Building children’s cultural competence

This document provides ideas to help plan a range of learning opportunities to develop children’s cultural competence throughout the year. It is important that plans remain flexible and open to change in response to children’s emerging interests and interactions with other children, and family and community members. It is also important that teachers purposefully introduce ideas to broaden children’s understanding and appreciation of diversity.

When selecting experiences, teachers can avoid presenting cultural stereotypes or practices as exotic by:

- sharing and discussing images, stories and information about both the traditional and contemporary lives of diverse peoples
- drawing attention to the strengths of cultural practices and why these practices are valued
- finding out about and respecting protocols, e.g. identifying who can share a cultural story, ways to appropriately discuss particular cultural practices and whether cultural objects can be handled.

To help children build connections between their own experiences and new learning, teachers can draw on family and community members, who can contribute to promoting learning about diversity in authentic and respectful ways. Documenting children’s learning about diversity throughout the year (e.g. using photographs and captions or recording learning stories) also helps make connections, as children can revisit past learning, make links to new learning and share this knowledge with their families over time.

Focus: How are people the same and different?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad focus questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are people the same and different from each other? How is each child similar to and different from their friends (e.g. eye colour, skin tone, hair colour/length, boy or girl, age, interests, abilities)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why are people different from each other? How are people’s cultural heritages evident in what they do, say, wear and/or eat?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How is each child’s family similar and different to other children’s families?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do people show respect for and value diversity in what they say and do?</td>
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Links to the learning and development areas

Identity: Building a confident self-identity
- Pride and confidence in who they are, their family and culture

Connectedness: Shows increasing respect for diversity
- Ways to respond to others with respect
- Interest in their own and others’ cultures and heritages
- Exploring aspects of culture and similarities and differences among people
- Awareness of bias and stereotyping
Focus: How are people the same and different?

### Explore cultural objects and images

Create different displays of objects/images that link to children’s cultural backgrounds and local community and the local Aboriginal community or Torres Strait Islander community.

**Focuses for learning:**
- Describe and compare the objects.
- Discuss how/why/when they might be used.
- Discuss why they may be important to a particular cultural group.
- Identify the value and strengths of the objects/images.
- Make links to children’s own practices/lives.
- Discuss ways to care for or handle the objects/images, show respect and follow cultural protocols.

**List resources**
- *List — people, texts, posters, games, songs, materials*

### Explore diverse languages

Explore diverse languages used by children/families/visitors by introducing a book or learning a song that includes words from various languages.

**Focuses for learning:**
- Explore reasons why people speak/write/communicate.
- Explore languages spoken by children/families/the community.
- Explore ways to communicate if you do not speak the language of another person.
- Learn and use words from various languages for real purposes, such as words from a local Aboriginal language or Torres Strait Islander language, or a language spoken by a family, e.g. greetings and labels for places, objects or actions.
- Explore ways people record ideas, e.g. different characters/scripts, the use of symbols, pictures, or movements.

**List resources**
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### Explore diversity in lifestyles (including how, when and why people wear particular cultural clothing, eat particular foods, celebrate and share beliefs)

Invite a family or community member to share aspects of their culture or heritage, such as a cultural story/song or food, and explain how/when/why the story/song/food may be shared, e.g. as part of a celebration, because it is a special/hard-to-prepare food.

**Focuses for learning:**
- Discuss the cultural and family practices/experiences and why they are important to people, e.g. a celebration, a way of teaching younger people, ways people spend time together.
- Make connections to similar/different practices/experiences in children’s lives, e.g. celebrations where they wear special clothes, eat particular foods, do particular things or go places with a grandparent/special person.
- Discuss how the practices or experiences link to other aspects of people’s lives, e.g. ways to stay healthy, learn or look after younger/older people.
- Identify the value and strengths of the practices or experiences.
- Discuss ways to show respect for different practices, e.g. show interest in the foods friends like to eat or family activities/celebrations their friends talk about.

**List resources**
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**Focus: How are people the same and different?**

### Explore culture expressed through visual arts, dance and music

Share images in books, from a local museum/gallery, online or invite local Aboriginal artists or Torres Strait Islander artists or artists from other cultural groups to share/perform artworks important for their traditional and modern lives.

**Focuses for learning:**
- View and discuss visual arts, e.g. sculptures, masks, paintings and experience dance and music from various Aboriginal communities and Torres Strait Islander communities and other cultural groups.
- Make links to children’s personal experiences with artworks, dances and music.
- Discuss the subject matter or life experiences represented in the artworks by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people and why they are important.
- Discuss why particular symbols, movements, and music are important to particular cultural groups, and ways to show respect for these.
- Describe/explore ways to create symbols, e.g. using colour, line, gestures, series of movements, use of voice or particular instruments.
- Support children to create personal symbols (rather than copying symbols significant to other people) to represent what is important in their world/life (e.g. ways to represent family, friends, their home and local places when painting, dancing and making music).

**List resources**
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### Explore cultural tools and technology

Share fiction and nonfiction texts, view items from a museum, search websites or invite local Aboriginal elders, family or community members or Torres Strait Islander elders, family and community members to share the tools and technologies that are important for their traditional and modern lives.

**Focuses for learning:**
- Identify tools/technologies children are familiar with and use in their daily lives.
- Explore traditional and modern tools/technologies used by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people, or people from a range of cultural backgrounds. Make links to children’s personal experiences.
- Discuss how and why people in different communities may use/have used different tools/technologies.
- Invite family or community members to help children use particular tools/technologies for a real purpose while following appropriate protocols, e.g. to cook, eat, write, draw or make music.

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### Explore cultural stories

Share a variety of cultural stories relevant to children’s interests and other learning experiences, e.g. animals or gardening, a natural occurrence such as a rainbow.

**Focuses for learning:**
- Invite family/community members to share cultural stories and explain why the story is shared/why it is important.
- Share and discuss cultural stories in books, on DVDs or on websites, and make links to children’s personal experiences, e.g. when does your family come together to share personal stories/experiences from the past or present?
- Provide opportunities to experience stories shared in different ways, e.g. verbally or through song, recorded in books, told while drawing symbols in the sand or with the help of objects, using dance or drama to tell the story.
- Share ‘told’ Aboriginal stories or Torres Strait Islander stories, such as *Tiddalick the Thirsty Frog*, an
Focus: How are people the same and different?

Aboriginal story from the Murray River region. Explain who told the story, to whom it was told and why,

Explore cultural stories

e.g. to explain an aspect of the natural world, a social rule or important cultural practice.
Innovate on cultural stories to help children understand the messages or purposes of the stories, e.g. substitute a character/situation so children see the relevance of the story to their own lives.
Invite children to respond to parts of cultural stories by drawing, painting, moving, dramatising or retelling.

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