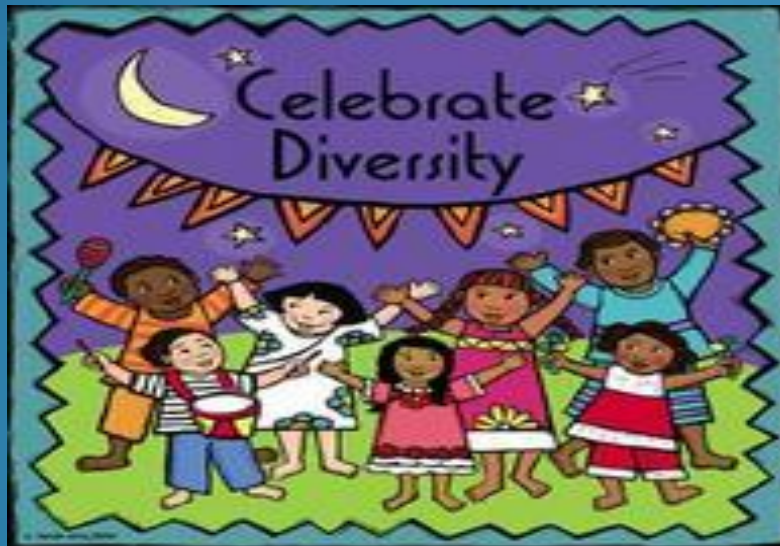


“Cultural Awareness in Authentic Assessment in Early Childhood Ells”



SENSITIVITY EXERCISE: Looking Within Before Looking Out

Typical Family Dinner



- *Family mealtime is one of the most frequent cultural traditions practiced throughout the world. In most cultures the partaking of nourishment with the family is the most important part of the day. This is an exercise developed by noted anthropologist Fred Eriksson to sensitize our awareness to similarities and differences in others and ourselves.*
- *Reflect on your experiences of the typical family dinner in your childhood. Discuss the activities, discussions and foods served during this daily home practice. The following should be included:*
- *Where did you sit?*
- *Provide specific examples of topics discussed during your family dinner.*
- *What were the specific roles of your parent/parents during the family dinner?*
- *What was your role during your family dinner?*
- *Recall if possible a specific dish prepared or your favorite dish prepared.*



- *Share your family dinner with your table partners and create a Venn diagram of your similarities and differences. This information will be used to address the multitude of cultures we have in our schools and how this lens needs to be cross referenced with our use of authentic assessment.*

• Why we assess children?

- We assess to find out where children are in any aspect of their development and learning:
- Physical
- Socio-cultural/linguistic
- Socio-economic
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Health



Authentic Assessment in Early Childhood ELLs



- Early childhood professionals often utilize a wide range of strategies to assess children and guide teaching practices in the classroom, e.g., observational notes, checklists, rating scales, student work samples, and portfolios.
- This type of assessment information is necessary and provides valuable information on each child's performance on the physical, socio-emotional, socio-cultural linguistic and cognitive levels. Moreover, it allows teachers to individualize their program thus addressing each child's unique learning needs.



Cultural Awareness in Authentic Assessment



Questions to Ponder while we do authentic assessment:

- ❖ What do we know about our young Ells and their families? E.g., religious and cultural practices, family rituals, celebrations, academics, etc.
- ❖ What skills and dispositions are young Ells learning from adults in their everyday cultural practices?

- ❖ How do the concepts and skills learned in these activities facilitate intellectual development in our young Ells?
- ❖ How do their everyday conversations in their native and second languages among peers in the classroom affect their academic success?

- How do the answers to these questions help us to perform valid authentic assessment?

SHOW ANSWER



Authentic Assessment in Early Childhood Ells.

We all know that under the pressure of NCLB, all non-native English speakers are required to be assessed for their level of English fluency annually, with little or not attention paid to their existing skills and abilities in their home language. Their prior experiences and learning within their own cultural contexts are not considered as well.

Interchanging Lenses



- *What do we know about our young Ells and their families? E.g., religious and cultural practices, family rituals, celebrations, academics, etc.*
- *Conduct a community study to gather information about religious and cultural practices. For example, in the Fordham section of the Bronx, there is a large community of Vietnamese and Cambodian families. There is one Buddhist Temple and two Seventh Day Adventist Churches. Knowing this information can shed light the value systems of the community in respect to parenting, education, health etc. Reading the bulletin boards at the churches or their newsletter/bulletin can also shed light on family values.*

What skills and dispositions are young Ells learning from adults in their family's everyday cultural practices?

- During your first parent orientation finding out what families do with their children at home, e.g. reading, singing, cooking, chores, etc.
- Do they sing songs to their children from their culture?
- Do they read or recite rhymes or poems to their children in the native language? *In Latino cultures we have “los dichos”-proverbs which guide children's behaviors.*
- Do they themselves read in their native language? Novels, newspapers, magazines, etc. In other words are their homes print rich in their native or second language?
- Do they watch television in their native and second language ?
- (Maldonado & DiBello, in press).



How do the concepts and skills learned in these activities facilitate intellectual development in our young ELLs?

- Naturally certain concepts and skills are learned from these family activities. For example, in the sensitivity exercise you did earlier why were you asked where sat dinner? What was your mother role? Your father's? What chores did you do?
- These are family customs and traditions where children learn about gender, equity, fairness and the social graces.



How do their everyday conversations in their native and second languages among peers in the classroom affect their academic success?

- It is essential for children learning English as a second language to interact with others as much as possible. Talking with their peers is a must.
- Children need to experiment and produce utterances that may be inaccurate, yet reflect normal language development usage. Teachers need to be knowledgeable of second language development and theory.
- Teachers need to remember that parents are the child's first educators, and that as such they need to be seen as partners in their child's education. While the parents might not be able to provide access to English, they can continue to help develop the child's thinking in the family's native language.

(Genishi and Dyson, p. 41.)

- **What to look for in your observations for authentic assessment:**

- **Child engages/interacts effectively in class discussions and conversations with peers**
- **Child responds to questions clearly and debates issues in their native and second language**
- **Child uses age-appropriate vocabulary**
- **Child speaks comfortably in small groups**
- **Child expresses personal needs (toileting, second helpings, etc.)**
- **Child dramatizes/ gestures, draws pictures to show their needs**

- (Garcia, 2002)

Bibliography

Garcia, E. (2002). Student Cultural Diversity: Understanding and Meeting the Challenge. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

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Maldonado, N. S. and DiBello, L. (in press). Hispanic American Children and their Families. Maryland: Association for Childhood Education International Publications.