REVISITING AND UPDATING THE

Multicultural Principles

for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five

Addressing Culture and Home Language in Head Start Program Systems & Services

Multicultural Principles

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Acknowledgments

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Preface

In 1991, the Head Start Bureau published the *Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs* information memorandum and resource handbook (hereafter referred to as the *Multicultural Principles*) following two years of work by the Head Start Multicultural Task Force. Its purpose was to "stand as a challenge" to programs to "focus efforts on individualizing services so that every child and family feels respected and valued and is able to grow in accepting and appreciating difference" (Administration for Children, Youth, and Families 1991, 3). The memorandum presented this challenge to programs:

> Effective Head Start programming requires understanding, respect, and responsiveness to the cultures of all people, but particularly to those of enrolled children and families. (Administration for Children, Youth, and Families 1991, 5)

This statement implies that Head Start programs are effective when their systems and services reflect well-developed understandings of the cultures of enrolled families. Furthermore, individual staff members must be able to demonstrate their respect for, and respond to, all of the different cultures within their service area. The *Multicultural Principles* also recognized that program staff and administrators are rooted in their own cultures. *Culture* is, therefore, a fundamental feature of Head Start program systems and services.

Introduction

> The cultural, racial, and ethnic composition of the Head Start
> community is becoming increasingly diverse as Head Start reflects the
> demographic changes in America. (Administration for Children,
> Youth, and Families 1991, 7)

In the twenty-first century, the demographic changes referred to in the 1991 information memorandum have continued to increase dramatically. Many Head Start and Early Head Start programs are faced with service areas that are more racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse than ever before. In addition, since 1991 a wide range of research—both in the United States and in other countries—has explored the relationships between culture, language, and children's development. This research overwhelmingly reaffirms the value of the *Multicultural Principles* that were originally published. In a time of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity within communities, it is especially important that Head Start programs develop long-range plans to understand and incorporate key implications of the research into their systems and service delivery.

This document has two main goals: first, to present all Head Start programs (which include Head Start, Early Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start) with an updated version of the *Multicultural Principles*; and second, to provide a selective review of research conducted since the *Multicultural Principles* were first published in 1991. There are a variety of reasons for revisiting and updating the original resource handbook, including:

- Since 1991, the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* have been revised and the Early Head Start program has been created and then expanded.

- The research literature addressing cultural influences on development and first- and second-language acquisition has expanded enormously.

- The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 12, 2007. The Act specified, among other requirements, that Head Start agencies "assist children with progress towards acquisition of English while making meaningful progress in attaining the knowledge, skills and abilities and development across the domains of the child outcomes framework, including progress made though the use of culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional services." Furthermore, the Act called for improving educational outreach, increasing enrollment, and improving quality of services to children and families, particularly in communities that have experienced a large increase in speakers of languages other than English. It also called for improving service delivery to children and families "in whose homes English is not the language customarily spoken." With regard to the current *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, the Act required that "any revisions will not result in the elimination or any reduction in quality, scope, or types of [services]" (Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Public Law 110-134, sec. 640).

- Head Start has a long history of serving linguistically diverse populations. More than 140 languages are spoken by Head Start children and families. Almost 3 in 10 children entering Head Start speak a home language other than English. Those numbers have been growing in recent years. As of this writing, only 14 percent of Head Start programs nationwide serve exclusively English-speaking children. Put another way, almost 9 out of every 10 Head Start programs enroll children from families that speak languages other than English.

- The 1991 information memorandum indicated that knowledge of culture and home languages was essential to providing effective Head Start services. This requirement is more important than ever. Programs today need to understand clearly the *implications* of the current research as well as extend their services through thoughtful *applications*.

Organization of this Document

This document revisits the original *Multicultural Principles*. The text is organized around each of the 10 Principles, which may be worded slightly differently than the original. In some instances, the language of certain Principles was revised to reflect current usage (e.g., the term *components* was replaced with the term *services*) and/or to be consistent with current legislation. Appendix B provides the original 1991 text of the *Multicultural Principles*.

This document revisits each Principle, following a general format that includes:

- the **Highlights** of the original *Multicultural Principles*;

- a selective **Research Review** that may include one or more "key implications";

- a **Voices from the Head Start Community** section presenting one or more examples of actual policies and/or practices from Head Start, Early Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs; and

- one or more **Reflective Questions/Activities** for programs to consider.

You will find that some sections of this document are longer and more detailed than others.

How to Use this Document

Programs are encouraged to use this document in ways that are appropriate for their own local community. Given the significant differences at the local level, no one-size-fits-all approach is presented. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the *Multicultural Principles* themselves apply to all Head Start programs and program options.

It is important to note that the Voices from the Head Start Community sections were included to present specific examples of systems, policies, and/or services from actual programs. These examples are in no way representative of all program options or all relevant practices.

Finally, it is worth noting that discussions of culture and home language can be experienced in many different ways, ranging from fun and uplifting to threatening and uncomfortable. As the original *Multicultural Principles* stated:

> In many instances, implementation of these principles will require leadership, courage, change, risk-taking, training, and resources.
> (p. 23)

The numerous Reflective Questions/Activities were intended to provide programs with the opportunity to "take the risk" of addressing culture and home language as they begin planning their program services. Although there is no guarantee that every discussion about culture and home language will be enjoyable, thoughtful presentation of the information, along with skilled facilitation, can go a long way to building "buy-in" among staff.

Terminology and Definitions

> In defining culture, it is not altogether surprising to find that the
> definitions for culture are as varied as the number of investigators,
> mostly anthropologists, defining it. (Leung 1994, 96)

Defining the term *culture* is challenging. In 1952, a team of researchers reviewed the
literature and identified 160 different definitions of the term (Vermeersch 1977). Since
then, the number of definitions has continued to increase. Not surprisingly, Head Start
staff who wish to learn more about culture can easily encounter many different versions
of the term.

A variety of definitions of culture are provided in the chart on the next page. The
purpose of providing these definitions is to invite Head Start program staff to review
and discuss the various definitions of the term as a framework for further discussions.
An activity and sample handout for reflective thinking is included in the Reflective
Questions/Activity section of Principle 1; the sources of the text quoted in the chart
are presented in Appendix A.

Definitions of Culture:

Culture is…

the organized and common practices of particular communities	an instrument people use as they struggle to survive in a social group	the complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society
a shared organization of ideas that includes the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and the meaning of communicative actions	a framework that guides and bounds life practices	shared understanding, as well as the public customs and artifacts that embody these understandings
the complex processes of human social interaction and symbolic communication	all that is done by people	patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts
a set of activities by which different groups produce collective memories, knowledge, social relationships, and values within historically controlled relations of power	the ways and manners people use to see, perceive, represent, interpret, and assign value and meaning to the reality they live or experience	not so much a matter of an inert system in which people operate, but rather a historical construction by people that is always changing

Note. The sources of the text quoted in this chart are listed in Appendix A.

PRINCIPLE 1:

Every individual is rooted in culture.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Culture has an influence on the beliefs and behaviors of everyone.

- Culture is passed from generation to generation.

- Culture is dynamic and changes according to the contemporary environment.

- Home language is a key component of children's identity formation.

- Successful programs respect and incorporate the cultures of children and families.

Research Review

> Culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices. (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000, 3)

Culture is acquired through the repeated, daily interactions children have with the people around them while growing up. Children acquire cultural knowledge as they develop language, learn concepts, and experience the ways they are cared for by their parents and family members. Children also acquire cultural knowledge from their communities and Head Start experiences.

The acquisition of culture begins at birth and continues throughout the life span. On a daily basis, adults make many decisions and continually model behaviors, such as:

- interacting and communicating in order to establish relationships and bond with their infant (Small 1998);

- responding to specific behaviors from their child, including behaviors that are considered "inappropriate" in that culture (Rogoff & Mosier 2003); and

- planning, implementing, and evaluating the kinds of learning experiences that children have (Tudge & Putnam 1997).

The ways in which adults carry out these activities are rooted in and influenced by their culture(s). As children develop and learn, they are increasingly exposed to information, including facts about their world, as well as social rules and expectations about their behavior. They are encouraged to participate in or initiate some behaviors—and they are discouraged from others. For example, in some cultures, toddlers are encouraged to feed themselves using their fingers; whereas in others, they are fed by their parents. Families communicate their expectations both verbally and nonverbally.

As children develop, they demonstrate increasing levels of cultural knowledge. By the time children are old enough to attend preschool, they will already have cultural knowledge about the rules of their environments. Some of these rules include how to use objects, which behaviors are (or are not) acceptable, and how to relate to older or younger family members.

The influence of cultural activity upon children's development has been described from many different perspectives in the research literature. The following paragraphs provide a sampling of these perspectives.

Rogoff (1990, 2003), Small (1998), and Cohen (1978) have described cultural activity in human societies. Although their descriptions have differed in important ways, each account supports Principle 1—*every individual is rooted in culture*.

Rogoff (1990, 2003) described family interactions and daily routines as the source of children's cultural information. Children are born biologically equipped to be keen observers of their families. They become more involved in the activities of the family as they grow. Of course, a baby's family members have grown up within one or more cultures themselves and have developed their own cultural knowledge.

As a baby develops, he or she is increasingly able to participate in activities as well as influence other family members. As all family activities are situated within the culture (or cultures) of the family, these interactions provide children with an apprenticeship in thinking—a long-term process by which children's individual development is connected to culturally specific ways of thinking, learning, and living.

Small (1998) described children's development as resulting from the combination of biology and cultural influences. For example, language is biologically based—humans around the world are born with the capacity to acquire language. At the same time, our

cultural environments provide us with one or more specific languages and rules for communication.

All cultures appear to generate knowledge, rules, values, advice, and expectations for rearing children. Yet the specifics of how to raise children are often different across cultures. Finally, all cultures seem to have the ability to produce narratives—that is, a way of gathering and telling stories. Although the ways of telling stories vary by culture, the practice of having and telling stories appears to be universal.

Cohen (1978) presented a comprehensive analysis of culture. In this view, culture is more than a single aspect of human life—it can be considered on different levels.

At the *universal level*, all humans are essentially the same. For example, all cultures make use of language by combining information into stories. In addition, people everywhere have ways of expressing anger, sadness, or happiness; ways of raising children; and ways of making a living.

At the *group level*, human behaviors are patterned in ways that are shaped from child-hood. For example, within the cultural group(s) that raised us, many expectations about "how to act" are transmitted from generation to generation.

At the *family level*, individual families make different decisions about how to live their lives. For example, some people may choose to live as their parents did, whereas others may choose to do things quite differently.

Finally, culture can be viewed at the *individual level*. For example, each individual chooses the extent to which he or she wishes to participate in and pass on the traditions, beliefs, and values of his or her group and family.

Figure 1. Culture Viewed from Four Levels.
Based on text in Cohen, 1978.
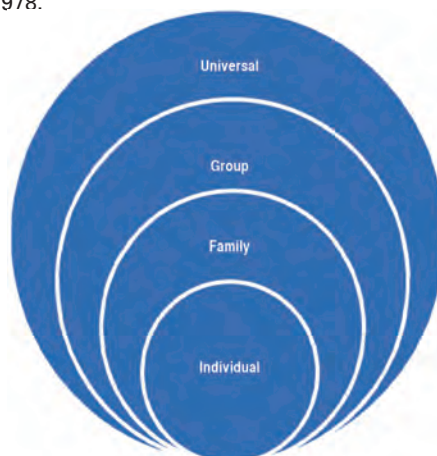
One way to think about culture at the individual level is to consider your siblings. Are you more alike or more different from one or more of them? These differences can exist even when you were raised in the same family and within the same community and cultural group. Therefore, although culture is an important influence on development, knowing someone's cultural group does not necessarily tell us much about the person *as an individual*. Figure 1 depicts the four different levels of culture.

Key Implications

On the basis of the literature reviewed above, culture is real and important, but understanding it is not necessarily simple or easy. Understanding culture, therefore, requires the ability to balance different considerations—different pieces of information—at the same time.

Chavajay and Rogoff (1999) made two important points. First, culture is not a single "thing," but, rather, can be understood on different levels. Second, culture *by itself* does not explain everything about the actions or behaviors of an individual or group of people. Thus, culture is one of many important elements in children's development, but not the only important element. Culture is a way (or ways) of living. In other words, culture is not the only way to explain human development. As the original *Multicultural Principles* noted, culture is "dynamic and evolves and adapts" (p. 11). Individuals are also dynamic—they change and adapt to the circumstances of their lives.

For Head Start programs, it is absolutely necessary to respect and incorporate families' cultures into the systems and services provided. Program management should actively promote the development of a positive cultural and individual identity for all children. In addition, as program staff are also members of cultural groups, programs must find ways to identify and include cultural information from program staff. At the same time, management must also consider the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*. The Voices from the Head Start Community section and Reflective Activity presented next provide initial suggestions for gathering and using cultural information from program staff and enrolled families.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

A program in Minnesota created a Cross-Cultural Team, drawing from among diverse staff members who reflect the diversity of their service area. Members of the team explained the origins of this work as follows:

> In the late 1980s, different immigrant groups began moving into our service area. The first group to arrive was the Hmong, followed by families from Somalia and then many other areas. We had to make a

decision of how to serve these families. *We needed to do more than just translate our forms.* . . . Now, this effort is an integral part of our program related to how we serve the community.

Over the years, the work of the Cross-Cultural Team impacted the program's services and systems. The Team came up with and began to use a basic question to organize their ongoing work in understanding the cultures of the familes they serve: How do we meet the needs of all our families?

Using this question as an organizing tool, the team members gathered information regarding cultural values and customs from families and diverse staff members. They compiled their findings in different formats. The Team then used the information to plan specific program activities in order to best meet the needs of families and staff. Team members offered the following suggestions to other programs interested in this type of work: (1) take the time to reflect on information gathered; (2) work with community partners who have experience working with the different cultures of the Head Start service area; and (3) develop their own local process.

Over the years, the work of the Cross-Cultural Team has impacted the program's services and systems. Several examples are presented below.

1. *Creating a 24-hour parent communication hotline.* There is an 800 number available to the community in four languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. The hotline provides information on daily activities, program information, and upcoming events, as well as registration information. Information is updated weekly.

2. *Organizing international events and festivals.* Different activites involving the families are planned during the program year. These events are organized to inform parents about classroom activities, and to help program staff and parents learn about one another's cultural heritage.

3. *Tape recording parents.* To provide children with authentic models of their home language(s), the program makes tape recordings of parents speaking or reading in their home language. The tapes are then played in the classroom for individual and group readings.

4. *Creating a cross-language phrase book.* This project began as a way to help staff learn to say "hello" to families in their own languages. Over time, the project expanded into a phrase book, which currently includes many commonly used words and phrases in the different languages of the families enrolled. The phrase book enables staff to say a few words to parents in their home language about registration or transportation and to speak with children about a variety of topics, including food and classroom learning experiences.

Team members also emphasized that they continue to develop ways of educating the parents about the program. In the words of one team member: "We have to help parents understand why we do things—why we read daily, why we use rhymes and free play, and have children using playdough." A team member offered this insight into their process:

Final Thought

> We can never learn *everything* about all cultures; but we can demonstrate an interest and willingness to learn from each other.
>
> —Cross-Cultural Team Member, MN

Reflective Questions/Activities

This section presents four suggestions for reflective thinking: (1) an activity in which program staff explore their own cultural backgrounds (e.g., during preservice or inservice); (2) an activity to help program staff develop an understanding of the cultures of parents and family members; (3) an activity for program staff to identify what culture means to them; and (4) an activity for program staff to consider using a graphic to think about culture in their work. These activities should be considered only as a starting point for discussion and further study; they do not represent a comprehensive approach to the issues.

Reflections for Program Staff: Culture in My Life

1. What do you remember about how you were raised? How might your personal background or upbringing influence your thinking about children's development?

2. What skills and behaviors do parents in your program value in their children? How might their personal backgrounds or other experiences influence their thinking?

3. When do your values and beliefs about children conflict with those of families enrolled in your program? How can you discuss and work with these differences in values and beliefs with families in order to benefit the children?

4. What experiences, values, and/or beliefs do families hold that may come into play when you are in the beginning of establishing relationships with them?

5. What beliefs do families have regarding the "cultures" of the service systems they are familiar with? For example, what do parents say about their experiences with education, health care, and other service areas?

Reflections for Program Staff: Culture in the Lives of Families

1. What cultural groups live within the service area of your program? What do you know about the lifestyle, immigration history, health beliefs, communication style, etc. of each cultural group? What do you know about the different ideas for raising children held within these cultural groups? How did you learn this information?

2. What skills and behaviors do parents in your program value in their children? How might their personal backgrounds or other experiences influence their thinking?

3. What systems or strategies does your program currently have in place to obtain additional information about the cultural groups in your service area? What else could be done to learn about the cultural groups in your service area?

4. In what ways do the systems and services of your program reflect information about the cultural groups in your service area? Have the demographics of your service area changed recently?

Reflective Thinking Activity

Examine the different definitions presented in the Definitions of Culture chart on page 9. Is there other information that you feel is important that has *not* been included in any of the definitions in this chart? What is your own definition of *culture*?

Culture is . . . ?

1. For me, culture is _____

_____

_____

_____

2. Reasons I chose this definition include _____

Culture: What IS It?

1. How might you use this graphic to recall and reflect upon your own cultural experiences as you were growing up?

2. How might you use this graphic to learn from (or to dialogue with) the families in your program?

3. How could you adapt or modify the graphic to better reflect your own view of culture?

Figure 2. **Connections to Culture**.

PRINCIPLE 2:

The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are the primary sources for culturally relevant programming.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Families and community groups can provide accurate information.

- Culturally relevant program systems and services enhance children's learning.

- Programs must take into account issues relevant to all cultural groups within their service area.

Research Review

Culture is the context in which children develop. It is also the context in which parents raise their children. Parents use their knowledge of children's development and caregiving—learned from their personal experiences and their cultural communities—to make decisions about their caregiving practices (Rogoff 2003).

One area in which the impact of culture cannot be understated, and in which culturally relevant programming is very important, is health. Decisions about co-sleeping, hygiene, or personal care; when to seek medical care; the types of food children eat and how the food is prepared and served; feeding patterns; causes of illness; taking Medicaid; and the use of home and folks remedies are affected by culture and must be understood by service providers so that effective care and support are given to the family (Lipson & Dibble 2005).

Culture is closely involved in how children develop and learn. Children enrolled in Head Start programs receive cultural information from their parents and their teachers, home visitors, and other Head Start staff, as well as from other members of their community. Programs for young children that do not take into account issues of culture thereby miss important information about the foundations of a child's development. Program staff who study and reflect on the relevance of culture are better able to support effectively children's ongoing learning and development.

Key Implications

Programs that actively embrace learning *from* families provide the most effective support for children's development. They can integrate classroom environments, materials, activities, and other practice, or program services, with a child's knowledge and experience. This "matching" becomes a base from which a child can acquire knowledge of a second culture. The major implication of such support is the need for Head Start programs to learn about the children and families enrolled in their program from the families themselves. It is only then that programs can develop meaningful partnerships with parents in which everyone is working together to ensure that children gain optimal benefits from their Head Start experience.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

Conversation Starters

An Early Head Start program in Virginia has developed a process for learning from families that links the program's long-range goals with specific practices intended to achieve goals for interactions with families. The program's long-range goals include the following:

- understanding the cultures of all families enrolled in the program;

- making all families feel welcome in the classroom; and

- integrating all of the cultures of families with children in the classroom.

To achieve these and other goals, the program has developed a practice it refers to as Conversation Starters. Through this practice, the teachers find specific and consistent ways to approach parents as they enroll their children in the program. Conversation Starters is aimed at initiating positive long-term relationships with the family. Teachers ask parents how and what words they use to comfort their child when he or she is upset . . . as well as ways they encourage their child. This enables the teacher to understand an important aspect of the parents' practices and, by extension, to understand how the child is cared for in the home. In addition, the practice enables the teacher to learn—and then to use—one or more familiar words in the child's home language.

As the teacher makes additional contact with the parent, the teacher has the opportunity to share instances in which the child was comforted or encouraged in the classroom. This provides continuity to the parent–teacher communication, and opens the potential for more significant commnication to occur in the future.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. How could you incorporate Conversation Starters into your program? Would you begin by asking parents about how they comfort their child in the home language, or would you ask another question?

2. How could you use Conversation Starters in your program with English-speaking parents? How could you go beyond the initial question(s) asked at the beginning of the program year in order to develop a deeper relationship?

3. How might you extend the use of Conversation Starters in your program? For example, how might different staff (e.g., teachers, home visitors, family service staff, administrators) use the practice in complementary ways? How might staff work together to share information they receive from families over time?

4. How might Conversation Starters be used in the family partnership agreement process?

5. How are families invited to share aspects of their culture(s) with other parents and children in classrooms, during socialization times, during other program activities, or in other settings?

6. How can you represent the families' home lives in the classroom/socialization space so that all families feel welcome and valued?

PRINCIPLE 3:

Culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the cultures of different groups and discarding stereotypes.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Stereotypes and misinformation interfere with effective Head Start program services.

- All program staff have an individual responsibility to acquire accurate information about cultural groups in their community.

Research Review

Culture is an important factor in child development. Nevertheless, there are many challenges to understanding what culture is. Because we acquire our own culture starting at birth, we are rarely challenged to *think about it directly* as we go about our daily lives. Moreover, when we do start to think about our own culture, we find ourselves confronted with a dynamic and complex reality.

As we have seen, there are many different ways to define, describe, or discuss culture. Yet there are some common features of these definitions that can help us develop an organized framework for understanding the different roles culture plays in child development. Common features include:

- The *capacity* for culture is innate or biological. However, cultural *knowledge* is not. Cultural knowledge is acquired through multiple processes that begin at birth (Rogoff 1990; Valsiner 1997).

- Culture involves shared meaning or understandings, including values and beliefs, within a group (Rogoff 2003).

- Culture is dynamic and *volitional* (Ovando & Collier 1998). That is, it evolves and changes over time as people *make choices* in the course of their daily lives, including if (and to what extent) they will participate in the shared meanings, values, and behaviors of their group.
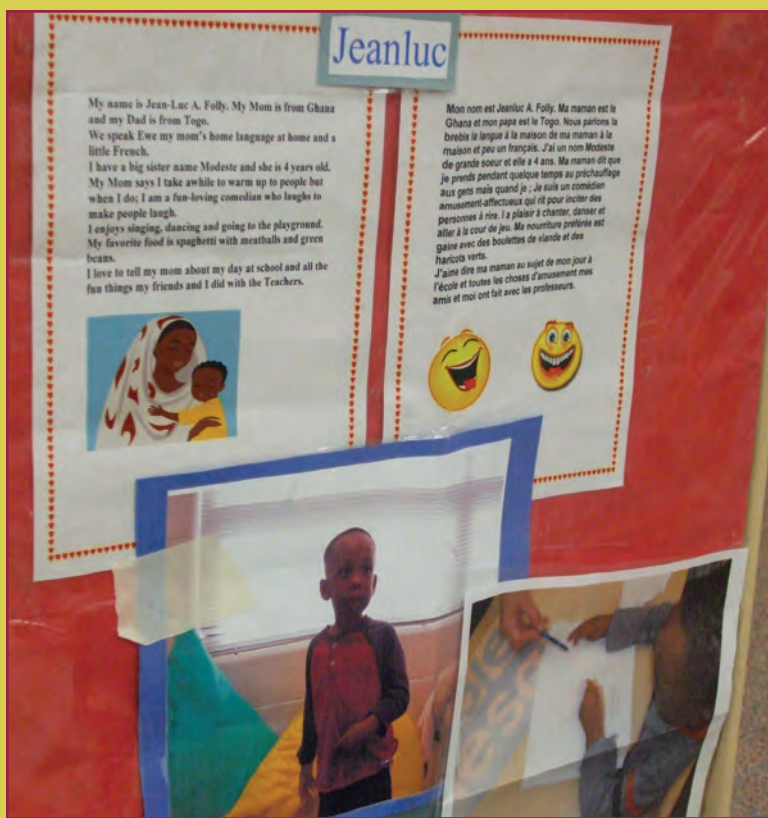
Learning Accurate Information

Learning accurate information about cultures different from your own requires persistence, dedication, openness, and honesty. Exploring your own values, beliefs, and traditions—and learning how they impact you and the way you engage with the world—are preliminary steps to be taken before understanding others. In taking such steps, you also become more aware of your own stereotypes, assumptions, and biases (Sue 1998). There are many ways to pursue a higher level of self-awareness and reflect on your experiences and the cultural lens through which you view the world.

Gaining Knowledge

Increasing your cultural knowledge is essential. Families are rich sources of information for learning about their cultures. It is important to engage in meaningful dialogues with families. Key skills that are important to possess include the ability to listen to others who are culturally different, to actively learn about their experiences, and to respect differences in a nonjudgmental way (Derman-Sparks 1995).

There are many ways to learn about different groups of people. Reading information about a cultural group is one way (Phillips 1995), inquiring and learning about the various home practices of families (Gonzalez-Mena 1995) is yet another. It is equally important to seek out educational and multicultural training experiences (Derman-Sparks 1995). In addition, learning how culture can be integrated into the curriculum and classroom environment is essential (Derman-Sparks 1995).

Discarding Stereotypes

Stereotypes are distorted pictures of reality that broadly label one group as being a certain way. Stereotypes influence our perception, evaluation, judgment, and memory about individuals and events. People tend to learn stereotypes from the people around them—such as peers and family—or from the media and entertainment. Negative stereotypes are usually reinforced in similar ways.

Overcoming stereotypes and working to eliminate bias are continuous processes. It is essential to learn accurate information about different groups of people (e.g., race, religion, gender) through various ways (e.g., attending cultural events). It is important to remember that different does not mean abnormal or deficient. To counter negative stereotypes, seek out positive examples that cancel out or disprove the negative label. Doing this requires time, openness, and sensitivity.

In stereotyping, assumptions are made about a person on the basis of his or her group membership without learning whether the individual fits those assumptions. To avoid negative stereotyping in the Head Start environment, we should reflect on our own beliefs about all aspects of child rearing and early childhood education. We must acknowledge our own beliefs and biases about specific groups of people that may be unintentionally communicated to children and families.

Disabilities Services in Multicultural Settings

Services for children with disabilities are an integral part of all Head Start programs. Of course, these services are also influenced by culture and language. According to Harry and Kalyanpur (1994), the main challenge to program staff is to recognize that services for children with disabilities are based on cultural assumptions. These assumptions, in turn, influence service implementation in many important ways.

For example, cultures may differ in how they define a disability. That is, conditions or behaviors that are viewed as a disability in one culture may not be interpreted in the same way by members of another culture. Culture can influence:

- how parents respond to being informed that their child has a disability;

- how parents may adapt their parenting style in relation to their child's disability and to the goals they have for their children; and

- the ways in which parents communicate with program staff and other professionals who are involved in providing disabilities services.

Clearly, cultural assumptions and the ways in which they impact relationships and communication influence the identification and diagnosis of a disability and the provision of services for children and their families. Not surprisingly, these assumptions may become sources of misunderstanding and friction between program staff and families. Accordingly, Harry and Kalyanpur (1994) recommended that programs begin by developing a "sharp awareness" of this possibility (p. 161).

For example, program staff can avoid making assumptions about parents' behaviors. A parent's silence when informed that his or her child has been diagnosed with a disability may mean something different from what the staff person interprets it to be. In turn, a parent's hesitation to sign permission forms for further evaluation for a potential disability also may be misinterpreted. The authors encourage staff to examine their own cultural assumptions and to actively seek information from families at different times during service delivery, including families' interpretation of the disability and the values that underlie the preferences and practices of the family. The goal here is twofold: first, to work past assumptions in order to develop a productive form of cross-cultural communication with families; second, to address the challenge of "learning to collaborate within the parameters of different cultural frameworks" (Harry & Kalyanpur 1995, 161). The process is neither simple nor easy to implement. However, commitment to developing this approach is essential for programs to go beyond service delivery that is bound within a specific cultural framework.

Key Implications

There are two major implications of the information presented above. First, culture is not an *absolute* factor in children's development. That is, it is not the only factor that helps us understand how children develop. Other factors—including children's biological capacities, temperament, and individual preferences—also have a great deal of influence on how children develop. Although culture has an undeniable impact on human behavior, it is ultimately one of many influences upon human development.

Second, children's development is impacted by *choice*. Although all parents grow up within one or more cultures, culture is modified as parents make individual and specific choices about how to raise their children. For example, some parents may decide to raise their children within a specific religious tradition, whereas others may not. Some parents may insist that their children use the manners and social skills of their traditional culture, whereas others may encourage their children to adopt the social skills of the mainstream society in which they live.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

One grantee in Texas who served primarily Hispanic families found that a concentrated number of Hmong families had begun to enroll in its Head Start program. Some of the families ran small businesses, and others were employed in various agricultural jobs. One family in particular was known to enroll at least one child per year in the Head Start program. This family had reached 12 members in size; the majority were boys. This particular year, two brothers, ages 3 and 3.9 years, were enrolled. The teachers began to request assistance from the director as soon as they heard that additional boys from this family were to be enrolled, as they had worked with their brothers in previous years. The boys were highly active and boisterous in their play, often endangering themselves and other children by climbing and jumping from classroom structures. They were completely undeterred when teachers attempted to intervene during their unconventional play. Out of frustration, the teachers raised the question of cognitive developmental deficits, as evidenced by their inability to follow directions.

Numerous attempts by staff to discuss their concerns with the mother were met with a pleasant but silent demeanor. Unfortunately, staff interpreted her response as lack of understanding or a language barrier, or at best the behavior of a mother who was overwhelmed by a family beyond control. Home visits were offered, but the mother's lack of response was accepted as a refusal. The staff was burned out from working with the family, resigning themselves to the existing classroom climate.

It happened that a skilled clinician with knowledge of Hmong culture conducted a Child Study Team meeting for one of the boys of this family. He was exhibiting a severe deficit in expressive speech. The clinician could see and feel the frustration of the staff as they explained their screening results. A facilitated discussion by the clinician revealed that culturally specific values were contributing to the challenge the teachers were experiencing. Staff learned from the mother, who came to the meeting as the only representative of her family, that in this home and within the Hmong culture, high value was placed on energetic, vigorous play. A happy child is perceived as a direct extension of the parent. This explained the behavior exhibited by the older siblings formerly enrolled in Head Start. An "ah-hah moment" occurred for the staff when, at age 3, these Hmong boys required a lengthy home-to-school adjustment period. Additionally, the boys' behavior fell far below the age-appropriate expectations of preschoolers staff had worked with in the past.

During the meeting, a discussion about family culture evolved to a point at which the mother expressed gratitude to the Head Start program during the past years. The meeting opened doors to further communication and daily reports of progress, and the mother became involved in the classroom and supported her sons' transition into Head Start. Her English skills surprised the staff. The staff's willingness to learn about other cultures, in turn, helped the mother better appreciate the teacher's perspective on the importance of routines and transitions. It provided a rich, multicultural learning experience for staff who had worked at this Head Start program for many years.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. Does your program's self-assessment process ask you to review and reflect upon your work as it relates to learning accurate cultural information and discarding stereotypes?

2. What opportunities do all program staff have to reflect upon their own experiences and beliefs, including assumptions and beliefs that are stereotypical and that may influence their work with children and families?

3. What opportunities do all program staff have to learn accurate information about families and communities within your service area?

4. Does your program value cultural information that, in addition to languages spoken in the home, includes background information about child rearing practices, meal traditions, family origin, educational, and socioeconomic characteristics?

PRINCIPLE 4:

Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices and adaptations is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Children's learning is enhanced when their culture is respected and reflected in all aspects of the program.

- Programs must accommodate various learning styles of children.

- Children benefit from active, hands-on learning experiences that include frequent opportunities to make choices.

Research Review

As culture is an important context in which children develop, decisions related to curriculum should naturally take information about family culture and home language into account. This section will focus on the intersection of three important aspects of cultural influences on child development: (1) how parents raise their children, (2) how teachers teach, and (3) how children learn.

Culture has a major influence on the goals that adults have for a child. In some cultures, adults desire to see their child walking independently as soon as possible. You may have observed parents supporting their young children by both hands as they take tentative steps on a sidewalk or path. It is common to see infant or toddler classrooms equipped with objects to encourage children to crawl over and pull themselves up to a standing position, or to see teachers (or parents) extending their hands to encourage a child to take a few steps toward them. Helping infants to walk at an early age seems to be a goal of almost everyone in mainstream American culture. However, not all cultures share this outlook on early walking.

Valsiner (1997) pointed out that, among the Tuvan people of central Siberia, late walking by children is considered an indicator of a long life. In Tuvan culture, the "lateness" of walking is considered beneficial; therefore, adults do not facilitate early

walking experiences by their children. This is one example of how what seems "familiar" in one cultural setting may not be valued or prioritized in another culture.

Gonzalez-Mena (2001, 2008) described the various ways a culture can influence how adults—as either parents or teachers—relate to children. Because adults have goals for young children, they therefore take on a variety of *roles* in order to support children's development in ways that are consistent with these goals. This relationship—between goals and roles—can be observed in a number of daily activities, interactions, and curricular choices. For example, culture can shape how adults:

- carry out basic infant caregiving routines, such as sleeping, hygiene, and feeding;

- provide stimulation to their infant or toddler;

- understand, interpret, and relate to children's play;

- initiate and respond to children's communication, including nonverbal behaviors as well as speech;

- assess and address different types of conflicts (e.g., child–child, child–adult); and

- carry out socialization, guidance, and discipline of the child (Gonzalez-Mena 2008).

When Parents and Program Collide

In the Head Start of the twenty-first century, it is typical for program staff and enrolled families to come from different cultural backgrounds.

Cultural differences can lead to conflicts in many ways. For example, two Early Head Start teachers may disagree on practices for handling a baby, responding to crying, or feeding. Home visit staff may be conflicted over how and when to intervene in family arguments. Staff and parents in American Indian and Alaska Native or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs may differ about the extent to which programs should support children's home or native language. Given the wide range of cultural ideas, it is not surprising that adults can have differences that are firmly ingrained within them.

As noted previously, adults may disagree over *practices*—that is, ways of working with or caring for young children. Gonzalez-Mena (1992, 2001, 2008) indicated that these disagreements may be *cultural* or *individual*. In the first case, adults from different cultural backgrounds may find that their familiar ways of working with children are different; in

the second case, adults within the same culture can disagree. In situations of conflict between program staff and parents (either cultural or individual), Gonzalez-Mena identified four possible outcomes:

1. All sides gain understanding, negotiate, and/or compromise, leading to resolution of the conflict.

2. Program staff understand the parents' perspective(s) and change their practices.

3. Parents take on the perspective of the program staff and change their practices.

4. No resolution is reached (here, the conflict may continue or intensify; or both sides can cope with the differences).

Of course, conflicts can occur over numerous issues. To help program staff make progress, Gonzalez-Mena challenges them to question their own assumptions about child development practices (e.g., "My way of thinking about X is not the only way to think about it. My way of doing Practice Y is not the only way to work with the child."). Once this commitment to test one's own assumptions is in place, two goals for a conflict situation are: (1) to minimize (or eliminate) extreme differences in practices; and (2) to resolve the situation for the benefit of the child. Program staff are encouraged to take a child-centered look at any situation of conflicting practices by asking the following:

1. How does the family view a particular practice?

2. How does each program staff person view a particular practice?

3. How does the child respond to the specific practice?

The point is to begin and continue to dialogue with families and to exchange information with the goal of resolving the conflict for the benefit of the child. The "bottom line" is really: What is in the best interest of the child? Readers are encouraged to review the works of Janet Gonzalez-Mena cited in this document's References section for more specific guidance on implementing these strategies.

Key Implications

Cultures shape the goals or desired outcomes valued within a particular society. Parents and teachers may have different goals that translate into real and practical differences as parents and families seek to raise their children within a particular set of ideas. Adults' goals for children are reflected in the numerous ways in which they support children's development.

By learning more about the goals that parents have for their children, and about the types of behaviors or practices that parents prioritize and implement as they raise their children, program staff can more easily match the learning experiences of the classroom to those of the home. For example, if a teacher is concerned that a 3-year-old in her

class is not skilled with using a fork, she should first find out if this is a goal of the family. Do they scoop their food at home using spoons? Do they use chopsticks? Do they feed the child? It is best for the teacher to check what the family practices and goals are before starting to individualize for this child regarding learning how to eat with a fork.

One way of making developmentally appropriate curriculum decisions is to learn about the lives, beliefs, and interests of the children and their families. The information can then be used to inform the range of services provided by the program. The next section describes how children's "background knowledge" can be gathered and used to support language development in either the first or the second language.

Background Knowledge

As discussed previously, children acquire cultural knowledge from the day they are born. Put another way, children enter Early Head Start and Head Start with understandings already acquired from interactions and experiences with family and community members. The term *background knowledge* refers to the specific factual and social information that children can have at any age.

At any age, children acquire not only cultural knowledge and language skills but also conceptual knowledge. Some examples of conceptual knowledge include:

- understanding the uses of objects (e.g., a map is used to find locations),
- quantity (how many items are in a group),
- directions (up/down or north/south), or
- properties of objects (e.g., a cork will float in water but a key will not).

These insights are an additional source of information for planning and implementing daily learning experiences within the classroom.

Background knowledge plays a key role in children's acquisition of a second language. Familiar objects and concepts that the child has acquired from family and community members in the home language—when used in second language settings—can facilitate learning, as the child can focus on the new vocabulary involved. Background knowledge "helps determine how cognitively demanding a subject is," and can be considered a context for second language acquisition (Freeman & Freeman, 1992, 28). Background knowledge can also include specific, personally meaningful experiences such as travel, observations of family routines, or knowledge of parents' employment. This discussion about the context of language learning is explored in more detail in Principle 6.

Key Implications

The role of background knowledge in children's learning emphasizes the importance of ongoing child assessment in all Head Start programs, especially those in diverse service areas.

Teachers can use ongoing assessment procedures (e.g., observations of children in the classroom, observations during home visits, conversations with parents) in order to understand the background knowledge of individual children. By taking into account "where children are coming from" (i.e., understanding children's experiences, lifestyle, and what children already know), teachers are in a position to plan a curriculum that fully supports children's learning.
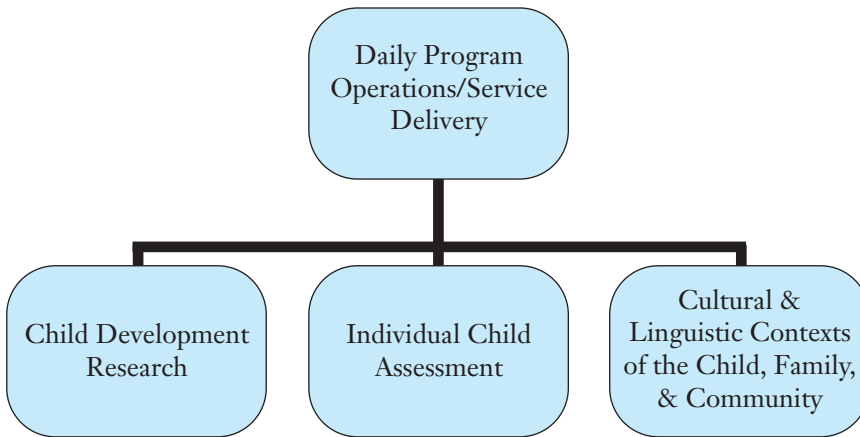
Culturally Responsive Practices; Culturally Appropriate Services

Since the publication of the *Multicultural Principles* in 1991, the field of early childhood education has been marked by sustained interest in, and discussions of, the intersection of child development, family culture, and home language(s) with program policies and practices. For example, in 1996, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published a Position Statement entitled *Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education*.

In 1997, NAEYC released its revised publication on *developmentally appropriate practices*. This term was formulated by professionals making decisions about the well-being and education of children, on the basis of at least three important pieces of information:

1. *What is known about child development and learning*: Knowledge of age-related human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and challenging to children.

2. *What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group*: [Necessary] to be able to adapt and be responsive to inevitable individual variation.

3. *Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live*: [Necessary] to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families. (Bredekamp & Copple 1997, 8–9)

With this information, programs are expected to use knowledge of children's cultural and social settings as a key component of decisions about teaching environments. In 2009, NAEYC released its third revision of the publication (Bredekamp & Copple 2009). In this most recent version, the three types of knowledge identified in the 1997 publication remain. The decision-making process for developmentally appropriate practices is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Sources of Developmentally Appropriate Practices.

Curriculum in Multicultural Classrooms

The term *culturally responsive practices* has been used to refer to the implementation of effective teaching practices in diverse early education settings. One source describes culturally responsive practices as *teaching to and through* the strengths of children who are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (Gay 2000, 29). This term implies the integration of assessment and curriculum practices: program staff must learn about the individual strengths, abilities, and preferences of each of the children enrolled in their program, and then find ways to plan and implement a curriculum that is based upon these strengths. For example, teachers can use home visits to learn about the child's strengths and interests, to observe ways that families interact with their child, and to begin a dialogue with families about their goals for the child.

Classroom Materials

In her 1995 book, *The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8*, Martha Bronson offers detailed suggestions for selecting play materials that are safe, appropriate, and supportive of play and development. It is relevant to note here that classroom materials can potentially depict people in stereotypical ways or only contain token images of culturally diverse people. Therefore, the challenge is to provide classroom materials that reflect *all* children, families, and adults in the program, and to eliminate stereotypical or inaccurate materials from daily use. For example, books and dramatic play materials should reflect diversity of gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds, special needs and abilities,

and a range of occupations and ages. Books and environmental print should also represent the different languages of children in the classroom.

The challenge for programs is to establish systems and procedures that take the cultural and linguistic contexts of the children into account. Once in place, these classroom materials should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the classrooms reflect all enrolled children without stereotyping. Programs are encouraged to seek information from parents, family members, and knowledgeable members of the community for their input in equipping classrooms to reflect cultures and languages in respectful ways.

Finally, encouraging children's language and cognitive growth does not preclude the responsibility to support each child's sense of well-being, the formation of his or her identity, and feelings of security. A consensus within the research is that effective environments for children support *all* domains of development, and that environments associated with learning outcomes should also provide strong support for social–emotional development (Hart & Risley 1995, 1999; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998). With this in mind, the developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate environment mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of the children it serves (Gestwicki 1995). The following are some specific strategies suggested by Derman-Sparks (1989):

1. Use images in abundance that represent all children, families, and staff in your program.

2. Use images of children and adults from the major ethnic groups in your community and in U.S. society.

3. Use images that accurately reflect people's current daily lives in the U.S. during work and recreational activities.

4. Offer a balance among different cultural and ethnic groups.

5. Provide a fair balance of images of women and men doing "jobs at home" and "jobs outside home." Provide images of older people of various backgrounds doing different activities.

6. Provide images of differently abled people of various backgrounds at work and with their families.

7. Use images of diversity in family styles, such as single mothers and fathers, and extended families that are multiracial and multiethnic.

8. Use images of important individuals, past and present, and that reflect diversity.

9. Exhibit artwork—prints, sculpture, and textiles—by artists of various backgrounds.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

Here are examples of two "voices" that support Principle 4, one an Early Head Start program and one a Head Start program.

In one Early Head Start program in Massachusetts, when a mother from Ghana who spoke very little English brought her 9-month-old daughter to our classroom, we had some concerns. The baby could not roll over or sit up by herself. At first, communication was difficult, and the mother seemed unhappy with the care her daughter was receiving. She appeared unconcerned about the delay. The teacher was trying very hard to build a relationship with this mother, but was having difficulty.

Through informal daily exchanges, the teacher built a relationship with the mother while caring for the baby. Sometimes the teacher would send notes home, and the mother's friend would translate. The mother would then bring notes back. For home visits and conferences, they found an interpreter who would facilitate communication. The teacher learned that this mother used a long piece of fabric to keep the baby wrapped to her body most of the time because she came from a family where you don't put a baby down on the ground.

Once this important piece of information was understood, the teacher was able to help the mother feel more comfortable about the care her baby was receiving. She explained why they put babies on the ground for tummy time. The teacher asked the mother's permission to implement plans she had made for the baby. If the mother did not want the baby on the floor, would it be okay if she was on a foam mat with someone right next to her? That was okay with the mother, but she was concerned that the baby needed to be held more often. Because the infant room had many volunteers, it was easy to meet this request. Teachers and volunteers made efforts to hold the baby as much as possible and do it in ways that would support her gross motor development. They played bouncing games on their laps, let her lie across their legs on her stomach, and gave her large objects to hold onto. The program was able to secure another foam mat, similar to the classroom mat they used, so that the mother could use it at home.

Through communication, patience, and an open mind, the teacher built a relationship with the mother and created opportunities for this baby to improve her motor skills. In turn, the mother shared her beliefs with the teacher that babies should be frequently held. Respecting this practice, the teacher incorporated it into her lesson planning.

In a rural community in the United States, both men and women are absent from their jobs on the first day of hunting season. The majority are hunters who hope to fill their freezers with meat in order to feed their families during the winter. The Head Start program experiences the arrival of hunting season with the arrival of young children at Head Start carrying toy guns, just like Daddy and Mommy.

Program administrators and teachers alike have spent countless hours discussing how their programs can restrict gun play in a community that depends on the use of guns to put food on the table. At one Head Start site, experienced teachers anticipated the arrival of children with their guns by setting up a receiving area just inside the center's doors where the guns were to be "checked at the door." Each family was greeted by a staff member who explained procedures, just as they used to have to do in the old days. Each child received a paper ticket in exchange for their gun along with the assurance that the gun would be returned at the end of the day when they went home.

At another site, teachers used this event as an opportunity to educate the young children about the requirements of gun ownership and handling. The teachers' lesson plans included teaching the children how to apply for legal ownership of a gun, gun regulations, and gun safety. After the children completed these lessons, the teachers issued each child a certificate of attendance.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. How are home visits by teachers or home visitors conducted? Is time taken during home visits to observe how children, parents, and other family members relate to each other?

2. Is time taken during home visits to ask parents about knowledge and information that are familiar to the child?

3. How are teachers' observations of children in the classroom used to identify children's background knowledge? As the teacher gains additional information about what children know and do, are classroom learning experiences planned with this information in mind?

4. How do program staff use informal conversations with parents (e.g., encounters in the hallway or during drop-off or pick-up times) to learn more about the child?

5. How are parents included in curriculum planning? Are parents invited to share information about their child's interests and favorite activities? Is this information used in curriculum planning?

6. Does your program have a procedure for reviewing conflicts over practices between staff and parents? Do staff have opportunities to discuss and role-play different scenarios and to practice their skills at dialogue with families?

Additional Reflective Questions

Given the importance of cultural and social contexts to children's development, how do we as a program . . .

1. Begin information-sharing and create opportunities for dialogue with parents and family members during our initial contacts with them?

2. Find ways for parents, family members, and community partners to share their expertise, ideas, preferences, and information about their cultural backgrounds to the extent that they choose to do so?

3. Develop our expertise in developing and sustaining dialogue with families, especially when there are questions or conflicts over program practices?

4. Organize and integrate information across staff; that is, do different staff working with a family have oportunities to share, discuss, and integrate information in order to produce more effective program services?

5. Are our partnerships and dialogue with families and community partners centered on the well-being of the children enrolled in our program? What practices and strategies do we have in place for when staff and parents are in disagreement?

PRINCIPLE 5:

Every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Children need the cultural identities of their families to be recognized and honored.

- Children need to learn a variety of skills in order to function effectively in a diverse society.

- Children have the right to grow up in environments where differences are expected and respected.

Research Review

Like culture, our identity is dynamic and complex. Our identity is connected to our work and activities, our families and heritage, our ideas and beliefs, and our choices and circumstances. Beginning at birth, young children develop their identities over time, in the context of family and community relationships.

As noted in Principle 4, one way that culture shapes children's development is through the goals that adults have for children as well as through the roles that adults take on in order to accomplish these goals. This cultural shaping process will naturally have an impact on how members of a cultural group come to develop a personal and social identity. Although a full review of the literature on identity development is beyond the scope and purpose of this document, it should be noted that some researchers have investigated the connection between the cultural identities of immigrant groups in the United States and school achievement.

One common assumption is that traditional cultures "get in the way" of school success. Immigrants and minorities, it is argued, must "do away with" the culture of their families and take on the cultural forms of their schools. This assumption was disputed by a

team of researchers who compared levels of assimilation into U.S. culture with Indochinese children's school achievement:

> *The most successful Indochinese families appear to retain their own traditions and values.* By this statement we are in no way devaluing the American system. The openness and opportunity it offers have enabled the Indochinese to succeed in the U.S. even while maintaining their own cultural traditions. (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore 1992, 41)

Another finding is that cultural identity is connected to literacy development. Altarriba (1993) framed the issues as follows:

> The existing evidence . . . uniformly suggests that [reading] compre-hension is facilitated to the degree that the reader is culturally familiar with the material being read. Subjects experience interference when culturally unfamiliar material is presented for processing. (p.381)

In other words, culturally responsive practices not only can be used to inform curricu-lum and specific teaching practices aimed at early literacy but also are necessary to sup-port children's academic progress. In this view, programs do not have to choose between services that promote academic development and those that are culturally responsive. Instead, programs are encouraged to improve upon culturally responsive policies and service delivery in order to support fully children's learning and development (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000).

Key Implications

One key implication is that family culture is a source of strength, especially for young children. Therefore, programs should develop self-assessment procedures to examine program systems and services.

Family and Culture: Sources of Strength

Families play a crucial role in forming a child's identity and helping that child determine his or her place in the world (Jackson, Taylor, & Chatters 1997). For example, among African American Head Start families, it was found that mothers' positive identification with their race was significantly related to children's social competence (Halgunseth et al. 2005). Self-esteem, positive psychological functioning, and achievement have all been associated with a person's connection or identification with his or her racial and cultural group.

There are many other ways that culture can serve as a source of strength. Informal adoption by extended kin, godparents, or friends is a culture-bound practice among many Puerto Rican, African American, and Native American families (Garcia-Preto 2005; Moore-Hines & Boyd-Franklin 2003). Furthermore, extended ethnic kin

networks and social networks have been found to enhance self-esteem (Keefe & Padilla 1987). Research has also found that many Hispanics and Asian Americans seek personal support networks, economic opportunities, and social acceptance within ethnic communities (Vega & Rumbart 1991).

According to the *Multicultural Principles* (1991), the culture of each family must be recognized and embraced for its unique characteristics, as well as how it serves as a source of strength in supporting children's development. It is important to view families as having their own distinctive culture, structures, and practices that can be different from what we are familiar with. However, these differences do not make the family or the children deficient, but just the opposite—a knowledgeable and rich resource that programs should take advantage of as they plan and implement their program.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

An American Indian Head Start program located on a reservation in Wisconsin operates dual-language classrooms for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children in order to preserve the Ojibwa language and culture as well as to support English language acquisition. Members of the community who are most fluent in the language provide language instruction to program staff on a regular basis. The staff carry out many activities to support language preservation, including implementation of culturally responsive play and learning experiences within classrooms.

For example, toddler and preschool classrooms feature word walls that present basic vocabulary in Ojibwa and English. In addition, teachers have created storyboards that are familiar to the children. In one classroom, the board includes a forest scene in which there are trees, plants, ponds, and small animals. In one spot in the scene, a tree stump indicates that a beaver had chewed down the tree. The storyboard is a place where children can play and use language to describe familiar settings and events. During children's play, teachers have the opportunity to observe children's language use, to extend and elaborate upon children's utterances, and to introduce new vocabulary in either Ojibwa or English.

In a related activity, teachers cover tables with butcher paper during free playtime.

Using various colored marking pens, the teachers outline settings that are familiar to the children, including Lake Superior, train tracks, and trees. The teachers then bring small toys to the setting, such as toy trains, small animals, stickers, hats, and other dress-up clothing. What began as a teacher-initiated activity can then be turned over to the children, to allow them to develop different ideas in their play. Like the storyboard activity, this type of pretend play allows the children to direct their own activity, to develop complex stories about the setting and actions involved, and to use either of their languages to express themselves.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. Observe the book area within a classroom. To what extent do the books reflect the racial, ethnic, and linguistic heritage of all children enrolled in the classroom? How do the arrangement and decoration of the area invite children from various backgrounds to enter and select books?

2. How familiar are you with the stories that the children in your program are told or have read to them by their parents or other family members? If you are familiar, how do you use this information to plan a curriculum? If not, how can you obtain this information?

3. Does your program have a formal policy to ensure that teaching staff or volunteers read to children in the home language and in English? Are books in the classroom offered in the languages spoken by all enrolled children?

4. How are parents invited to share their culture(s) with children, families, or program staff? How are parents invited to share with program staff what makes their family "feel at home"?

5. What specific indicators and systems can your program identify that demonstrate respect and support for the cultures of all enrolled families?

PRINCIPLE 6:

Effective programs for children who speak languages other than English require continued development of the first language while the acquisition of English is facilitated.
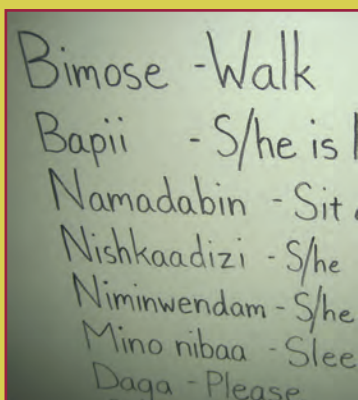
Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Language acquisition is a natural process based on discovering meanings.

- Use of children's first language facilitates learning in the preschool years.

- Research indicates that developing and maintaining a child's first language support and facilitate learning of the second language. This is best accomplished without translation and with the recognition of the child's need to develop understanding before speaking.

Research Review

Since the publication of the *Multicultural Principles* in 1991, research on dual-language development (i.e., children acquiring more than one language) has consistently supported this Principle. First, research has demonstrated that dual-language development does not interfere with the acquisition of typical developmental milestones. Second, research has identified key aspects of environments that support language acquisition. Third, the connections between language and the acquisition of conceptual skills is a compelling reason for the continued development of children's home language. Finally, recent research has indicated that ongoing use of the first language facilitates the acquisition of English. Summaries of these research findings are presented below. Programs are encouraged to access *Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take?*, the Office of Head Start dual language report, via the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center Web site: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc.

Dual-Language Acquisition: Does It Delay Development?

Dual-language development in young children is characterized by *variability*; simply put, there are various pathways to the acquisition of two languages. Although it is probable

that the majority of children in the world are exposed to more than one language (Bialystok, 2001), dual-language development is often the cause of anxiety in adults. The anxiety may be characterized as a concern that dual-language development is "too much" for young children to handle.

On the basis of this concern, several studies have collected and analyzed data on dual-language development in very young children. Oller, Eilers, Urbano, and Cobo-Lewis (1997) examined groups of monolingual and dual-language (Spanish, English) infants to examine when the children began to babble and how much babbling they did. The researchers found no significant differences between the two groups.

Petito and colleagues (2001) examined groups of monolingual and dual-language children (French, English, sign language) and compared their acquisition of the following language milestones: first spoken (or signed) words, two-word utterances, and a 50-word vocabulary. Prior research on monolingual children has established these milestones as important points in the developmental process. Petito and colleagues found no significant differences in the ages at which dual-language children acquired the language milestones in comparison to monolingual children.

Other researchers have examined dual-language development in preschool-age children (Rodríguez, Díaz, Duran, & Espinosa 1995; Winsler, Díaz, Espinosa, & Rodríguez 1999). In these studies, low-income, Spanish-speaking children attending bilingual

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Definitions

Dual-Language Learners (DLL): Children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language (ACF 2008).

L1: Refers to a child's first language, also referred to as home or primary language.

L2: Refers to a child's second language.

Second-Language Learners/Sequential Bilingual Development: Children who begin to learn an additional language after three years of age (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004, 4).

Simultaneous Bilingual Development: Children who learn two or more languages from birth or who start within one year of being born (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004, 4).

preschool programs were compared with similar children who remained at home. The classrooms used in the study were "truly bilingual in the sense that approximately equal proportions of time were spent by teachers speaking Spanish and English" (Winsler et al. 1999, 360).

Children enrolled in the bilingual preschool programs showed significant gains in both Spanish and English vocabulary acquisition. Instead of experiencing a decline in their first language, children who attended the bilingual preschools demonstrated continued growth of first-language skills. In addition, these children advanced their development of specific skills in Spanish, such as using increased numbers of words to tell a story. The authors attributed the children's progress in both languages to the high quality of the programs children attended. Although the research base on this issue is not extensive, the available evidence shows consistent results: children are able to acquire more than one language, given the opportunity to receive consistent exposure in both languages.

Home Language and Conceptual Skills

Language development involves more than learning to speak. As children acquire their home language, they also build up their conceptual knowledge. From birth to five years of age, young children develop a wide range of important conceptual skills, including the following:

1. **Categorization**: Children are able to identify apples, bananas, and oranges as examples of fruits or are able to recognize the differences between children and adults.

2. **Classification**: Children are able to distinguish between big and small items or are able to group items by two or more attributes (e.g., "This bowl is red and plastic. That bowl is green and made of glass.").

3. **Narration**: Children are able to describe previous experiences as a coherent (i.e., logical, readily understood) story or to recall in detail the contents of a favorite book.

4. **Cause and effect**: Children are able to identify germs as the source of illness or are able to understand that sunlight can cause sunburn.

5. **Logical reasoning**: Children are able to link two ideas in a logical order (e.g., "We have to clean up because it's almost time to get on the bus.") or are able to distinguish between real and pretend activities.

6. **Number operations**: Children are able to count the items in a group or are able to add small quantities together to obtain the correct sum.

7. **Spatial relationships**: Children are able to indicate objects that are above, below, or beside another object or are able to indicate, for example, that an object is to the left of another object.

In many concrete and important ways, children develop a wide range of important conceptual abilities as they acquire and develop their first language. These skills are essential for reading and school success, and the skills have the potential to transfer from one language to another. To support children's readiness for school, Head Start programs should maximize children's uninterrupted conceptual development during the preschool period by supporting home language learning as well as English.

The Home Language Foundation

Strong and continued support for the development of the home language is key for successful second-language acquisition. As Collier (1995) explained:

> The key to understanding the role of first language in . . . second language is to understand the function of uninterrupted cognitive development . . . when parents and children speak the language that they know best, they are working at their actual level of cognitive maturity. (p. 6–7)

That is, parents should be encouraged to use the language they know best when speaking with their children. As children continue to develop their knowledge in the first language, this same knowledge and learned concepts can readily be transferred to a second language once the child has developed vocabulary and grammatical abilities in that second language.

Recent support for this position was provided by the results of a study by Miller and colleagues (2006). In their study of 1,500 Spanish–English bilingual children enrolled in kindergarten through third grade, the authors examined how oral language proficiency in either Spanish or English was related to children's reading abilities in both languages. The authors reported that children's oral language proficiency in English predicted their reading scores in both English and Spanish. Likewise, children's oral language proficiency in Spanish predicted their reading scores in both languages. The evidence indicates that increased proficiency in one language supports reading ability in a second language.

Although the results come from only one study, these findings do not support the operation of English-only environments for children who speak languages other than English. In fact, the findings suggest that the continued development of the child's home language—with an explicit emphasis upon the development of strong oral language skills—is a direct source of support for the child's acquisition of English, and particularly for successful reading in English later on.

Key Implications

Figure 4 presents an imperfect but perhaps useful visual display of sequential dual-language development. The figure indicates that a child has begun to acquire one language from birth (indicated in yellow) and then begins to acquire a second language as a 4-year-old (indicated in red).

As you view the figure, keep in mind the range of conceptual skills that children acquire and develop in their home language (yellow) or L1. (These skills are listed on pages 47-48.) Now consider the extent of the children's development of their second language, (red) or L2.

Figure 4 demonstrates children making steady progress in their second language (red), L2. However, their acquisition of L2 vocabulary takes time. When we consider the range of conceptual skills formed in their language (L1), and then regard the extent of second-language development, it is difficult to imagine how children could continue to develop their conceptual knowledge if access to their first language were substantially reduced or cut off entirely.

Figure 4. **Visualizing Sequential Dual-Language Acquisition**.
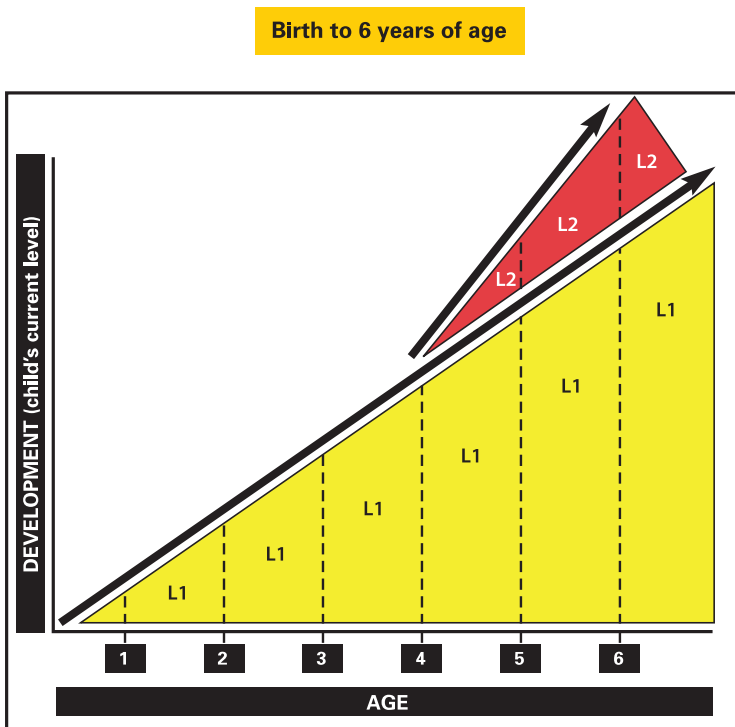
Simply put, during the first few years of sequential dual-language development, children do not have the level of L2 vocabulary and other language skills (i.e., grammar) to be able to use or to develop their conceptual skills. There is just not enough linguistic "raw material" to do the job.

Therefore, Principle 6 is consistent with the research on language acquisition and with the research on the development of conceptual skills. Programs should seek to support the continued development of children's home language by hiring teachers or obtaining volunteers to the extent possible. However, it is clear that not all programs are able to hire staff fluent in all of the different languages that the children and families speak. Therefore, it is vital that programs form partnerships with parents and other community members who are encouraged to provide such assistance. Program staff can help families tap into their strengths and interests (e.g., storytelling, quilting, gardening, games, physical activities) and communicate with them how these can contribute and be brought into the classroom as learning opportunities.

By maintaining the development of children's home language, we concurrently support the advancement of many conceptual skills that are necessary for later academic success. This increased improvement and continued learning in the home language can be accomplished while introducing and supporting children's development of English.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

A program in Washington state recognized how difficult it was to support children who speak languages other than English when, within their Head Start program, there were 20–30 languages spoken in any given year. The program covers a wide geographic area; some centers may have only Spanish and English speakers, whereas others may have 5–7 languages spoken in one classroom.

With the oversight of the bilingual services manager, the program created a bilingual assistant program. Hired at the beginning of the program year, part-time bilingual assistants are community members, parents of formerly enrolled children, and others who understand and speak sufficient English and one of the desired home languages. The bilingual assistants (who are not part of the teacher–child ratio requirement) are assigned to a classroom when there is a minimum of four children in the classroom who speak the same second language. (Classrooms with fewer than four children who speak a second language are not assigned a bilingual assistant. In these classrooms, however, trained volunteers who speak the language of the children serve as language models and work individually with the children.)

The program provides training to the bilingual assistants, who work with teachers to help children learn expectations, transitions, and routines. They are trained how to provide individual language support in order to meet children wherever they are in their process of language acquisition. Classrooms teachers are required to complete an online training module on how to work with the bilingual assistants effectively and on the importance of home language retention and second-language acquisition. The bilingual services manager together with individual teachers decide how long the bilingual assistant remains in the classroom. The bilingual assistants are an integral part of the program's philosophy of supporting and utilizing a child's first language while promoting English language acquisition.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. Review the list of cognitive skills that children develop as they acquire their home language (see the "Home Language and Conceptual Skills" section, p. 47). Do observations of the classrooms in your program demonstrate that teachers plan learning experiences to support children's acquisition of these skills?

2. To what extent is the program able to hire staff who speak the home languages of the children enrolled in the program?

3. When it is not possible to hire staff who speak the home languages of families, what has your program done to increase families' access to the full range of Head Start services and to communicate the importance of family support for the home language(s)?

4. Does your program have written policies on the use of home language and English throughout your program's systems and services? If not, what information is needed to begin? If yes, how are these policies shared with staff and parents?

5. What policies and practices are in place within your program to support parents' understanding of first- and second-language development?

PRINCIPLE 7:

Culturally relevant programming requires staff who both reflect and are responsive to the community and families served.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* require grantees to hire staff that reflect the racial and ethnic population of the children enrolled in the program.

- Incorporating cultural relevance and support for the continued development of children's home language is the foundation for a good program.

Research Review

The research and information presented in Principle 6 indicates that young children enrolled in classroom settings benefit when at least one adult speaks their home language. In home visiting programs, the ability of the home visitor to speak the language of the family is especially crucial to establishing and developing relationships that support families' and children's development. Regardless of the program option, families need to be able to understand fully what the Head Start program is, the types of services that their children receive, and how they can become involved. Parents need to understand and contribute to the progress their child is making.

Key Implications

The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* reflect Principle 7. The Standards require that:

- effective two-way comprehensive communications between staff and parents are carried out on a regular basis, in a language parents understand;

- staff and program consultants are familiar with the ethnic background and heritage of families;

- meetings and interactions with families are respectful of each family's diversity and cultural and ethnic background; and

- when a majority of the children speak a language other than English, a classroom staff member (or home visitor) must be hired who speaks their language.

These requirements, along with numerous others related to programmatic cultural and linguistic responsiveness, necessitate that staff members be hired who reflect both the children's and the families' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

For many years, Head Start programs have had a tradition of "growing their own staff" or hiring from within to reflect the community and families in their program. In some instances, a program may train volunteers who have promise and a commitment to the program, but perhaps lack the qualifications to be employed. During the volunteer process, professional development is built in for these individuals while they are on their way to becoming paid substitutes and then on to paid staff with ongoing staff training. Tribal programs have been hiring from within the community and then growing staff for many, many years.

Programs must be able to communicate with families and children in meaningful ways. Programs should ensure that staff and consultants are familiar with the ethnic background of families. This information should be included in written communication and policies for both staff and consultants. In addition, programs should be mindful of how they utilize bilingual capabilities of staff. For example, if a bilingual teacher, hired for the purpose of teaching and interacting with children and their families, is also being asked to interpret and translate on a regular basis, this may not be appropriate. The additional responsibilities of translating and/or interpreting may cause the teacher to burn out. In addition, programs must remember that a person's ability to speak a language does not mean that he or she is competent or comfortable with either intrepreting for someone else or translating the written word from one language to another.

Programs should explore how parents best receive information. Programs need to work with parents to determine their literacy level in their home language and avoid assuming that, if a document is translated and sent home, it is automatically read and understood.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

During the summer months, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs are held to a special education standard by the *Head Start Performance Standards* and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Both require that children with suspected disabilities are screened, evaluated, and identified to receive special education services from Part C or Part B agencies within a finite amount of time. The school districts are responsible for implementing the special education programs but are typically closed during the summer months. This, however, does not preclude the responsibility of the programs to secure proper services.

To meet this requirement, one Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program in California made great efforts to contract with state-licensed, bilingual speech-language pathologists who had been migrant children themselves. The program recruited at universities when the students were close to completing their degree program. The students were able to do their practicum in the migrant Head Start program. What better way to find staff who could properly assess and serve their children? The speech pathologists understood the importance of timely evaluations for families on the move, and they understood the migrant family lifestyle. When meeting with families, their conversations were rich with cultural insights, including the relevance of preserving a home language. These professionals could explain the importance of early therapeutic intervention, as well as help the families work through any reluctance they might have to participate in the program. These conversations were perfect preparation for the school years ahead. They also ensured children would receive services as parents learned how to advocate for their children by providing schools with their child's official Individual Education Program when moving to another state.

These state-licensed, bilingual professionals expressed their desire to give back to their heritage, and, at the same time, they made it possible to provide quality services with minimal interruption to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start children. It was a win/win situation for all.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. How does your program currently gather information from families? Do your information-gathering practices assist staff to better understand the cultural values and beliefs of the families enrolled in your program?

2. How does your program identify and take into consideration parents' interests in culturally specific resources and services?

3. How does your program inform families in your service area about Head Start program services?

4. How does your program ensure that parents from different cultural groups or parents who may speak languages other than English are fully informed of and participate in the full range of parent involvement opportunities in your program?

5. How does your program reach out to, recruit, and/or hire staff, parents, volunteers, or consultants who reflect the families and the community?

PRINCIPLE 8:

Multicultural programming for children enables children to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Diversity within classrooms and home-based socialization experiences can be the starting points for planned learning experiences and discussions about individual differences.

- Cultural information should be integrated into everyday environments and learning experiences rather than taught as an occasional activity.

- An important goal is to develop children's capacity to communicate effectively with people who are different from themselves.

Research Review

The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in many Head Start programs reflects long-term demographic trends in the United States. Although all people are rooted in culture, it is also important to recognize that people are also individuals. Within any cultural group, there may be differences in how children are raised. It is, therefore, important to avoid thinking of all members of one culture as "the same." Instead, we must work to understand and appreciate each child and each family for their uniquenesses.

Cultural Transmission: The Role of Routines

Valsiner (1997) offered one explanation of how cultural and individual differences are connected. He argued that feeding and mealtimes provide the "microcosm within which cultural patterning of behavior begins and where the (individual) child is confronted with cultural knowledge about the world" (p. 214).

During mealtimes, adults purposefully limit some of the children's actions and promote others, thus shaping (not determining) future development. Parents and family

members model and explain if and how the child may feed himself, what and how much the child may eat, and how food is prepared, served, and stored.

According to Valsiner (1997), children are exposed to cultural information at every meal. The information is transmitted both directly and indirectly. For example, as children eat they are provided with direct instructions (e.g., sit up straight, chew with your mouth closed, eat everything on your plate). Direct instruction may also convey information related to religious, community, social, and other family contexts.

However, direct instruction is not the only way in which culture is communicated. Within the structured occasion of meals, family members indirectly expose children to different ways of thinking and behaving (Valsiner 1997, 226). In these instances, and often before much direct instruction takes place, children are exposed to ways of acting and interacting by observing family members and others. During mealtimes, even very young children come to see what is done, how, and by whom. Young children may:

- observe food preparation and household tasks;

- take part in conversations and hear their parents express opinions;

- be exposed to stories, humor, and grief;

- receive religious instruction;

- be instructed in polite forms of communication and behavior; and

- observe and overhear comments about community events.

The key component of this indirect exposure to cultural information becomes the child's active role in taking it in. That is, a child does not take in information "verbatim,"

nor does he or she access all information in the same way. Instead, children process information as it comes to them, actively "making sense" of what they see and hear. Even very young children compare observations from one environment with those from other environments.

Key Implications

Cultures differ in many ways in their approach to feeding and mealtimes. The culture can provide structure to these events as well as initiate children into practices and procedures defined as "acceptable." Nevertheless, individuals within a culture make their own choices about how to live, how to act, what values to hold, and what beliefs are personally important.

A key finding within the research literature is that children acquire cultural information through different pathways. At times, children receive direct instruction in cultural rules and expectations, such as mealtime behavior. At other times, children acquire cultural information through their own observations of family members (as well as extended family). Children also observe the teachers and other adults in their Head Start program, adults who provide child care, and members of their communities. Simply put, all adults are role models when they are in the same environment as children. Therefore, the implication of cultural transmission for program staff is that they must develop ways of communicating with families so that knowledge of their daily lives can be used to inform decisions about the classroom environment.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

A Head Start classroom teacher in Kansas shared that throughout all her years of teaching she had not thought much about her heritage or her family's culture. One day she was reading a story to the children about an Italian grandmother who joyfully prepared dinner for her family. It was a moment of epiphany for her. The story brought her "home." The connection made to her family and the pride she felt about her Italian heritage suddenly surfaced. She stated that prior to that moment she did not understand how powerful multicultural programming could be for children.

A week later she chose a storybook about an American Indian child, as there was one child of American Indian heritage in her class. At that time, there was very little representation of the child's culture in the curriculum. She shared that the child immediately approached her after she read the story. They spent some time looking at the pictures in the book and revisiting the pages that interested the child. The teacher sent the book home with the child and encouraged her to share it with her family. This simple gesture resulted in a stronger relationship between the Head Start center and the family. During the next month, the child's mother came to the classroom as a volunteer, and her parents came together to the parent meeting the following month.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. If your program serves infants and toddlers: How does your program gather information about the caregiving practices of families? For example, how do you understand how a family feeds its child, puts the child to sleep, or holds the child?

2. For preschool-age children, how do your classrooms reflect the cultures of the children enrolled? How do daily learning experiences allow children to learn about and develop respect for other cultures?

3. What opportunities do parents have to form relationships with other parents and to develop new understandings of individuals from different cultural groups with the community?

Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases.

Highlights from the Original *Multicultural Principles* (1991)

- Program systems and services should be reviewed for institutional bias.

- Skills to deal with bias must be taught to children.

Research Review

One challenge to understanding culture involves the way we acquire it. Rogoff (1990) posed the problem this way: We are "blind" to our own culture because our way of thinking and living, built up over a lifetime, has become a habit. Although all humans live within one or more cultures, our cultural knowledge is often subconscious. As much of what we do on a daily basis (e.g., working, eating, relaxing, raising children) involves routines, we rarely consciously think of culture as shaping our behavior at all.

Another challenge to understanding culture involves the personal, social, and emotional aspects of cultural information and ways of living. Our way of thinking and living, built into habits since childhood, naturally lead us to think that our way of doing things is the "right way." We tend to notice culture when we encounter differences, and our reaction is often to confirm our own expectations and ideas.

Key Implications

Our personal cultural backgrounds influence how we think, the values that we hold, and the practices we use to support children's development. In addition, our ways of acquiring culture, going back to our earliest childhood, influence how we approach thinking and talking about culture. Although a full review of resources is beyond the scope of this document, programs are encouraged to develop and implement long-term approaches and processes to address these important issues.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

In Florida, a Head Start grantee tried to ensure that all classrooms were staffed with bilingual teachers, but found that this was becoming more difficult because of the increasing needs of culturally diverse classrooms and family child care homes. Although the program had developed written policies on language use years ago, the policies focused only on English- and Spanish-speaking children and families. Since then, multiple languages had come to be represented by the program's enrolled families, who were from different regions of Mexico (e.g., Mixteco, Huastec, Trique) and other countries (e.g., Cambodia, Laos). There was growing confusion about the appropriateness of introducing a new language when young children had yet to master their first language. There was even more confusion about how to support children who spoke a language none of the program staff could speak. In addition, many parents, not understanding the full implications of losing one's first language, expressed their strong desire for their children to hear only English at the Head Start program.

As the program began to reach out to volunteers and staff who were from the same cultures of the children and who spoke their languages, tensions began to rise within the program.The English-speaking staff confronted the program administrator because they were uncomfortable when other employees were speaking Spanish or other languages in the staff lounge. They did not see the need for this outside of the classroom.

Program managers knew they needed to address the situation quickly. They decided to hold several staff forums to discuss the value of bilingualism and how communication in both languages in and outside of the classroom gave equal status to both groups.

The program management then invited a round table of expert consultants to meet numerous times with education coordinators and directors, program managers, and other key staff representative of varied cultures and backgrounds. Convening these meetings set in motion a series of highly reflective and research-based discussions about experiences that made a real difference in the lives of those around the table. One goal was to identify best practices that would support the developmental needs

of children who were learning their first language and experiencing their own culture while also in the midst of multicultural educational experiences and English learning. An additional goal was to articulate a program-wide philosophy and practice that embraced diversity, including addressing how adults use language in and outside of the classroom.

The result of the meetings over a 6-month period created a consistent understanding and buy-in of what should be contained in the grantee's Policies and Procedures on Language and Multicultural Principles.

The program staff worked to develop policies and procedures that included:

1. a statement of philosophy, in which statements about the program's beliefs about first- and second-language acquisition were put together on one page;

2. detailed statements about key research evidence of first- and second-language acquisition as well as early literacy development;

3. guidance for center managers and directors on hiring practices;

4. information on creating program–parent partnerships in order to support children's development to the fullest extent;

5. information on interpersonal communication between staff members, with parents, and throughout the program, including clarification on the use of languages other than English in working with children and throughout program services and systems; and

6. specific guidance on how the program supports (through trained volunteers, staff, community members, etc.) teachers and classrooms when there are multiple languages present.

The revised policies and procedures, once finalized in draft, were then presented to the agency's Parent Policy Council and Board of Directors for review and approval. Both groups were enthusiastic about the revision process, asked many questions, and gave their full support for the work.

Reflective Questions/Activities

1. How do the preservice and in-service trainings in your program address and provide opportunities and information for staff to develop their abilities to examine and challenge institutional and personal biases?

2. Think about what your response would be if a parent in your program tells you that his or her

   • 3-month-old is ready to begin toilet training;

   • 1-year-old should not be encouraged to walk;

   • 2-year-old should be fed by teachers;

   • 3-year-old drinks from a bottle;

   • 4-year-old should have access to coloring books daily; or

   • 5-year-old should not "waste time" in pretend play.

   How might your response influence your future relationship and communication with the family? How might your response influence your future work with the child?

3. Does your program incorporate reflective supervision practices so that staff have opportunities to reflect on their efforts to involve families in Head Start systems and services?

PRINCIPLE 10:

Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all systems and services and are beneficial to all adults and children.

Although Head Start no longer uses the term components to indicate program services, the need to disseminate information and to obtain buy-in from program staff, parents, and community partners on these Principles is essential.

Information on cultural relevance and dual-language development is complex, and implications for practice vary based on specific program conditions (e.g., staff are monolingual English speakers, staff are bilingual). However, the complexity of the content information requires that Head Start programs further examine their processes and practices within self-assessment, community assessment, child assessment, family partnerships, individualized curriculum, effective learning environments, health services, governance, and other elements of their program. A main task for programs is to connect the information on culture and dual-language development with Head Start systems and services.

Clearly, administrative leadership is essential to developing systems and services that address cultural relevance and dual-language development. Examples of specific aspects of leadership include: initiating the project; information gathering—current assessment of the organization; planning; communication; developing training opportunities and training and technical assistance (T/TA) plans; development of written policies—including policies for hiring; and budgeting.

In *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000) presented key elements of a culturally competent service system:

1. Monitor assessment procedures and instruments to ensure appropriateness and validity.

2. Identify groups that are underserved and eliminate cultural barriers that interfere with service delivery.

3. Organize planning, staff training, and community participation in order to deliver culturally competent services.

4. Define the location, size, characteristics, resources, and needs of culturally diverse populations within the service area.

5. Build cross-cultural communication skills.

6. Help diverse communities to organize themselves to improve the availability and use of needed services.

In addition, the authors recommend that the family—as defined by the cultural perspective of the target population—be the focus of service delivery.

In the original *Multicultural Principles*, it was recommended that Head Start directors schedule time to "review and discuss these principles with all component coordinators as a group" (Administration for Children, Youth, and Families 1991, 3). In this version, we suggest that Head Start directors and their management teams—including parents and community partners—develop both short- and long-term plans and processes to consider the ways in which:

1. culture(s) and languages (both English and the home languages of families) influence the lives of program staff;

2. culture(s) and languages (both English and the home language) influence the lives of the children and families;

3. attitudes, values, and beliefs are culture bound and shape our behaviors/teaching practices;

4. cultures and different home languages can be overtly respected and supported;

5. reflections on cultural issues can be integrated into daily classroom practices; and

6. reflections on cultural issues can be integrated into family partnership agreements and family services practices.

VOICES FROM THE HEAD START COMMUNITY

A program in New York provided four vignettes describing its work across service areas and systems.

To support the diverse families we serve in our program, we knew we had to reach out to our community. Our program planned a Community Resource Fair. We held a brainstorming session with many staff prior to our event to really focus on our goals and outreach efforts. We connected with local universities, community colleges, and local health and medical agencies. Through our Resource Fair, we began partnerships with a community college. We had medical students come and help with initial health screenings. Many of our new partners spoke the languages of our families.

Our program needed to boost the family literacy activities at our center. I went to the library in the community to find out what outreach services the library offers. During this visit, I set up a used book donation for our program, planned a schedule for storytelling, and gave families monthly library schedules for library activities. We found out we could host a parent meeting at the library, and, in turn, families got to tour the library and find out about services. Each family received a library card; some were amazed by how many books one could check out. The library did not have books in all the home languages our families needed, but by attending meetings and inquiring about the needs of our community, the library staff eventually ordered books in many of our home languages.

For all families to feel welcome, our program created a team dedicated to assessing what could be done to be more inclusive of the diverse families in our school. The team consisted of staff, parents, and community volunteers. The team looked at the building, classrooms, menus, and more. Some of the changes included adding a welcome mat with different languages to the front of our building; making sure the documents at our front desk were in many languages; and providing mint tea, ginger tea, and different pastries at our parent meetings. We also worked with our local public schools for translation services.

Over the years, our program went from a program with maybe 2 or 3 home languages to a program with more than 20! We wanted to ensure that our staff could incorporate all the different cultural differences, so we began with cultural sensitivity training. Looking at our own cultural biases and discussing any concerns or areas that made us uncomfortable was the way we began to understand the true needs of our program. We were also able to tie this to professional development for all staff.

Reflective Questions/Activities

To further support the work of addressing culture and home languages in Head Start program operations, the following list of Guiding Questions for program management teams has been created:

1. **Do you assess the current state of affairs in your program with regard to cultural responsiveness and dual-language acquisition?**

   - *Guiding Questions*: What knowledge of cultural groups does program staff have? What is the awareness level of staff at different levels within the organization? Does your program have written policies that address cultural relevance and home language and/or are they in need of revision? How do the systems, services, and practices visibly demonstrate your knowledge and awareness?

2. **Have you created plans for the next program year that extend or expand upon current practices, policies, and/or systems?**

   - *Guiding Questions*: How does your program address issues of cultural relevance and home language during your self-assessment process? Where are your program strengths in these areas? What have you done to address stereotypes and bias? What are some "next steps"?

3. **Does the administrative leadership represent the population you serve? Do you build in administrative leadership by providing professional development on issues of culture and home languages?**

   - *Guiding Questions*: How is your program's approach to issues of cultural relevance and home language organized? Do you have formal committees or working groups? Or do these efforts tend to be the work of one person? What administrative supports are attached to ongoing work on these issues?

4. **Are you (and your staff) clear on long-term goals?**

- *Guiding Questions*: Does your program have written goals for work on issues of cultural relevance and home language in written form that are widely disseminated in your agency? Do these goals address the range of issues identified in the preceding text? How often are these goals reviewed and/or revised? Do your T/TA plans reflect these goals? Does your program find ways to recognize and celebrate progress made in working on these issues?

5. **Have you identified tangible short-term objectives?**

- *Guiding Questions*: Does your program have specific short-term objectives for work on issues of cultural relevance and home language in written form that are widely disseminated in your agency? How is work on these objectives monitored and evaluated? Does your program find ways to recognize and celebrate progress made in working on these issues?

APPENDIX A

Definitions of Culture

"The organized and common practices of particular communities."
> Rogoff, B. 1990. *Apprenticeship in thinking.* New York: Oxford University Press. (p. 110)

"An instrument people use as they struggle to survive in a social group."
> de Melendez, W. R., & V. Ostertag. 1997. *Teaching young children in multicultural classrooms.* Albany: Delmar Publishers. (p. 45)

"That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."
> Altarriba, J. 1993. The influence of culture on cognitive processes. In *Cognition and culture: A cross-cultural approach to cognitive psychology*, ed. J. Altarriba, 379–384. Amsterdam: North-Holland. (p. 379)

"A shared organization of ideas that includes the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and the meaning of communicative actions."
> Lubeck, S. 1994. The politics of DAP. In *Diversity and developmentally appropriate practices: Challenges for early childhood education*, ed. B. L. Mallory and R. S. New, 17–43. New York: Teachers College Press. (p. 21)

"A framework that guides and bounds life practices."
> Hanson, M. J. 1992. Ethnic, cultural, and language diversity in intervention settings. In *Developing cross-cultural competence*, ed. E. W. Lynch and M. J. Hanson, 3–18. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes. (p. 3)

"Shared understanding, as well as the public customs and artifacts that embody these understandings."
> Strauss, C., & N. Quinn 1992. Preliminaries to a theory of culture acquisition. In *Cognition: Conceptual and methodological issues* , ed. H. L. Pick, Jr., P. van den Brock, and D. C. Knill, 267–294. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. (p. 267)

"The complex processes of human social interaction and symbolic communication."
>   Hernandez 1989, quoted in de Melendez, W. R., & V. Ostertag. 1997. *Teaching young children in multicultural classrooms*. Albany: Delmar Publishers. (p. 45)

"All that is done by people."
>   Freire 1970, quoted in de Melendez, W. R., & V. Ostertag. 1997. *Teaching young children in multicultural classrooms*. Albany: Delmar Publishers. (p. 45)

"Patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts."
>   Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition 1982, quoted in Leung, B. P. 1994. Culture as a contextual variable in the study of differential minority student achievement. *Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students* 13:95–105. http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/rcd/BE019743/Culture_as_a_Contextual.pdf

"A set of activities by which different groups produce collective memories, knowledge, social relationships, and values within historically controlled relations of power."
>   Giroux, H. A., ed. 1991. *Postmodernism, feminism and cultural politics: Redrawing educational boundaries*. Albany: State University of New York Press. (p. 50)

"The ways and manners people use to see, perceive, represent, interpret, and assign value and meaning to the reality they live or experience."
>   de Melendez, W. R., & V. Ostertag. 1997. *Teaching young children in multicultural classrooms*. Albany: Delmar Publishers. (p. 45)

"Not so much a matter of an inert system in which people operate, but rather a historical construction by people that is always changing."
>   Henry Glassie 1992, quoted in Ovando, C. J., & V. P. Collier. 1998. *Bilingual and ESL classrooms: Teaching in multicultural contexts*. 2nd ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill. (p. 135)

The Original Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs *(1991)*

1. Every individual is rooted in culture.

2. The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are the primary sources for culturally relevant programming.

3. Culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the culture of different groups and discarding stereotypes.

4. Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.

5. Every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.

6. Effective programs for children with limited English speaking ability require continued development of the first language while the acquisition of English is facilitated.

7. Culturally relevant programming requires staff who reflect the community and families served.

8. Multicultural programming for children enables children to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences. It is beneficial to all children.
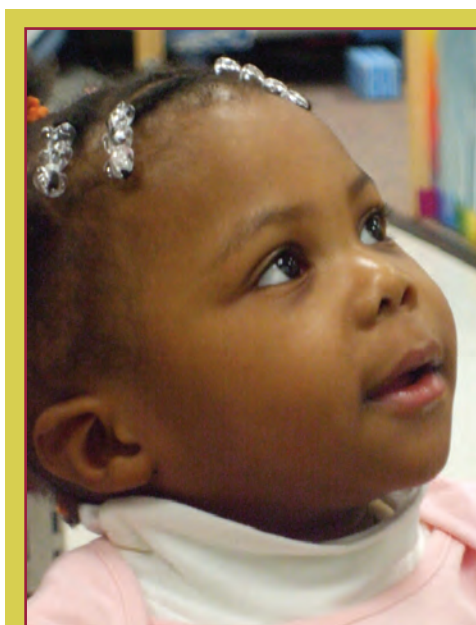
9. Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases.

10. Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all components and services.

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