



## Early Childhood Iowa Stakeholder's Alliance Cultural Competencies

### Introduction:

Two guiding principles of ECI are broad-based representation and respect. These principles require a commitment to embracing diversity and being intentional about fostering diversity. We are working to promote success for all children and families and to build an early childhood system that is responsive to all families and children in Iowa.

Diversity includes the characteristics that make each individual unique. It includes differences such as the following:

- Age
- Culture
- Disabilities
- Education
- Family Mobility (transient, military, migrant)
- Family Structure (same sex couples, single, adoptive, grandparents)
- Gender
- Languages
- Multi-racial
- Race/Ethnicity
- Regionality
- Religion
- Socio-economic Status/Class
- Talented and Gifted

Culture is the values, beliefs, linguistics, customs, practices, expression, and patterns of thinking and styles of communication that shape our behaviors, expectations and reactions. It is shared by a group of people and expressed through behaviors in response to the specific needs of its members. It goes beyond race and color to include the diversity characteristics listed above, physical characteristics and groups with similar values, experiences and orientations/preferences.

Cultural competence is "a set of congruent practice skills, attitudes, policies and structures, which come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in the context of cultural difference" (Cross, 1998).

We affirm the five elements of cultural competence for both individuals and organizations (Cross, 1998):

**Individual:**

1. Awareness and acceptance of differences
2. Awareness of own cultural values
3. Understanding dynamics of differences
4. Development of cultural knowledge
5. Ability to adapt practice to the cultural context of children and families

**Organizational:**

1. Valuing diversity
2. Cultural self-assessment
3. Managing the dynamics of differences
4. Institutionalization of cultural knowledge
5. Adaptation to diversity in policies, values, structure and service

ECI also affirms the eight components of culturally competent work (Chaisson-Cardenas, 2004):

1. **Knowledge of Self:** Awareness of one's own cultural background and how it influences the perception of what is "normal" and what is not is the first and most important step in becoming culturally competent. It is also important that organizations, and the individuals within them, know where their assets, biases and blind spots are.
2. **Knowledge of Community:** Awareness of the respective cultural groups, how they differ from the dominant culture, how they differ internally, and how they differ from non-mainstream cultural groups. Therefore, history, cultural beliefs, vulnerabilities, strengths, demographics, and contextual realities are a central focus.
3. **Personal Involvement:** To what degree a professional demonstrates reciprocity to a given ethnic, racial or cultural community. Much of the cross-cultural literature considers personal involvement as one of the highly effective methods of both learning about and showing respect to communities with diverse populations.
4. **Resources and Linkages:** To what extent an organization has the ability to effectively utilize both formal and informal networks within a given cultural, racial or ethnic community. Such linkages with the various resources are often vital outlets for personnel recruitment, community education, and for obtaining demographic, theoretical, or philosophical perspectives of a given cultural community. Moreover, with the shrinking of formal service systems over recent years, natural networks are often necessary to provide a more individualized array of services to more completely meet the needs of a given client.
5. **Staffing:** The organization works on its recruitment and retention of a diverse staff population and the preparation of existing staff. Training activities are convened by the organization, and the various activities are generally sanctioned by the organization to keep staff abreast of cultural issues in their service area.
6. **Service Delivery, Intervention and Investigation:** The professional is aware of and uses appropriate language and culturally relevant methodology.

7. **Organizational Policies and Procedures:** The organization practices written policies which reflect culturally competent principles. (These culturally progressive efforts are often a result of a given leadership style, staff personalities, or even fads which can change or erode over time. Therefore, one important aspect of policy is to uphold good individual and administrative practices.)
  
8. **Reaching Out to Communities:** The organization conducts outreach efforts that may prove helpful to communities with diverse populations. When appropriately engaged, culturally-sanctioned helpers, information brokers, leaders, supports, and ultimately networks can comprise highly effective systems of intervention.

**Culture, Diversity and Equity** (California Early Childhood Educator Project, 2009)

Key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture shapes values, beliefs, world view, experiences, and behavior</li> <li>• Cultural values and beliefs influence child-rearing practices, teaching practices, and family-school interactions</li> <li>• Culturally responsive practices provide meaningful learning experiences and support a sense of identity, belonging, and self esteem</li> </ul>
Dispositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is aware of how one’s values, beliefs, and world view influence one’s perceptions of the values, beliefs, and world views of others</li> <li>• Attends to and respects cultural and family beliefs, values, and practices, and diverse perspectives and values related to all differences</li> <li>• Strives for effective, respectful, and culturally responsive communication and practices with children and their families</li> </ul>
Performance Areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Respect for All Differences</li> <li>B. Culturally Responsive Approaches</li> <li>C. Culture and Language Learning and Development Foundations</li> <li>D. Inclusive Learning Environments</li> <li>E. Observation and Assessment of Young Dual-Language Learners</li> </ol>

**A. Respect for All Differences**

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
Includes all families' cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attends to the culturally diverse needs of children and families.</li> <li>• Works proactively to help children and families transition to early childhood setting; communications with family members to ensure that both their children and they have the tools and information to be full participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops and facilitates the implementation of policies and practices that promote the inclusion of all children and families in the program and facilitates accommodations to address the unique cultural perspectives and needs of <b>all</b> families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocates in the broader community for the inclusion of the full range of diversity found in children and families in early childhood programs.</li> </ul>
Involves family members in planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in the planning of learning activities that are inclusive and respectful of all families.</li> <li>• Plans curriculum and activities collaboratively with all families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates the participation of all families and staff in curriculum planning throughout a program.</li> <li>• Collaborates with families and staff to determine policies that support the inclusion of families and staff in planning program services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides and explains rationale for policies, practices, and procedures that are representative and inclusive of all families in the early childhood setting.</li> </ul>
Receptive to all family concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports family concerns in a timely manner to supervisor</li> <li>• Communicates with family members regularly to understand each family's current concerns</li> <li>• Is sensitive and responsive to issues or special circumstances that may arise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works with family when the family is in need of special assistance and partners with culturally and linguistically appropriate outside support services to ensure that the family receives needed services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works to create service partnerships for families, ensuring that families have culturally and linguistically appropriate, comprehensive support services available to them.</li> </ul>

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers</b>	<b>Management and Professional Development Staff</b>	<b>Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers</b>
Formalize family feedback system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages family members to engage in formal feedback process.</li> <li>Gathers input and feedback from families, following the program's formal procedures for collecting such information.</li> <li>Learns to work with interpreters/translators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops and facilitates implementation of protocols for families to provide formal input and feedback to the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guides educators in early childhood programs on culturally and linguistically appropriate processes for collecting and using input and feedback from families.</li> <li>Evaluates the effectiveness with which programs gather and use information from families.</li> </ul>
Staff preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participates in staff orientation sessions to develop skills and knowledge in being respectful to diverse families. Applies skills and knowledge gained from orientation sessions in order to be respectful to all families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides orientation for early childhood educators that address organizational commitment to respect and inclusively serve all families. Creates professional development activities for programs in how to prepare staff to be respectful and inclusive of diverse families in early childhood settings.</li> </ul>	

**B. Culturally Responsive, Gender Fair Approaches**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers</b>	<b>Management and Professional Development Staff</b>	<b>Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers</b>
Language adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists with the use of interpreters and translators, as appropriate.</li> <li>Uses interpreters and translators effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes the effective use of interpreters or translators in the early childhood program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designs, recommends, and implements training for interpreters and translators in early childhood settings.</li> <li>Ensures that translations are accurate.</li> </ul>

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures that all parents are provided with complete and accurate information as well as discuss options that affect their children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops and mandates translation certification (medical, legal, etc.).</li> </ul>
Family involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacts with families in a way that encourages their participation.</li> <li>Obtains information about families' child rearing practices and goals for children and shares that information with staff.</li> <li>Promotes the participation of families in the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses family information to guide the development of program policies.</li> <li>Promotes the participation of families in the program.</li> <li>Provides opportunities for family members to be involved and learn about ways to support their child at home.</li> <li>Guides early educators in strategies to gather information from families and apply that information to practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop program designs that facilitate participation of all families in early childhood settings.</li> </ul>
Family area welcoming and inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcomes all families during visits and at drop off and pick up times.</li> <li>Sets up the learning environment as a welcoming place for families.</li> <li>Is consistently available to all families to engage in conversations and listen to their concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops program policies and practices that create a welcoming atmosphere for all families. Invites family members to plan and carry out activities that reflect their home and culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates to the broader community the importance of inclusion and involvement of all families in early childhood settings.</li> </ul>

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides support and feedback on ways to engage in communication practices and design environments that help <b>all</b> families feel welcome and comfortable in the early childhood settings.</li> </ul>	
Communication practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates respectfully with families.</li> <li>Demonstrates the understanding of the cultural implications of roles and expectations for early educator and family relationships.</li> <li>Adapts to families' culturally based communication practices.</li> <li>Articulates and implements concepts on intercultural communication, including nonverbal communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes policies and practices that invite open communication with all families.</li> <li>Promotes and solicits input from all families.</li> <li>Researches and teaches early educators about cultural differences in communication and practices ways to engage families in open, respectful communication.</li> </ul>	
Family-teacher relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attends and contributes to family-teacher meetings.</li> <li>Uses multiple strategies for building relationships with families. For example, sharing observations and documentation with families or being available to meet when requested.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops program policies and practices that foster the development of effective family-teacher relationships.</li> </ul>	

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers</b>	<b>Management and Professional Development Staff</b>	<b>Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructs and guides early educators on how to facilitate warm and informative family-teacher relationships that form the basis for the open exchange of cultural information.</li> </ul>	
Inclusive family cultural representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists with designing a family and culturally welcoming environment.</li> <li>Interacts with families formally and informally to ensure that the overall learning environment reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the families and children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborates with early child educators and families to design ways to reflect the families' culture and languages in the governance of the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates conversations among early educators on how to create programs that reflect the cultures and languages of the families and the children served.</li> <li>Promotes understanding about the importance of cultural connections in early childhood settings for young children and their families.</li> </ul>

### **C. Culture and Language for Learning and Development Foundations**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers</b>	<b>Management and Professional Development Staff</b>	<b>Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers</b>
Learning differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows children's lead in supporting learning.</li> <li>Uses widely recognized, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate strategies for addressing learning differences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops and promotes developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate strategies for addressing learning differences.</li> </ul>	



Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researches, teaches, and mentors early childhood educators on strategies that appropriately and effectively meet the diverse learning needs of young children.</li> </ul>	
Interpretation of development within cultural context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists with practices that reflect the cultural context(s) and experiences of the children.</li> <li>• Uses knowledge of children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences to facilitate interactions and learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs program strategies that incorporate knowledge of children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences into the curriculum.</li> <li>• Teaches and mentors early childhood educators to incorporate knowledge of children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences into curriculum.</li> </ul>	
Reflective cultural awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is aware that all early educators and families are individuals who come from different backgrounds and have different beliefs and values.</li> <li>• Reflects on influence of own cultural background and experiences on teaching.</li> <li>• Communicates with early educators and families to understand diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs overall programmatic approach that allows early childhood educators to explore their own cultural perspectives and strengths of the children, families, and community they serve.</li> <li>• Advocates and provides opportunities to early childhood educators.</li> </ul>	

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
Children's identity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds positively to the children's communication about family and self.</li> <li>• Provides experiences that promote positive identity development in young children.</li> <li>• Uses understanding of individual children's life experiences to promote healthy identity formation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops curriculum that promotes children's sense of identity by integrating home culture and language in learning activities and environments.</li> <li>• Informs early childhood educators on the importance of young children's positive identity development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fosters understanding that home culture and language are central to young children's identity development.</li> </ul>
Community cultural input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists with activities that focus on children's cultural and linguistic experiences in the community.</li> <li>• Provides experiences that focus on children's cultural and linguistic experiences in the community and encourages children's families to share roles in the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops curriculum that focuses on children's cultural and linguistic experiences in the community and encourages children's families to share their community roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitors and supports early childhood programs on how to develop curriculum that focuses on children's cultural and linguistic experiences in the community and encourages children's families to share their community roles.</li> </ul>
Anti-bias communication and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follows guidelines on how to engage in anti-bias communication and practices with young children and their families.</li> <li>• Models the implementation of practices to engage and intervene in anti-bias communication with young children and their families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates the implementation of policies that promote anti-bias communication and practices in the program.</li> <li>• Arranges training opportunities for program staff to learn about anti-bias communication and practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides resources to early childhood professionals in anti-bias communication and practices and helps develop a process of self-reflection to inform and support the application.</li> </ul>

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers</b>	<b>Management and Professional Development Staff</b>	<b>Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitors the effectiveness of efforts to promote anti-bias communication.</li> </ul>	

**D. Inclusive Learning Environments**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers</b>	<b>Management and Professional Development Staff</b>	<b>Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers</b>
Visual representation of diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists with placing pictures and other materials in the classroom, including non-traditional gender roles that reflect the diversity of the children.</li> <li>Identifies and uses pictures, books, recordings, food, and other materials that reflect the diversity of children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates resource list of materials that offer developmentally and culturally appropriate recommendations of diversity in early childhood settings.</li> <li>Promotes the use of materials in the program.</li> <li>Assesses the visual representation of diversity in the program.</li> <li>Teaches early childhood professionals about developmentally and culturally appropriate strategies for visually representing young children and families in early education environments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides support and resources to program staff to ensure they are inclusive and welcoming.</li> </ul>

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
Language diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is responsive to children and families who use their home language to communicate.</li> <li>• Creates a learning environment that supports children and families' communication in their home language(s) as well as in English.</li> <li>• Communicates to the children and their families the importance and benefits of learning more than one language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops and facilitates the implementation of program policies and practices that honor and promote communication in the home language of children and families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates with the larger community and informs early childhood educators about the importance of the home language in the learning and development of young dual-language learners.</li> </ul>
Individualized developmental expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists with supporting the learning and development of individual children.</li> <li>• Plans and implements curriculum to support the learning and development of individual children.</li> <li>• Understands the stages of dual language acquisition and scaffolds children's learning.</li> <li>• Integrates different ways of learning and different cultural perspectives into curriculum and instruction through the use of hands-on, visual, and active learning to meet the needs of individual children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates program policies and practices that promote responsiveness to the learning strengths, interests, and needs of individual children.</li> <li>• Facilitates implementation of developmentally, individually, culturally, and linguistically appropriate early childhood practices.</li> <li>• Guides early childhood professionals in developmentally appropriate practice that is responsive to the learning strengths, interests, and needs of individual children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds awareness in the broader community of the importance of developmentally, individually, culturally, and linguistically appropriate early childhood practice.</li> </ul>

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies and uses resources to increase knowledge and understanding of the impact of socioeconomic status, race, religion, class, national origin, disability and gender on children’s learning.</li> <li>• Uses a variety of performance-based assessment tools (e.g., children’s work samples, classroom observation, dictation, interviews, parent input, video clips, audio,) to monitor the progress of each child.</li> </ul>		
Assessments of environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes to the assessment process to determine how environments can be enhanced with an understanding of cultures and languages of the children and families.</li> <li>• Explains to the parents and staff the importance of assessing environments on an ongoing basis to ensure that the cultures and languages of families are reflected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports staff to use the assessment data to continually enhance the environment to reflect the languages and cultures of families.</li> <li>• Builds staff composition reflective of families and community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks appropriate resources and engages families to ensure appropriate application of the knowledge gathered through the assessment of the environment.</li> </ul>

### E. Observation and Assessment of Young Dual-Language Learners

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
Language and literacy assessment instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becomes familiar with some language and literacy assessment instruments, recognizing the importance of assessing young dual-language learners in both the home language and in English.</li> <li>• Participates in planning based on individual assessment information.</li> <li>• Communicates with families in their home language (through an interpreter if needed) and specialist service providers about the interpretation of observation or assessment data, as appropriate.</li> <li>• Provides information to families in their home languages regarding parental consent and confidentiality.</li> <li>• Reflects on personal perspectives or biases when interpreting children’s behavior and learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborates with staff to assess young children’s knowledge and skills in language and literacy in both the home language and English and plan based on individual assessment information.</li> <li>• Uses designated assessment instruments with an understanding of some of the advantages and limitations.</li> <li>• Communicates with families about the value of assessment and its role in supporting children’s learning and development; shares assessment information about individual children with families.</li> <li>• Incorporates input from program staff and families, as appropriate, in the selection of developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, valid, and effective language and literacy assessment instruments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocates in the community and facilitates discussions among early childhood education professionals and families to develop guidelines for the developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive assessment and transition process of young dual- language learners in early education settings.</li> <li>• Informs early childhood educators on how to use assessment information in planning learning opportunities for individual children.</li> <li>• Provides staff development and conducts ongoing program improvement based on language and literacy assessment information.</li> </ul>

Topics	Teachers, Direct Care and Other Front Line Workers	Management and Professional Development Staff	Early Childhood Leaders and Policy Makers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses assessments that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate; focused on all domains of development; conducted over time; and used for the purpose for which it was designed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes collaborative planning based on individual assessment information.</li> <li>• Communicates with families about the program’s approach to assessment.</li> <li>• Informs early childhood educators on how to use assessment information in planning learning opportunities for individual children.</li> </ul>	

**Resources**

- [Iowa Civil Rights Commission](#)
- [Iowa Department of Human Rights](#), Division of Community and Advocacy Services

**Works Cited**

California Early Childhood Educator Project. (2009).

Chaisson-Cardenas, J.-P. (2004). Components of Culturally Competent Work. Iowa Department of Human Rights.

Cross, T. L. (1998, June 11-13). Five Elements of Cultural Competence. *Train the Trainers of Cultural Competence: Knowledge Development and Application* . Orlando, Florida.