

Pathways to Cultural Competence Programs

4 Underlying Principles

This checklist is based on the NAEYC Pathways to Cultural Competence Tool for Programs. It has been adapted for use in New York State. The purpose of the tool is to provide early childhood programs with a process to assess if and how culturally-competent practices are being implemented in the program. The program director uses information from conversations with staff, as well as observations, to reflect on overall program practices and complete the program checklist. The goal is for staff in early childhood programs to reflect upon their program's use of culturally-competent practices and determine areas in which they can improve.

Many definitions of culture and cultural-competence exist because of the complexity associated with culture. The definition of culture and cultural competence as they relate to this tool are based on the NAEYC Pathways to Cultural Competence Project.

“NAEYC believe that for optimal development and learning of all children, educators must **accept** the legitimacy of children's home language, **respect** (hold in high regard) the home culture, and **promote** and **encourage** the active involvement and support of all families including extended and non-traditional family units (NAEYC, 1995, pg. 2). Since all children are rooted in their families we see a child's family structure and all that it entails as the core of their family's culture...including family socioeconomic status, family composition, parent's level of educational attainment, abilities of children and family members, family immigration status, family's religion, family's home and preferred languages, parent's sexual orientation, and the way that a family classifies its race and ethnicity (NAEYC, 2010, pg. 1).”

Culture influences every aspect of child development and shapes children's early learning experiences. Families' cultures guide their child-rearing practices and expectations (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). It follows that children's cultural and family socialization practices should be consistently integrated into early childhood program practice to provide high-quality early care and education (Gonzalez-Mena, 2010; Grant & Ray, 2013).

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1. Teacher Reflection

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

2. Intentional Decision-Making and Practice

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

3. Strength-Based Perspective

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

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

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

To complete the checklist, please select one of the following responses for each question:

- **Met** – Your program is culturally competent in this area and it is demonstrated by implementation of the objective for/by all teachers, classrooms, children, and families; and staff reflects on and discusses this practice as part of on-going professional development.
- **In Progress** – You have previously reflected on and/or completed the Pathways cultural competence checklist and designated areas for improvement. A culturally competent program improvement plan is in place (e.g., implementing strategies described in the checklist) and staff is currently working to improve in designated areas.
- **Not Met** – At this time, your program is not implementing culturally competent practices for this area.

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Program Name:

Administrator/Staff Completing Checklist:

Date Checklist Started:

Date Checklist Completed:

Program Checklist¹

Concept 1: “Children are nested in families.”				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
—	—	—	1. Review and discuss Concept 1 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.	
—	—	—	2. Know the primary caregivers for the children in your program and do not assume they are mothers and fathers.	- At the beginning of the year ask caregivers to provide this information as part of the enrollment process - Change enrollment forms from <i>Mother/Father</i> to <i>Parent/Guardian</i>.
—	—	—	3. Encourage two-way communication with families by (a) coordinating informal gatherings at the program, (b) utilizing drop-off and pick-up times as opportunities to communicate, (c) agreeing upon effective modes of communication	- Notes, phone calls, e-mails - Developing a family or parent council - Hosting family-themed events such as a Carnival Night or Pancake Breakfast
—	—	—	4. Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs; they should not solely be recipients of information	- Individually and collectively parents can offer suggestions about goals and expectations for their children during meetings that takes place during the work day as well as outside of normal business hours - Caregiver-teacher conferences are structured so

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				that information is exchanged such that caregivers can make recommendations. • Plan ahead to address language barriers by ensuring that all materials are translated in advance • Recruiting family-volunteers to serve as mentors/guides to families who are in their first year of a new program.
—	—	—	5. Coordinate with classroom teachers to provide families with information and resources about topics the children are investigating in the program	• During drop-off and pick-up discuss what the child is learning in class and how this information can be integrated into everyday practices at home • Provide parents with examples of children's work.
—	—	—	6. Welcome all interested family and extended family members to meetings, program events, and activities regarding the child.	• Provide caregivers with advance notice about upcoming events, such as an exhibit of the children's art, and ensure that there are opportunities for families with non-traditional work schedules to attend events.
—	—	—	7. Give teachers the time and resources necessary to conduct home visits, if families are comfortable. This will allow teachers to learn from families about children's home environments, interests, early language experiences, preferred learning styles and integrate this information into classroom learning activities.	• At the beginning of the program year, teachers are provided time to visit with families. • Teachers may use the visit to learn from families about their expectations for their children, home language, preferred learning styles, and who the central caregivers at home are for the child. • Teacher may use the visits to learn about the knowledge that families possess, which can shape teachers beliefs about children and families.

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—	—	—	8. Greet all families at drop-off and pick-up throughout the year using non-verbal and verbal communication.	• Greet children and family members by name during drop off and pick up. • Use drop and pick up as a time to tell families how their children are doing in class and hear their feedback and/or questions. • Become more conscious of families' non-verbal communication and allow time for learning cultural rules of non-verbal communication. Integrate what you learn into future non-verbal communications.
Concept 2: "Identify shared goals among families and staff."				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
—	—	—	1. Review and discuss Concept 2 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.	
—	—	—	2. Communicate to staff and families that the goal of the program is to develop a partnership in which each party can learn from the other	• Create a comfortable environment for parent-teacher conferences and make the purpose of it clear. • In addition to teachers updating parents ensure there is time for parents' questions and suggestions because families know their child in a different way and in more settings than teachers. • Be mindful not to make assumptions about parents' level of understanding or interest. • As part of enrollment tell families about the program's goal for a family-staff partnership, and ask them to describe their goals for their child.

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—	—	—	3. Require teachers to identify families' short and long term goals for their children and to align them with classroom objectives and developmentally appropriate practice. Encourage teachers to incorporate families' goals into classroom learning activities where appropriate.	• At the beginning of the program year, teachers discuss families' expectations for their children. • Throughout the year, teachers can update parents about their child's progress towards expectations, any challenges, and receive feedback from families.
—	—	—	4. Discuss with family members differences in childrearing beliefs and identify strategies for negotiating different approaches	• Find colleagues from diverse backgrounds with whom you can discuss the situation because they may be able to offer support • Do not judge families and actively listen when talking with them about their parenting practices. • It is essential that classroom teachers are involved in these discussions.
—	—	—	5. Include families in making decisions related to their children's well being and education, both at the program and classroom level	• Discuss with families how the program works so that they understand the larger context • Provide opportunities for families to give individual and collective feedback about the program and their child's classroom, these discussions could take place during informal and formal meetings where there is a mutual exchange of information • Form and/or invite family members to serve on a decision-making council. • Encourage teachers to include families in decisions related to their children's educational experience in the classroom.
—	—	—	6. Explore and support meaningful ways in which family members can contribute to the learning in the program.	• Ask families to share/talk about the activities that they are interested in participating in with their child, and use this input to inform the ways that you ask them to contribute.

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				• Provide families the option to observe their child's classroom at any time, and keeping in mind that observing is different from serving in the role of helper. • In addition to welcoming family members to serve as helpers provide them with opportunities to organize special events for the classroom.
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Concept 3: "Authentically incorporate cultural traditions and history in the program."				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
—	—	—	1. Review and discuss Concept 3 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.	
—	—	—	2. Highlight the presence of all families and children in the program.	• Hang pictures on the walls of children and families • Highlight their presence in program-wide activities.
—	—	—	3. Invite family members to share information about their cultural backgrounds in the program such as their history, traditions and home language.	• Beginning of the program year includes an opportunity for teachers to conduct home visits to learn more about the families' cultural and socialization practices. Home visits are an opportunity for teachers to learn about more than the tangible aspects of children's culture (e.g., food, music), but also families' core child-rearing goals and lived experiences.
—	—	—	4. Equip the program and classrooms with educational materials such as books, posters, utensils, kitchen and apparel items) that reflect value for diverse languages, family	• Include materials that reflect the children and families served in the program. Materials should present cultural groups in the varied roles that individuals hold in society rather than

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			compositions, ethnicities, and cultures.	stereotypical portrayals of a cultural group.
—	—	—	5. Encourage families to share artifacts, music, stories, or other culturally-relevant information with the program and with their children's teachers. Ensure that teachers are inviting and working with families to incorporate these resources in the classroom.	• Host a family fun day where families are asked to bring materials and/or share stories about their family traditions and culture. • Include pictures and stories from the family fun day in the classroom.
—	—	—	6. Represent relevant historical events and traditions of children, families, and their communities in the program	• Set up a family-based classroom museum and ask families to contribute artifacts. • Throughout the year rotate artifacts and take pictures of them to assemble a portfolio. • Hold an end-of-the year celebration where one activity includes a presentation of the classroom's portfolio.
—	—	—	7. Incorporate into your program's curriculum nursery rhymes, songs, extended vocabulary, and early literacy skills that originate from and are commonly practiced in the cultures represented in your program and community.	• Stories and traditions that are shared during a family fun day can be aligned with in the curriculum so the stories reinforce concepts and ideas that the children are learning in class. For example, the story of Br'er Rabbit, which is drawn from the African American oral tradition, can be used to teach about pro-social behaviors.

Concept 4: "Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child's life (e.g., school and home)."				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
—	—	—	1. Review and discuss Concept 4 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.	

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—	—	—	2. Invite families to define their ethnicity, family composition, or culture; do not assume based upon appearances.	As part of the enrollment process families are given the opportunity to provide their racial/ethnic background, home language, child's central caregivers at home, if they chose.
—	—	—	3. Equip classrooms with appropriate instructional resources such as books, toys, and bulletin boards that expose children to role models from their own and other cultural, ethnic, and non-traditional family backgrounds.	Instructional resources and materials in the room show examples of individuals from all cultural backgrounds engaged in diverse occupations and activities.
—	—	—	4. Recruit role models from diverse cultural backgrounds to visit or volunteer in the program. Role-models may come from the community or may be family members of children in the program.	Invite children's family members to participate in the classroom by telling the class about their occupations and interests.
—	—	—	5. Establish relationships in the community that are mutually beneficial.	- Programs help community efforts - Community leaders participate and serve as role models to children in programs.

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Concept 5: “Individuals’ and institutions’ practices are embedded in culture.”				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
—	—	—	1. Review and discuss Concept 5 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.	
—	—	—	2. Encourage staff, families, and children to learn about each other’s racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds by having a variety of year-round, program-wide activities.	- Activities could be coordinated with children’s teachers and could include: - Developing a program-wide international cookbook - Hosting musical and dance performances that represent the diverse backgrounds of families in the program.
—	—	—	3. Provide teachers the time and resources necessary to interact with children and families outside of the program setting and in the communities where they live	- Teachers conduct home visits - Teachers participate in local community activities such as, family fun day at the neighborhood park.

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Concept 6: “Ensure decisions and policies embrace home languages and dialects.”				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
—	—	—	1. Review and discuss Concept 6 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.	
—	—	—	2. Establish a language policy that embraces children’s home language and determines a set of goals for children	Bilingualism for all children.
—	—	—	3. Provide translational and interpretation resources to program staff. Also, seek out opportunities to recruit and retain qualified individuals that reflect the background(s) of the children and families served as well as the broader community.	- In preparation for families’ interactions with the program, ensure that materials in the necessary language(s) are available (keep in mind that some families may not be literate and will need opportunities to talk with staff about their child and the program). - Include program staff in the process of translation and interpretation because this is an opportunity for them to build rapport with children’s families.
—	—	—	4. Ensure staff and families are familiar with the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting children’s home languages. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.	Explain why things are done a certain way in the classroom and/or program.
—	—	—	5. Use children’s home language for multiple learning purposes, not just in giving directions or managing behavior	Label objects in the classroom using English and children’s home language.
—	—	—	6. Find ways to communicate with children and families in their home language	Recruit family-volunteers, who ideally are bilingual, to serve as mentors to families whose children are newly enrolled.
—	—	—	7. Encourage children to speak their home	Aim to have staff member(s) that are fluent

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			language to other children, staff, or parents from the same backgrounds.	in the home language of children enrolled in the program/classroom, and invite children's families to participate in classroom activities that draw on the knowledge of the children's home language. • Linguistic diversity is an opportunity for all of the children in the classroom to become dual language learners.
—	—	—	8. Provide opportunities for children to learn in their home language	• Book reading • Small groups • Personal stories
—	—	—	9. Correctly pronounce and know how to spell each child's name.	• Greet children and families name at pick-up and drop-off. • Refer to children by name during classroom interactions with the teacher(s) and classmates. • Correctly spell children's names as part of classroom displays and in communication to families.
—	—	—	10. Make available in the program, books, tapes/CDs, songs, print, and other materials in children's home languages to staff, children, and families.	

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Concept 7: “Ensure policies and practices embrace and respect families’ cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs toward learning.”				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
—	—	—	1. Review and discuss Concept 7 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.	
—	—	—	2. Identify families’ short and long term goals for their children in collaboration with teachers. Align families’ goals with curricula and developmentally appropriate practice. Incorporate families’ goals into program curricula where appropriate.	As part of enrollment discuss families’ learning and developmental goals for their children and provide them with information about how the curriculum can be used to support these goals.
—	—	—	3. Make clear to staff and families the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting diversity and addressing bias. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.	- Provide families with information about their child’s progress toward short and long term goals - On-going professional development where staff learn about families’ culture and beliefs regarding early childhood development and education.
—	—	—	4. Share strategies and ideas with staff on how the program can support children’s identity, honor home language, and address issues of bias. Use your staff as a resource for ideas on how to address issues of race/ethnicity, language, family composition and culture in the program.	- Provide materials and allow opportunities for staff to discuss topics around race/ethnicity, bias, language, cultural identity, and the like (see QUALITYstarsNY tool kit for guidance on how to structure these discussions and materials that can be used). - Staff that have opportunities to discuss and learn about each other’s culture will be better equipped to support children and strategize about cultural competence improvements in the program.
—	—	—	5. Work together with staff to create program activities that integrate appreciation and respect for diversity	- Songs - Stories - Finger plays

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				• Rhymes
—	—	—	6. Collaborate regularly with staff and families on developing a program environment that reflects an appreciation for diversity.	• Develop a collage of heroes from cultures represented in the program • Display flags of all countries represented in the program • Create learning settings used by different cultures
—	—	—	7. Review all forms and documents with a group of diverse staff and family members to ensure they are free from bias.	• Develop a committee of family, staff, and community members whose responsibility is to ensure that the program's environment, forms, policies, and practices are culturally-sensitive and reflect a value for diversity.
—	—	—	8. Include the diverse range of families your program serves in the discussion and decision-making of program policies and practices.	• Hold meetings during non-business hours • Develop rapport with families and learn about their concerns and questions. Involve them in decision-making regarding their concerns. • Explain to families how the program and/or organization works so that they have a broader perspective and can offer input beyond their child's experience.

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Concept 8: “Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping and bias through intentional teaching.”				
Met	In Progress	Not Met	Indicator	Implementation Examples
_____	_____	_____	1. Review and discuss Concept 8 of Teacher Checklist with teachers in the program.	
_____	_____	_____	2. Provide professional development opportunities to staff on countering stereotypes and bias through intentional teaching	• Allow staff opportunities to talk about their own cultural backgrounds and ask questions of each other • Educate staff about cultural traditions of children and families served and include members of various cultural, family compositions, and racial backgrounds to participate in these discussions • Program leadership serve as advocates for antibias environments.
_____	_____	_____	3. Invite role models across various language, cultural, and racial backgrounds to lead program activities with children. It is important for children and staff not to associate one single language, race, family composition, or culture as the most powerful.	• Invite families and community members to discuss their funds of knowledge (e.g., expertise and assets that they use in daily life) and/or occupation. • Invite family members to participate to be involved in opportunities that are visible to children such as taking a the lead in planning and carrying out a family fun day as well as roles that are less visible to children such as serving on a parent advisory board. • Invite families to give feedback on family engagement in order to provide opportunities for increased and sustained involvement.

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_____	_____	_____	4. Guide staff in recognizing stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, family composition, and cultural groups	• Provide examples and non-examples of classrooms/programs that counter stereotypes with pictures of men/women and individuals/families from diverse racial/ethnic/family composition backgrounds in varied jobs, include commercial and homemade books that are written in children's home language and reference the cultural experiences of individuals from different backgrounds • Correct- if applicable- any misperceptions staff may have toward other groups.
_____	_____	_____	5. Encourage staff to help children recognize stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, family composition, and cultural groups; support staff in helping children dispel- if applicable- any misperceptions they may hold toward other groups.	• Programs that have individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds in all levels of positions will be better positioned than one that does not have diversity in staff roles to recognize and correct misperceptions and bias. • If/when instances of bias or stereotypic imaging arise discuss with children why this is problematic and guide them in a discussion about alternative points of view.
_____	_____	_____	6. Intervene if a staff member or child displays a biased response to another staff member or child. Ask staff to intervene if children in their classrooms display a biased response to another child or staff member.	• Teach children that words as well as actions can be hurtful. • Try to respond to bias situations so that all of the children involved see the teacher's response to it. • In addition to the perpetrator be sure to respond to the child who was hurt in a timely manner. • Have the children brainstorm about ways that they can support each other and prevent

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				a biased situation from happening again, and these “rules of respect” may be posted in the classroom.
_____	_____	_____	7. Encourage staff to support each other and themselves in face of bias	• Be conscious of stereotypical or biased language and speak out against it, • Institute policy for staff to report and resolve instances of bias. • Assist staff in teaching children how they can support one another in face of bias.

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