

Chinook

Service

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Meeting People Where they Live: Cultural Competence

American life has always been a mixture of different cultures and values. Cultural competence is "the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, and religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each." In brief, cultural competence describes respectful attitudes and capable interactions with a variety of people.

Because Wyoming is not as culturally diverse as other states, those in the majority perhaps need to give more attention to understanding minority cultures. This effort may help parents, youth leaders, and community decision-makers appreciate the uniqueness of youth or elder culture, rural or urban culture, or lifestyles of different types of families.

Culture is simply how one lives and is connected to history by habit.

—Leroi Jones

An international educator recently described to me his work with leaders in rural, non-literate areas of Africa where effective education requires more repetition, more demonstration, more picture images. Practice which assumes literacy just doesn't work as well

Increasing our effectiveness with a variety of youth and families requires intentional efforts such as:

- Seeking knowledge of other cultures
- Gaining insight on personal heritage
- Confronting prejudices
- Getting out of comfort zones
- Resisting judgments
- Improving communication skills

Adapted from: Child Welfare League of America. (2000). Cultural competence: CWLA Interactive. www/cwla.org/culturecompetence.html and R.Taylor. (1999). *Nursing Management*, August, 30-32. www.nursingmanagement.com

This newsletter seeks to define the scope and describe some skills to enhance interaction with persons from a wide variety of backgrounds.

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For additional resources, visit

Dreamcatcher

Family Life website

www.uwyo.edu/ag/ces/dream.htm

Research Update: Cultural Competence

Technology and Cultural Competence Training

J.R. Ancist. (1998). Cultural competency training at a distance: Challenges and strategies. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 76, Spring, 134-143. Offers solutions to Challenges of Interactive TV: 1) Isolation, reduced by small classes, study/interaction groups; 2) time limits, extended by exchange of trainer or homework materials; 3) size, diffusion of class used to recruit diverse input from many sources; 4) tech problems anticipated with backup plans; 5) add electronic resources to enhance broadcasts. Notes traits of cultural competence: self-awareness, grasp of client worldview, development of appropriate strategies. Recommends TV elements: 1) needs assessment (esp. observational); 2) experience exercises and discussion; 3) skill practice; 4) processing feelings (esp. w/out-of-class opportunities). Keys to training: 1) humanizing (safe climate, set by instructor); 2) ground rules including active participation, confidentiality; 3) active participation and collaboration; 4) inter disciplinary teams.

Extension & Diversity

J.S.Long. (2000). Designing diversity: Developing Cooperative Extension programs with ethnically diverse communities. Pullman, WA: WSU CES. Presents 9 case studies of Extension programs helping immigrants adapt. Programs with welfare-dependent Hmong refugees in MN improved quality of life via basic skills such as dressing for winter, preserving fruits and vegetables, literacy, earning and saving.

The old proverb notwithstanding, we cannot put ourselves in someone else's shoes; or rather, we can, but it's still our own feet we will feel.

--Sorti

Native American Mentoring

M.Salzman. (2000). Promoting multicultural competence: A cross-cultural mentorship project. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 28, 119-124. Small scale mentoring and cultural awareness experience for white graduate students and Native Am. children resulted in gains for mentors: increased grasp of interpersonal and cultural differences for mentors, established rapport, awareness of health, goal-setting, and positive thinking among mentees. Supervision and service (vs. "fix-it") focus identified as critical to success.

Developing Cultural Competence in Family & Consumer Sciences

C.A.Darling; B.B.Greenwood; & S.Hansen-Grandy. (1998). Multicultural education in collegiate family and consumer sciences programs: Developing cultural competence. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, Spring, 42-48. Of 204 FCS administrators and faculty responding to a mail survey 58% indicated unit objectives (45% reported courses). Over 90% recognized the import of culture on communication, import of skills for effectiveness across cultures, and enjoyed working with a variety of students. Less than a majority rated their own (47%) or peers (43%) competence or student interest (37%) as high. Time, finances, and training were among the top five deterrents to multicultural education.

Impact of Diversity Training

L.J. Carrell. (1997). Diversity in the communication curriculum: Impact on student empathy. *Communication Education*, 46, (4), 234. College students in a diversity training experimental group including empathy training experienced significant gains in trait, attitude, and behavioral empathy over those who received the standard Intercultural Communication content course.

Stats and Facts: Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence Glossary:

Culture: shared values, norms, traditions, customs, arts, history, folklore, institutions of a group

Biculturalism: identification with two cultures

Cross-cultural: interaction between different cultures

Cultural diversity: differences in race, ethnicity, language, religion, nationality

Ethnicity: belonging to a common group with shared heritage

Race: a socially defined population that is derived from distinguishable physical characteristics, genetically determined

Continuum of Cultural Competence

- 1 Understanding own background
- 2 Acknowledging another's different culture. values, beliefs, behavior
- 3 Disconnecting difference and inferiority
- 4 Learning about others' cultures
- 5 Adapting community education systems to cultural frameworks of participants

Source: L.C.Lyons. (1998). Module 2: Cultural competence. George Washington University Medical Center.

<http://learn.gwumc.edu/iscope/Cultcomp.htm>

Underlining Needs for Cultural Competence

- Children of immigrants will make up 88% of child/youth population growth (50% of all population growth) between 2000 and 2050
- Today, 40% of public school students are from ethnic minorities
- Across the US, 1 in 5 children live in poverty. College educated persons make 76% more than high school graduates: relating to "haves" and "have nots" is critical for helpers

Source: Embracing Diversity: New Challenges for the New Millennium.

www.tw.org

Diversity is deemed to be present whenever there is the probability that, in interaction with a particular child or family, the assessor might attribute different meaning or values to behaviors or events than would the family or someone from that family's environment.—Barrera

Cultural Competence Goals for Educators & Human Service Workers

- 1) *Feel comfortable and effective in interactions and relationships with all individuals and families*
- 2) *interact with individuals and families in ways which enable them to feel positive about the relationship*
- 3) *accomplish goals established by the family and interventionist*

Source: Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong (1986). *Intercultural interactions*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Much of the success of these efforts comes from understanding and negotiating communication patterns which vary across culture:

- **Non-verbal communication:** for many Americans, silence is awkward, but many cultures are comfortable with long periods of silence
- **Distance:** Americans generally prefer arm's length proximity, but many cultures expect closer proximity
- **Eye Contact:** Americans typically seek to look others straight in the eye. Some cultures regard eye contact, especially staring, as impolite, some as showing disinterest. Sitting next to rather than directly across from another person may be more comfortable in these settings.
- **Facial Expression:** Showing emotions is routine in some cultures (Hispanic, Italian), but inappropriate in others. Americans tend to view expressiveness as immature, impassivity as unfeeling.
- **Verbal Communication:** A louder voice is assumed to be clearer, but may be regarded as too aggressive by some.

Source: George Washington University Medical Center/George Mason University Interdisciplinary Student Community-Oriented Prevention Enhancement Service online learning programs.
<http://learn.gwumc.edu/iscope>

Stats and Facts: Cultural Competence

Foundations for Multicultural Education

- Teachers make an ethical commitment to care for children
- Democratic principles of freedom, justice, and equality emphasize the importance of schools (and community organizations)
- Children are viewed as cultural beings who learn as they interact with their environment
- Teachers engage with children and families in their struggle to succeed within and alter the structure of the dominant culture
- Education is focused on helping all children develop basic skills, critical thinking, and social action skills so they can contribute to a just and caring community

Adapted from Embracing Diversity: New Challenges for the New Millennium.
www.tw.org/newwaves

One of the most significant insights of cultural competence is that many differences in values, attitudes, and behavior exist -within- every cultural group as well as between groups.

L-E-A-R-N Model of CrossCultural Encounter (Health Professionals)

Listen with sympathy and understanding to the patient's perception of the problem
Explain your perceptions of the problem
Acknowledge and discuss the differences and similarities
Recommend treatment (action)
Negotiate agreement

Source: Diversity RX: Quality Health Care Practices with Multicultural Audiences.
www.diversityrx.org

Comprehending Cultures

Categories are sometimes deceiving (as the statement above suggests).

However, appreciating that English, German, and Scandinavian speakers represent **Low Context Cultures**

- Detailed visual, verbal, written communication
- Direct and immediate in delivery

While most other language groups represent **High Context Cultures**

- Meaning draws heavily on physical location, ambiance or attire, individual behaviors, organizational settings and rules
- Such context clues are often missed by low context communicators and are not evident just by reading, viewing, or hearing a communication.

Adapted from E.T. Hall. (1992). *Beyond Culture*. Peter Smith Pub.

Cultural Competence Assessment

Cultural competence incorporates environment, materials, resources, communication styles, values, and attitudes. Youth and family professionals may want to consider whether they...

- Adapt procedures to cultures as needed
- Discourage slurs in group settings
- Use media reflecting a variety of people
- Accept families whatever their structure
- Recognize that individuals desire different levels of acculturation
- Understand that gender roles and age expectations vary across cultures

For the entire assessment, go to Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence:
www.dml.georgetown.edu/depts/pediatrics/gucdc/nccc7.html

Managing Competently with Variety

Workplace or volunteer settings bring together people from a variety of lifestyles and cultures. People with different experiences and assumptions are challenged to blend many streams of values and behavior toward a common goal. Diverse groups can begin to understand and design strategies which respect and exploit cultural differences by focusing on dilemmas shared by all cultures and the attitude/action options used to resolve these challenges,

Dilemmas/Options/Strategies. Each of the seven issue areas below describe dilemmas typical of every culture, options (at each end of a continuum) describing options to address these dilemmas, and suggest a few strategies for promoting balance and exploiting diverse perspectives.

Source of Identity: How do persons describe themselves and their priorities?

- **Individual:** Primary focus on personal interests, responsibilities, freedom, achievements; family and group maintenance voluntary to serve practical, self-interest
 - *Ex:* American/Western culture freedom to choose/express clothing, music; pursue careers or leisure interests; join or quit formal or informal groups
 - *Positive Values:* self-reliance, initiative, creativity, flexibility
- **Collective:** Attention first to needs of extended family or larger group (class, club, church) Loyalty offers protection, employment, belonging, bound by shared honor, expectations
 - *Ex:* certain Muslim, Latin American, Native American, & Asian-Pacific cultures
 - *Positive Values:* mutual support, belonging, clear roles, elder guides
- **Strategies:** Emphasis on teamwork, cooperation, structured planning and implementation, peer monitoring and coaching, and support help individualists overcome immature extremes of selfishness, disorganization, or loneliness. Encouragement for leadership, assertiveness, creativity, and personal recognition may help collectivists overcome shyness or conformity, and encourage them to discover personal gifts.
 - *Youth/Wildlife habitat project:* Organize a group project, with planning stages (library and field research and habitat improvement) done by a whole group. In the outdoors, set a group norm for shared effort but encourage each youth to take a special part of the project which he/she can plan, implement, and interpret. Organize/publicize/ and reward the largest and most visible activities as cooperative efforts.
 - *Adult/Parent help with youth projects:* Include ground rules for parent involvement and training on mentoring, problem solving, and experiential learning. Hold project group meetings where mutual help and understanding the learning process are emphasized more than prizes or final products.

Goals and Means of Achievement: What do persons value in working together?

- **Tough:** Emphasis on ambition, competitiveness, decisiveness promoting efficiency, increasing effort, material results
 - *Ex:* American/Western value on free enterprise, action ("doing something"), materialism, and problem solving are extreme options
 - *Positive Values:* hard work, persistence, autonomy/self-direction, accountability
- **Tender:** Orientation to cooperation and harmony, with social relationships often prioritized over work intensity or outcomes
 - *Ex:* Informal groups of Americans; Dutch and Indonesian cultures reflect extreme
 - *Positive Values:* equality and fraternity, more leisure pace, synergy
- **Strategies:** Limits on the number and intensity of activities, emphasis on fun, and cooperation, and practical results (e.g., working together, improving community) rather than beating others can reduce cutthroat competition. Goal setting and problem solving as well as rewards for interim accomplishments may help persons from "tender" cultures improve practical quality of life.

Addressing Cross-Cultural Dilemmas/Tough-Tender

- *Youth/Fund-raiser*. Create teams representing both cultures and a coach who can help them take turns and share leadership in brainstorming novel activities for money making, organizing roles effectively, relating positively to customers, managing a telephone tree, practicing with fun-filled role plays, and counting numbers of supporters as well as amount of money raised.
- *Adult/Pet judging*. Encourage project leader/judge to meet with youth from the start to set goals, outline ground rules, share stories, facilitate peer teaching, and keep records of progress. Incorporate positive peer comments and self-assessment of learning outcomes in demonstrations and reports.

Orientation to Authority: Who/How/Why should decide on what gets done?

- **Equal:** Regards status or authority as earned through skill and effort alone
 - *Ex:* American ideal in classrooms, workplaces, clubs, and many homes
 - *Positive Values:* mutual respect, democratic processes, initiative, accountability
- **Unequal:** Assumes status or authority are achieved through inheritance, or perhaps as a result of status in another sphere (e.g., wealthy or powerful person appointed)
 - *Ex:* typical of some clubs, companies, more traditional social or political structures such as Greece, France, or Mexico
 - *Positive Values:* efficient leadership, order, less competition within strata
- **Strategies:** Unequal authority (e.g., adult leadership) can be used to help lower status youth (e.g., less popular/familiar/talented) contribute and lead through volunteer and appointed roles ranging from leading discussion or demonstrations to cleaning the meeting place. Leadership skill training (parliamentary procedure, goal setting, directing and evaluating activities) can be offered to all members rather than just elected ones.
 - *Youth/Recreation leadership:* Since skill-based status may disadvantage those of lesser physical abilities or cultural familiarity, allow each child/youth to teach others a game or recreational activity in which he/she is knowledgeable/skilled. Focus rewards and other feedback on mastery (rather than outdoing others).
 - *Adult/Community decision-makers:* Organize youth-adult activities (leadership forums, junior town council, community service day, information campaigns) in which youth and adults work in cross-age groups or reverse roles.

Response to Ambiguity: How comfortable is novelty or change?

- **Dynamic:** Change is promoted, flexibility, newness, and innovation are valued
 - Ex: American consumer/fad culture, constant reinvention,
 - *Positive Values:* adaptation, economic growth, openness to people or events
- **Stable:** Tradition, consistency, group identity valued
 - Ex: tribal and ethnic cultures, religious traditions, rural peoples
 - *Positive Values:* stability, longstanding heritage, dependable events and roles
- **Strategies:** Even in homogenous groups, youth look forward to predictable roles or events (meeting schedule, yearly field trips, parties, service projects, competitions). Introducing new activities, skills, and people through members or guest speakers from other cultures enriches this stability while offering novelty. Spontaneous events (e.g., going out for ice cream, scavenger hunts, skits, games) in which kids from different backgrounds are on the same team reinforce togetherness.
 - *Youth/Fixing up the meeting place:* Including all members in (re)decorating a meeting place, carnival booth, or club display helps break the stable-exclusive routine (e.g., only "old" members own the group) and introduce novelty (personal or cultural artifacts) reflecting all personalities and traditions of members.
 - *Adult/Role Reversals:* Demonstrations/skill exercises, contests (e.g., guess items from school or teen culture), or meeting leadership which allows youth to lead and adults to follow helps introduce novelty (e.g., kids prepare events) and build presentation, problem solving, group management, and evaluation skills.

- **Scarce:** Time viewed as a commodity, where every minute counts and awareness of time (on time, wasted time, overtime, up-to-date, efficiency) permeates all events
 - *Ex:* Scheduling, timelines, precise timing, cost efficiency are prominent in both formal and informal arenas of American life
 - *Positive Values:* precision and efficiency often enhance quality-of-life
- **Plentiful:** Timelines viewed as ideals, but people or activities given as much time as necessary in reality
 - *Ex:* Being on time, limiting available time ("You've got 5 minutes"), and working to a deadline are not as important as giving people and events the time they need in Latin America, Scotland, Southern Europe, Japan and China
 - *Positive Values:* relaxed, flexible approach may be more humanizing and effective (vs. simply efficient) over the long run
- **Strategies:** Overscheduling meetings or rushing youth and families through events can result from a scarcity perspective. A casual approach in which timelines are not dependable, though, can inconvenience families. Following an announced agenda while accepting the realities that not everyone will be there on time and some will need to stay late or meet at another time requires a great deal of flexibility in leaders.

Addressing Cross-Cultural Dilemmas/Scarce & Plentiful Time + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

- *Youth/Child care Projects:* Child care as a fund-raising or learning project can become a way to appreciate new perspectives (e.g., infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-agers) on time (how long does it last, how fast does it happen, how often is it needed). Learning to guide children (e.g., feeding, play, learning skills, discussion) provides them new, more structured time perspective while helping youth slow down and meet others at their own pace.
- *Adult/Trip Chaperones:* Leaders tend to focus on the destination or critical events of youth trips, yet the experience of getting there often creates the most learning or memories for kids. Planning games, discussions, breaks, and creature comforts can build “quality time” into those events.

Outlook on Life: How much can you affect what happens?

- **Doing:** Faith in efficacy, ability to plan and shape events, often translates into actions to make a difference and technology for doing so is constantly (re)invented
 - *Ex:* Technology and development, intentional planning, implementation, and evaluation are integral parts of American schooling, business, and family life
 - *Positive Values:* optimism, determination, problem-solving skills
- **Being:** Skepticism about the impact of individual or collective action, and belief that fate, social conformity, or divine destiny influence events more than initiative may lead to not trying as hard, or alternatively, to doing as well as possible, enjoying the process more
 - *Ex:* poverty, repressive political or religious systems, or social ostracism may limit initiative, but spirituality may also place less emphasis on achievement
 - *Positive Values:* broader/spiritual perspective, contentment with effort or involvement vs. anxiety/anger about performance
- **Strategies:** Avoiding extremes of winning-at-all-costs or giving-up-too-easily, activities can be sequenced in small steps to guarantee success. Affirmations of character (e.g., playing fair, being responsible), capabilities (e.g., skills, knowledge), growth (e.g., personal improvement), and contributions to others (e.g., helping the team, being of service) rather than comparisons among participants help build a balance which promotes human development and honors all cultural traditions.
 - *Youth/Interview judging experiences:* Training adults to ask about personal meaning and growth as well as technical skill incorporates being—developing identity, competence, belonging, and meaning—and doing—taking initiative, problem solving, interpreting, reporting encourages a balanced perspective.
 - *Adult/Leadership:* Guest speakers as well as volunteer leaders should be encouraged and assisted to be genuine rather than feeling pressured to be “cool,” entertaining, or wise with kids. Staying in touch with their motivations of caring for kids and passionate sharing of interests encourages leaders to stay relaxed, caring and confident—exactly what children need from adults.

Adapted from M.S. Wilson, M.H. Hoppe, L.R. Sayles. (1996). *Managing across cultures: A learning framework*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership. Even though the dilemmas framework was developed for a workplace setting with adults, examples above illustrate that it might also be useful with children and youth. Problem solving statements are samples of how comparing, inventing options, reflecting on events, exploring sequences and consequences, or seeing other viewpoints decreases risk and increases people skills and critical thinking.

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Resources and Policy: Youth Risk and Resiliency

Organizations

Children, Youth and Families Extension Resource Network

www.cyfernet.org/welfare

Extension national and state resources on health, child care, youth & family issues; links to stats, grants, etc.

National Center for Cultural Competence

www.dml.georgetown.edu/depts/pediatrics/gucdc/cultural.html

Georgetown Univ. based, focused on health and social service delivery, with resources for planning and practice.

American Indian Science and Engineering Society

www.spot.colorado.edu/~aises/aises.html

Frameworks & resources for integrating traditional culture with science learning.

National MultiCultural Institute

www.nmci.org

Non-profit training and resource provider for workplaces and human service agencies.

National Court-Appointed Special Advocates Site

www.casanet.org

Practical resources for volunteers and professionals who need insights on how to relate in a diverse culture.

North Central Regional Educational Lab

www.ncrel.org

Guidelines and resources on interaction, activities, and curriculum valuable for teachers and community educators.

Northwest Regional Educational Lab

www.nwrel.org

Advocacy, training, info sheets on equity and culture. Link to "Cross-Cultural Communication" paper by Orlando Taylor provides good background

Resources for Parents

Canadian Mental Health Association

www.cmha.sudbury.on.ca/diversity.html

"Embracing Cultural Diversity" guide with practical strategies for parents helping victims and victimizers

Disney's Family.com

www.family.com

Type in "diversity" to find concise and concrete ideas on how parents can teach diversity at home and encourage cultural competence at school.

Resources

• Books and Curricula

Y. Morita (1994). *Take a Walk in my Shoes: Guide Book for Youth on Diversity Awareness*. Univ. of CA Extension (510-987-0098)

E.W. Lynch & M.J. Hanson. (Eds., 1998). *Developing cross-cultural competence*. Cambridge, MA: Paul H. Brookes.

D.Chen; L.Brekken; S.Chan; G.Guarneri. (1997). *Project CRAFT: Culturally responsive and family focused training*. Cambridge, MA: Paul H. Brookes. (video and facilitator guide)

L.R.Kohls & J.M. Knight. (1994). *Developing intercultural awareness: A cross-cultural training handbook*. Intercultural Press.

• **Films on videotape** touching on cultural interfaces & competence: *Snow Falling on Cedars*
Seven Years in Tibet
Music from the Heart
Ruby Bridges

Most cultural exploration begins with the annoyance of being lost. The control systems of the mind signal that something unexpected has arisen, that we are in uncharted waters and are going to have to switch off the automatic pilot and man the help ourselves—E.T. Hall

Paradoxes: A Parting Thought

Myths of Cultural Competence

Five insights from the Family Violence Prevention Fund, developed to help judges better decide on court cases, describe the complexity of cultural competence:

There are too many cultures. I can't possibly learn all I need to know about them all.

- Quite true, if learning entails trivia detailing every trait of every group or setting.
- Profound understanding involves shifting the way we think about others:
 - Recognizing or rejecting preexisting beliefs about a culture
 - Tuning in to individuals describing their own situations
 - Replacing labels with listening and collaboration

I have checked my preconceptions changed some thoughts. I am now competent.

- Perhaps the most accurate description is “more competent.”
- Since there is so much to learn, ingrained ideas and responses are so hard to reprogram, and since both other cultures and you yourself are constantly changing, it's best to think of cultural competence as a lifelong learning endeavor.

As a person of color, I know how to be culturally sensitive and don't need special training.

- Persons in cultural minorities tend to encounter differences and discrimination more often than those in the mainstream. Often this experience enhances empathy for others.
- Regardless of experience, each person has a different level of awareness and sensitivity to a wide variety of individuals and groups. Each person must use some kind of deliberate, reflective process to examine cultural misinformation and develop cultural competence.

I need a more concrete way to achieve competence—not just “touchy-feely” reflection.

- The good news: There are several concretely-defined awareness skills.
- Careful, systematic efforts (listening, gathering evidence, appreciating differences in meaning or interpretation, empathically evaluating) to understand individuals, situations, cultural patterns and assumptions, and most important, one's own preconceptions, can begin to approach the kind of cultural competence which makes one just or effective.

There are only a couple of cultures different from the dominant one in my area.

- That would seem to make the task of cultural competence easier.
- Regardless of the diversity of the area, citizens and professionals may encounter, and be required to interact with, persons from any background. Again, this is an ongoing, lifelong process.

Adapted from: Common Myths about Cultural Competence. (1999). Family Violence Prevention Fund.
www.fvpf.org/justice/eccult_myths.html