that originate from and are practiced in the cultures represented in your classroom and community.
- Incorporate into the curriculum cultural artifacts and music that reflect the cultures of the children served by the program.

Concept 4: “Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child’s life (e.g., school and home).”

- Invite families to define their ethnicity or culture; do not assume based upon appearances.
- Use a variety of appropriate resources such as books and stories to expose children to role models from their own and other cultural backgrounds.
- Ask role models from diverse cultural backgrounds to visit or volunteer in the classroom. Role-models may come from the community or may be family members of children in the program.

Concept 5: “Individuals and institutions’ practices are embedded in culture.”

- Encourage co-workers, families, and children to learn about each other’s racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds by having a variety of year-round activities. Activities could include sharing songs, stories, finger plays, and dandling rhymes, or creating international cookbooks with the families represented in the classroom.
- Interact with children and families outside of the school setting in the communities where they live.
- Ask families for feedback on classroom activities, policies, and materials. Use this information to modify classroom practices where appropriate.

Concept 6: “Ensure decisions and policies embrace home languages and dialects.”

- Use children’s home language for multiple learning purposes, not just in giving directions or managing behavior.
- Find ways to communicate with children and parents in their home language (e.g., translators, interpreters, gestures).
- Encourage children to speak their home language to other children, staff, or parents from the same backgrounds.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn curriculum in home language (e.g., book reading, small groups, and personal stories).
- Correctly pronounce and know how to spell each child’s name.
- Make available books, tapes/CDs, songs, print, and other materials in children’s home languages.

Concept 7: “Ensure policies and practices embrace and respect families’ cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs toward learning.”

- Understand the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting diversity, addressing bias, and communicating with families in their home languages. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for families and colleagues.

- Share strategies and ideas with colleagues about how they can support children's identity, honor home language, and address issues of bias. Use your colleagues as resources for addressing issues of race, language, and culture.
- Work together with colleagues to create daily classroom activities that integrate appreciation and respect for diversity (e.g., songs, stories, finger plays, rhymes).
- Collaborate with colleagues on ideas for ensuring that the classroom and center environment reflects an appreciation for diversity. Examples include (a) developing a collage of heroes from cultures represented in the program, (b) display flags of all countries represented in the program, or (c) creating learning settings used by different cultures.

Concept 8: "Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping and bias through intentional teaching."

- Invite role models across various language, cultural, and racial backgrounds to lead classroom activities with children. It is important for children not to associate one single language, race, or culture as the most powerful.
- Guide children in recognizing stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups. Correct- if applicable- any misperceptions that children in your class may have toward other groups.
- Intervene if a child displays a biased response to another child or staff member.
- Teach children how they can support each other and themselves in face of bias.
- Self-reflect on any potential discomfort or stereotypes you may have toward other language, racial, and cultural groups.

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