



Working with Culturally Diverse Families


Caregiver/Preschool Teacher Tip #5





The beliefs held by each family have a great influence over all aspects of a child's life. Each family has its own set of traditions, cultural beliefs, attitudes, and expectations for the education of their child. Early childhood staff needs to recognize and respect the beliefs held by the families they serve. Some key thoughts include:


 A child's beliefs, values, spiritual practices, rules for behavior, communication, and ways of knowing originate with the child's home culture. For example, some cultures may value cooperation and obedience within the group instead of competition and individual achievement. Other cultures may value creativity and artistic expression (Regional Educational Laboratory Network, 1999.) Provide staff training around the issues of culture and home language.

 Don't assume that because a family is from a certain culture that they hold all the beliefs of that culture. Just as American families display a great deal of diversity of beliefs, so do other cultures.


 Invite community members and parents from different cultures to share photos, food, and customs they have at parent and staff meetings.


 Provide parent materials in the home languages of the families you serve.


 Recognize that each home also has its own culture. How parents communicate, play, and discipline varies. Sometimes culture is more than the obvious, such as Hispanic or Asian, for example. Communication to the home should occur in ways that are convenient and comfortable for the family.

 Children should have ample opportunities to learn and grow in ways that are compatible with their home culture.

 Provide opportunities for cross-cultural sharing.

 Encourage families to read and speak to their child in their home language.

 Use labels in the classroom that reflect the languages of the children in your classroom.

 Toys and materials in the classroom should reflect the cultures of the children.

