



Cultural Diversity in the Child Care Setting

OUR COUNTRY is made up of people from many cultures. Some are new arrivals while others have lived in the country for generations or even centuries! As we focus our attention and energy on child development, establishing a culture of love and equal opportunity for all should be at the top of the curriculum. Childcare providers have an opportunity to set the standard for cultural inclusiveness.

Cultural diversity in childcare provides a range of opportunities for children and families to celebrate differences by creating an understanding and appreciation for different cultures, racial and ethnic groups within our community. It is one aspect of diversity, which also embraces differences in gender identity, abilities, age, and social and economic backgrounds.

Each family that enters a childcare environment has its own unique combination of history and family type, as well as racial, ethnic, cultural and religious beliefs, experiences and ways of doing things. These experiences affect the foods they eat, the holidays they celebrate, their language, values, customs and the way they live.

A caregiver's acceptance of the very



things that make a child and her family unique will communicate to each child that she is a valuable and worthy person. People who are treated with respect and who are taught to have good feelings about themselves, learn to respond to others in warm, loving and accepting ways. It's important for caregivers to take some time to reflect on personal behaviors and attitudes and how they communicate with children and families.

By ignoring young children's awareness of these differences, we as professional caregivers unintentionally contribute to the prejudice and stereotypes children learn. In fact, young children's racial beliefs are heavily influenced by their environments. Silence about race does not prevent children from noticing racial

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Farmer Fran's Fun Facts




Greens

- Cooking greens are leafy green vegetables, which are among the most widely grown vegetables. They are also known as potherbs and most varieties can be used either fresh or cooked.
- The term "leafy greens" refers to vegetables like lettuce, cabbage, endive, escarole, spinach, collards, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, Swiss chard and bok choy. Many varieties belong to the cabbage family. Some varieties of greens, like kale and collards, taste sweeter after a frost.
- Cook collards, Swiss chard, bok choy and spinach for a mild or sweeter flavor. Cook arugula, kale and mustard greens for a peppery flavor. Sauté collard greens with garlic, onions, tomatoes and olive oil. Simmer greens in low-sodium chicken broth until tender and wilted. Stir-fry bok choy with carrots, corn and red peppers for a colorful side dish.
- Avoid greens that have brown, yellow, spotted, wilted or slimy leaves. Store greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for two to five days. Wash greens thoroughly before use.
- Two cups of raw greens makes about a ½ cup cooked. Most cooked greens are an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin K.

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Cultural Diversity in the Child Care Setting

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and other differences; instead, silence inhibits them from asking questions and having meaningful conversations. This is an especially important issue in classrooms lacking racial and ethnic diversity.

Children of today are growing up differently than the previous generations. The United States has become more diverse than ever. Children interact with children of different ethnic groups in schools, neighborhoods and social events. Our society and relationships are more racially mixed than ever before. A childcare provider plays a vital role in shaping a child's perspective by determining what they see and hear.

When planning and preparing an early learning program, caregivers should consider what can be done to develop an environment of inclusiveness:

- How do the toys, games, puzzles, books and posters represent the variety of cultures and lifestyles present in our society?
- Are there any stereotypes present in the childcare environment? Stereotypes are an oversimplified picture or idea which usually ridicules or seeks to limit the potential of a person or group based on sex, ethnicity, origin or family.
- Are children of different backgrounds, boys as well as girls, represented as equally strong, active, intelligent and successful?
- Do materials show the variety of family types that exist in society?

Not all families practice the same values and beliefs. Caregivers who are open to new perspectives develop a greater understanding of home cultures which enhances open communication with families.

- Let parents know that you want to understand their lifestyles and preferences so that you can plan activities for the children.
- Avoid books that only teach children to aspire to one set of values. Instead, include books and toys that reflect the cultures of all the children served in the childcare.
- Use books and parents as resources, learn games and



activities of children of other cultures served in your childcare.

- Serve foods related to specific cultures. Ask parents to provide special family recipes and meal preferences.
- Holidays and special occasions can add some fun and spice to everyday life. Discuss with parents dates for their celebrated holidays, birthdays and other special occasions. Balance family and childcare celebrations to fit together so children do not become so over-tired or over excited that it spoils the fun for everyone.
- Allow parents to share holiday traditions and incorporate those in the planning. If holidays overlap with your own holidays and traditions, modify your plans after the children are gone.

We all know that education starts at home. Childcare providers have an opportunity to help children develop a high level of understanding, appreciation and respect for individual differences in themselves and others. Young children model the behavior of older children and adults. Remember that what is not included in the environment can be as powerful of a contributor to attitudes as what is included in the environment.

— Vicki Leslie
Child Health and Nutrition Specialist

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Teach an Attitude of Gratitude

GRATITUDE is the awareness, acknowledgment and appreciation of positive things in life, even when they are small. Studies suggest that children who are more grateful appear to be happier and more optimistic, have better social support, are more satisfied with their school, family, community, friends and themselves. People who actively express gratitude give more emotional support to others and tend to be more engaged in activities to take care of their physical health by eating well and exercising. This leads to higher energy levels, better sleep and a stronger immune system or the ability to fight off illness or infection.

At a time when many of us are struggling to adapt to a new normal, practicing gratitude and teaching children to be grateful is more important than ever. It's never too early to start; when caregivers tune into an infant's needs and curiosities and are able to satisfy the infant patiently with love, they're planting the seeds for gratitude to develop. As children grow, teach them to say "thank you" and help them to perform small acts of kindness. There are many things children can do to show appreciation for other people, such as sharing a toy with a friend, coloring a picture for a loved one or sending a thank you note.

MODEL GRATITUDE

Caregivers should make an effort to role model an appreciative attitude and behavior by being thoughtful, cooperative, helpful and giving.

- **Say "Thank you."** Whether you thank the store clerk or you thank a child for clearing the table, make sure you're thanking people often.
- **Talk about gratitude.** Make it a point to share what you're grateful for. Even when you have a rough day or something bad happens, point out that there's still a lot to feel grateful for. Instead of complaining about the rain, talk about being grateful that the plants are being watered so you'll have food to eat.
- **Express gratitude.** When children see you writing "thank you" notes or sending a token of



appreciation to someone, you'll teach them to do the same. Make it a habit to express gratitude every day. Here are some examples of rituals you might establish:

- Everyone takes a turn, during a meal time each day, to share one thing they loved about their day.
- At bedtime or nap time, children say three things they feel grateful for.
- During the car ride to school, child care or back home, have everyone thank someone else in the car for something.

To foster a deeper sense of gratitude, ask children questions. Researchers from University of North Carolina encourage posing questions that can help children experience all four gratitude components: notice, think, feel and do.

What do you have in your life to be grateful for? Are you grateful for any people in your life? What do you enjoy about this food that was prepared for you? What does it feel like inside to recognize someone being kind? Is there a way to show your gratitude by doing something kind in return? Does the feeling you have make you want to share this feeling by giving to someone else?

Teaching gratitude to children is a first step in helping mold kind, empathetic people and helps our world be a better place for all.

Sources: Greatergood.berkeley.edu and verywellmind.com

West African Inspired Turkey Stew

Olive or canola oil	2 Tbsp	Chickpeas, rinsed and drained	1 (15 oz) can
Onion, diced	1	Turkey meat, leftover, cooked	3 cups
Ginger, fresh, peeled and minced	1 Tbsp	Tomatoes, diced	1 (14.5 oz) can
Salt	½ tsp	Sweet potato, peeled and diced	1 large
Garlic, minced	2 cloves	Collard greens	2 cups
Curry powder	2 tsp	Brown rice	5 cups
Smoked paprika	1 tsp	Cilantro, chopped (optional)	½ cup
Cayenne (optional)	to taste		
Tomato paste	⅓ cup		
Peanut butter	⅔ cup		
Chicken broth	2 cups		
Coconut milk	1 cup		

1. In a large saucepan, sauté onion, ginger and salt in oil until soft. Add garlic, spices and tomato paste and cook about 5 minutes, until fragrant.
2. Mix in peanut butter, broth and coconut milk. Add chickpeas, cooked turkey meat, tomatoes, sweet potatoes and greens. Bring to a boil and then simmer for 40–45 minutes until sweet potatoes are very soft and stew is thickened.
3. Serve stew over rice, top with cilantro, if desired.

Yield: 10 servings

Meets requirement for vegetable, whole grain-rich and meat/meat alternate

— Adapted from *nutmeggannony.com*

Screamin' Mean Greens

Onions, chopped	2	Greens, assorted	5 pounds
Vegetable oil	2 Tbsp	(Collard, kale, mustard and turnip)	
Jalapeno, seeded and minced (optional)	2	Smoked turkey wing	1
		Salt & pepper	to taste

1. Using any combination of greens, tear off tough stems and wash well in a sink full of water to remove all grit.
2. In a very large pan, combine onions, oil, jalapeno and 2 cups of water. Bring to a boil over high heat.
3. Gradually stir in greens, allowing each batch to wilt before adding more. Add turkey wing and season with salt and pepper, cover and reduce heat to medium-low.
4. Cook, stirring occasionally, just until the greens are tender, about 30 minutes. Remove the turkey wing, discard skin and bones and chop the turkey meat, returning it to the pot. Use a slotted spoon to transfer greens to a serving dish.

Yield: 12 servings

Meets requirement for vegetable

— *Patti LaBelle Cuisine; Recipes to Sing About*

ACTIVITY CORNER Yoga Pose of the Month



RECLINED SPINAL TWIST

At this time of year when food is at the forefront of many celebrations, give your digestive organs a rinse with this cleansing and detoxifying pose.

- 1 Begin by lying flat on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor.
- 2 Keep your right knee bent in toward your chest while you straighten your left leg on the floor.
- 3 Holding on to your right knee with your left hand, begin to bring it over across your body toward the floor.
- 4 Open your right arm out in the opposite direction along the floor, turning your head to look toward it.
- 5 Take many long deep breaths and relax into the pose, feeling the tension melt away.
- 6 Return to starting position, both feet flat on the floor and repeat on the other side.

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Food Q. What's a turkey's favorite dessert?
Funny A. Peach gobbler!