

A Culturally Responsive Approach to Implementing a Curriculum

Narrator: Welcome to this presentation of the 15-minute In-service Suite on "A Culturally Responsive Approach to Implementing a Curriculum." This suite describes how education staff in all program settings can implement curriculum in a way that is responsive to children's and families' cultures. The suite also focuses on how home visitors can use a culturally responsive approach to implementing a curriculum in partnership with families.

The Framework for Effective Practice, or House Framework, helps us think about the elements needed to support children's preparation and readiness for school. The elements are the foundation, the pillars, and the roof. When connected to one another, they form a single structure that surrounds the family in the center, because as we implement each component of the house in partnership with parents and families, we foster children's learning and development. A culturally responsive approach to implementing a curriculum is an essential part of the left pillar, Implementing Research-Based Curriculum and Teaching Practices. Every individual is rooted in culture, and culture gives us a sense of belonging to a social group. When we implement curriculum in ways that respond to children's cultures, we encourage the development of children's identity and foster a sense of belonging in the learning environment.

This presentation is one in a series of modules designed to help education staff, including teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors, implement a research-based curriculum responsively, building on children's and families' cultures and on children's development and interests.

Let's start by defining "culture." Culture can be described as a set of beliefs, values, and practices shared by a group of people. It often includes specific artifacts, food, customs, music, and traditions. Cultural responsiveness requires that we begin by understanding the role of culture in our own lives. Some parts of our culture are easy to see and hear, like our clothes, food, language, and music. Others are less visible and less straightforward to describe, such as our beliefs about child rearing, health, and family relationships. People differ from each other within cultures, too. People who belong to a cultural group may share some beliefs, values, and practices. However, each family makes decisions about the values and beliefs they hold and how they behave, and each of us has choices about the extent to which we participate and pass on the beliefs, values, and practices. Our cultures contribute to our beliefs, values, and practices. For example, the ways we care for children and our goals for children's learning and development. Culture also influences how children interact with adults, manage their emotions, show respect, or engage with stories or songs. Cultural responsiveness begins with recognizing the role that culture plays in our own lives, including how it impacts our work with children and families.

Key components of a culturally responsive approach to implementing a curriculum include learning from families and then using that information to modify learning environments and experiences and to engage effectively with children and families. Learning from families is at

the heart of culturally responsive practices. Learning from families helps education staff understand the families' expectations, values, languages, and ways of being. [Group talking]

Woman: For culture, I would say to be very respectful and to ask a lot of questions. So, starting with this family, I wasn't sure, but I always asked, "Is this OK?" "Would you like me to do this?" "Do you celebrate this?" "Do you talk about this?"

Narrator: Then, in partnership with families, education staff use what they've learned to enhance and modify the curriculum's learning experiences to more directly build on children's and families' cultures. Implementing a curriculum responsively means including the backgrounds and home experiences of all the children and providing children with opportunities to learn about other cultures.

Teacher: Using home language with them will help them to be more comfortable to be in the school with us, to be in the school with other children so they feel they are at home, and they feel they are welcome. [Teacher talking to child] [Child talking to teacher]

Narrator: Finally, a culturally responsive approach also means that educators provide learning environments and materials that reflect children's and families' cultures and languages. For home visitors, this means partnering with families to use materials and create environments that promote the families' culture and languages. Cultural responsiveness is an ongoing and essential aspect of implementing a curriculum. We learn from families about their culture and use what we learn as we interact with families and children. We also support learning experiences and environments that build on families' cultures. At the same time, we must be aware of how our own cultural backgrounds impact our work.

We hope you are inspired to implement your curriculum in a way that is culturally responsive to the children and families you work with. For more information and more ideas, see the complete 15-minute Suite on "A Culturally Responsive Approach to Implementing a Curriculum," and take a look at our tips and tools and helpful resources.