

Culture – Understanding and Supporting Differences

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Within the childcare setting, children bring a variety of experiences and knowledge from individual cultures. For childcare staff to include the child from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, activities provided need to recognise each child's skills, culture, interests, likes and dislikes. It is important to acknowledge diversity and cultural differences throughout the program and avoid tokenism e.g. setting specific days for specific cultures, displaying posters of cultural groups that have what is known as the tourist approach i.e. posters that you would see in a travel agent. When working with a group of children there may be a number of children from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. Incorporate all cultures rather than focusing on each one individually. For example, when talking about where we come from include all children; such as Tommy was born in Western Australia on a big farm, Houg was born in Vietnam in the country and Maria was born in Italy in a big city.

The following strategies, ideas and activities are just a suggestion and will of course depend on the individual child as well as the group.

Language Activities

- Show the concept of differences e.g. housing, clothing, foods of different cultures; as well as focusing on the similarities through conversation, pictures. Encourage children to bring photos and books from home.
- Using children's books in a variety of languages e.g. showing children that the storybook "The Rainbow Fish" is written in lots of languages, which means children, all over the world, are reading the same books.
- Reinforce vocabulary with words and phrases about other cultures e.g. when telling stories or during routine times, other activities such as cooking. Talk about what foods you like and what foods Houg from Vietnam likes or Maria from Italy.

Music & Movement

- Use children's songs that are either sung in different languages or have the same music e.g. "Where is Thumbkin" in English is also "the Butterfly Song" in Vietnamese.
- Movement can be used to show differences and similarities of dance in cultures e.g. Some Filipino dances use bamboo poles.

Crafts

- Provide on your craft table a variety of materials to make and explore that are used by different cultures e.g. leaves and sticks as well as brushes for painting.
- Use differing colours of paint. Talk about how different cultures use lots of bright colours or differing shades of one colour, e.g. Filipinos use bright reds and yellows whereas other cultures may use rich earth colours such as ochre and brown.
- Utilise the types of crafts from other cultures to incorporate into your craft activities e.g. Make a Parol (Christmas Lantern) from the Philippines.

Outdoor Play

- Provide physical play talking about what children in other cultures do when playing outside e.g. Tommy living on a farm may swim in the creek while Anne, living in the city may swim at the swimming pool.
- Climbing activities can take on a world of its own incorporating dramatic play e.g. we are climbing the mountains in Nepal or climbing over the Great Dividing Range.
- Use the sand pit to describe what the country side is like in different cultures e.g. the deserts in Africa compared to the warm tropical area of Asia.

References:

- Siraj-Blatchford I. *"Supporting Identity, Diversity and Language in the Early Years"* Open University Press 2000
Clarke, P.
York Stacey *"Big as Life- The everyday Curriculum"* Redleaf Press 1998

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