



Diversity and Inclusion in Early Care and Education



A white paper

The next 40 years will be marked by dramatic demographic shifts in the United States. As the population booms from about 310 million in 2010 to slightly less the 440 million by 2050¹, the look and feel of this country will be far different than what we see and experience now—today’s majority is tomorrow minority.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports a decrease in the ratio of whites between 2010 and 2050, from 79.5 percent to 74 percent. At the same time, Non-Hispanic whites are no longer projected to make up a majority of the population by 2042, but will remain the largest single racial group. In 2050, they will compose 46.3 percent of the population, compared to 85 percent in 1960.

The report also foresees an increase in the Hispanic population from 16 percent to 30 percent by 2050, African American population will rise ever so slightly from 12.9 percent to 13 percent, and Asian Americans will jump in population from 4.6 percent to 7.8 percent. Eighty-two percent of the increase in population from 2005 to 2050 will be due to a significant influx of immigrants and their children.²

Sixty-two percent of the nation’s children are expected to be of a “minority” ethnicity by 2050, up from 44 percent today. About 39 percent are projected to be Hispanic or Latino—up from 44 percent today—and 38 percent are projected to be single-race, non-Hispanic whites—down from 56 percent in 2008.³

So, what does this mean? How will these changing demographics impact early childhood education? What new professional development strategies need to be implemented? How are current professional development strategies dealing with this impending wave of children of color?

Answering these questions requires a look at the present way of doing things and the limitations of these current methods. In “Diversity in Early Childhood Programs,” Frances Wardle wrote:

“High on the list of criteria parents use to choose child care and early childhood programs are providers and programs who match the parents’ own view of education and discipline, and those who speak the same language and have the same religion. Thus, many of our programs—family child care, Head Start, religious programs, and even some neighborhood public schools—are traditional reflections of homogeneous communities in religion, race/ethnicity, language and socioeconomic status. But now these traditional programs are expected to provide our children with experiences outside of their groups, offering opportunities to teach them to be tolerant, respectful and accepting of differences.”⁴

Wayback Machine (archived August 22, 2008), U.S. Census Press Releases, 14 August 2008 (archived from the original on 2008-08-22)

- 1 “Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2050”. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved 8/20/14.
- 2 “Table 4. Projections of the Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2010 to 2050” (Excel). U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved 8/20/14.
- 3 An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury at the

- 4 Wardle, F., Ph.D., “Diversity in Early Childhood Programs,” Early Childhood News, Monterey, Calif., http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=548 Retrieved 7/16/14. Note: Wardle cited: Willer, B., Hofferth, S.L., Kisker, E.F., Divine-Hawkins, P., Farqar, E. & Gantz, F.B. (1991). The demand and supply of child care in 1990. Washington, D.C. NAEYC

As the U.S. population continues to “brown” or become more varied, early educators must break from this traditional mindset. Early education practitioners must: (1) overcome personal bias, (2) develop the tools that promote diversity and inclusion, and (3) create a classroom setting and anti-bias curriculum to ensure that children in their care are able to discern and embrace their differences.

CDA & Diversity and Inclusion

The Council of Professional Recognition is a leader in the professional development of the early care and education industry. Its Child Development Associate™ (CDA) National Credential includes six competency standards and 13 functional areas, each of which speaks directly to the cultural development of children. CDA Candidates must develop a warm, positive, supportive and responsive relationship with each child, and help each child learn about and take pride in his or her individual and cultural identity.⁵ Diversity and inclusiveness are embedded in the CDA credentialing process. Multiple sources of evidence—training, parent engagement and observation—ensure that diversity is woven into the classroom setting.

As a result of its leadership and demonstrated commitment to serve the growing diverse populations in the CDA community both in the United States and abroad, the Council established the Multilingual and Special Programs division at its headquarters in Washington, D.C., in January 2013. This division ensures that all multilingual CDA candidates and candidates in special programs have the same level of access to the Council’s high-quality services and the same opportunity to earn a CDA credential as English-speaking candidates. CDAs have been awarded to candidates who speak many languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Creole, French, Hmong, Korean, Mandarin, Navajo, Portuguese, Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese and Yiddish.

⁵ Washington, Valora, Ph.D. (Ed.), (2013), *Essentials for Working with Young Children*, Washington, D.C., Council for Professional Recognition. p. 6.

The Multilingual and Special Programs team supports the work of candidates in less privileged communities, in multiple languages, and those working in special programs and under special conditions, migrant, Alaska Natives and American Indian, Home Visitor, educators with disabilities, international programs, and military programs in the U.S. and overseas.

A key example of the Council’s efforts in this area is its history in helping CDA candidates from the Lakota Nation obtain their credentials in their native language and bilingual Lakota English specializations. The elders in the communities partnered with the staffs at various programs at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota to incorporate the language into everyday life for children. At the beginning of each day, teachers and staff communicated with each other in the Lakota language. Now, in the Oglala Lakota College Head Start Program, the Lakota language is spoken 80 percent of the time, and families are encouraged to use the language at home.

CDA candidates on the reservation assemble their resource files in both English and the Lakota language and, during their training, they often set up their classrooms by labeling all items in the Lakota language, making it visible on walls, chairs, tables, etc. to illustrate its importance. Today, the CDA program on the Pine Ridge Reservation is alive and thriving. Each semester brings in enthusiastic candidates looking to positively impact the lives of their young children.

As a leader in ECE professional development, the Council works with stakeholders across the entire industry spectrum to explore and implement best practices to make certain that cultural awareness is part of the teaching and learning experience. This paper examines those best practices.

What is Diversity?

The term diversity can have multiple meanings, depending on the context of its use. In a corporate environment, it might refer to strategies for recruiting, retaining and developing human capital in the workforce. In higher education, it could mean broadening the mix of gender and race in the admissions process. In the banking industry, it may mean not keeping all of your eggs in one basket.

But, for the purposes of this discussion, diversity—or multicultural education—is not something that can be taught directly, it is not a curriculum or lesson plan, or one-off observances of Cinco de Mayo or Black History Month. Rather, it is a collaborative effort among children, parents, families and colleagues to enable children to learn about their own backgrounds and those of people different from them; to see themselves and their communities represented in their program setting; and be exposed to activities that destroy stereotypes.⁶

Removing Privilege & Eliminating Personal Bias

In her essay, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh asserted that the majority population (i.e., whites, and only for a short while longer) possesses a set of societal advantages. She cited a list of more than 50 instances of such privileges, which are “like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks:”

- *I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.*
- *I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.*
- *My children are given texts and classes which*

implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.

McIntosh asserted that her longstanding beliefs acknowledged that racism put others at a disadvantage, but she had also been socialized “not to see one of its corollary aspect, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.”

But, by removing these “denied and protected” privileges from the knapsack, she concluded, the privileges are “fully acknowledged, lessened or ended.”⁷

What is then done with this newfound knowledge is an open question, McIntosh concluded, of “whether we will choose to use this unearned advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader basis.”

The Council asserts that removing these assumptions from the knapsack involves appreciating that they exist in early care and education settings, it means challenging them and challenging oneself to ensure a more inclusive worldview. Because early educators use a complex set of skills to meet the needs of children and families, the Council also agrees that teachers are expected to:

- Increase their sensitivity to different cultures, family compositions, religious practices and languages
- Become more aware of their own implicit and explicit biases that influence their teaching practices
- Avoid generalizing the traditions, beliefs and values an individual to a group or, conversely, from a group to an individual⁸

⁶ Wardle, F., Ph.D., (2003) “Diversity Workshop” Littleton, Colo.: Child Care Partnership.

⁷ McIntosh, P. (1990) “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” The Independent School Magazine Winter Issue, Washington, D.C., National Association of Independent Schools

⁸ Ponciano, L. & Shabazian, A. (2012). “Interculturalism: Addressing Diversity in Early Childhood,” Dimensions of Early Childhood Vol. 40, No.1. Little Rock, Ark., Southern Early Childhood Association. p. 25

Developing the Tools That Promote Diversity and Inclusion

Research suggests that teacher preparation programs rarely provide adequate opportunities to learn and practice these skills. Teachers have reported that they are not prepared to work with diverse populations, are uncomfortable with discussing diversity issues, and as many as 80 percent feel ill-prepared to handle the challenges that diversity may present in their settings. Accordingly, changes must occur in the way that preservice teachers are educated—self-awareness, interaction with diverse populations, and reflection—to overcome this challenge.⁹

- **Self-Awareness:** Forty percent of preservice teachers report they are unaware of the stresses that institutionalized racism puts on the development of children of color, or are reluctant to examine their own thoughts on differences. Therefore, teacher preparation should include activities such as role-plays, guest speakers and candid discussions to create a deeper understanding of cultural differences
- **Interacting with Diverse Populations:** Through this interaction, teachers of young children can learn how to respect family traditions such as sleeping arrangements at home, food preparation, and other childrearing strategies that may vary depending on cultural context. Where home and school cultures clash, differences can only be resolved through open dialogue between teachers and families.
- **Reflection:** After teachers have engaged in reflection regarding their own cultural context and their experiences with diverse populations, they can move toward creating cultural consistency between home and school.¹⁰

9 Ibid

10 Ibid

Creating an Anti-Bias Setting and Curriculum

In their book, *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*, co-authors Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards assert that bias is built into the system.

“Early childhood teachers want children to feel powerful and competent. They strive to welcome children and to show respect to their families as best they know how. However, beyond individual teachers’ hopes, beliefs and actions is a society that has built advantage and disadvantage into its institutions and systems. These dynamics of advantage and disadvantage are deeply rooted in history. They continue to shape the degree of access children have to education, health care, security—in a word access to the services necessary for children’s healthy development. These dynamics also greatly affect the early childhood education system, despite whatever values individual teachers may have.

“Inequity of resources, and the biases that justify that inequity, have an enormous impact on children’s lives. It is important to remember that it is not human differences that undermine children’s development but rather unfair, hurtful treatment based upon these differences.

One major dynamic of advantage and disadvantage that especially affects early childhood practice is that of the ‘visibility’ or ‘invisibility’ of certain kinds of people or cultures in a program. Too many early childhood materials focus on children and families who resemble the stereotypes of American culture as it is most commonly depicted—middle-class, White, suburban, able-bodied, English-speaking, mother-and-father (nuclear) family—as if these were the only types of children and families we work with.”¹¹

11 Derman-Sparks, L. & Olsen Edwards, J. (2010). *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*. Washington, D.C. National Association for the Education of Young Children. p.3

But, the focus of the authors' work "is a vision of a world in which all children are able to blossom, and each child's particular abilities and gifts are able to flourish."

To do this, Derman-Sparks and Edwards established four goals for anti-bias education. In their book, the goals are represented as gears, each of which interacts and builds on the other three. Each goal is also discussed in the context of several suggested teaching guidelines, which are summarized below.

1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride and positive social identities.

- **Teaching Guidelines:** Self-concept activities should explore racial, cultural, gender or economic class identities and supporting children's families as a vital part of nurturing a positive self-image.

2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.

- **Teaching Guidelines:** It's best to begin with what children already know, and exploring the many kinds of diversity present in their group even when they come from similar backgrounds. This approach sets the stage for broadening the discussion beyond the classroom setting. Also, avoid a "tourist curriculum," a curriculum that "drops in on strange, exotic people to see their holidays and taste their foods, and then returns to the 'real' world of regular 'life.'"

3. Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

- **Teaching Guidelines:** Begin by assessing children's misconceptions and stereotypes, and then plan activities that help them learn how to contrast inaccurate, untrue images or ideas with accurate ones. At the same time, build

their capacity for empathy and fairness and provide critical-thinking activities that enable them to take action against unfair actions or thoughts.

4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

- **Teaching Guidelines:** Be alert for unfair practices that directly affect children's lives, engaging them in a dialogue about the specific incident, and learn how their families teach them to deal with being victims of discrimination.¹²

These goals tie nicely into what Ponciano and Shabazian call an "intercultural classroom," which involves "the sharing and learning across cultures that promotes understanding, equality, harmony and justice in a diverse society."

Intercultural classrooms:

- Create space and time to sensitively discuss children's different backgrounds, cultures, family structures and abilities
- Are adorned with pictures of the group's children and families using materials, playing in the classroom, and sharing aspects of their cultural context
- Have customized, individualized picture books or photo albums of the children's families that show important people and pets
- Include the cultural tools using in home-based daily activities, such as eating
- Provide children with opportunities to share songs, stories and language from their cultural context with their peers and teachers.¹³

12 Ibid

13 Ponciano & Shabazian, p. 27

Conclusion

By most accounts, tomorrow's cultural landscape will look vastly different from today. By the middle of the century, more than six in 10 children will be "of color," each looking at the world through a unique lens that includes reflections of their ethnic perspectives. American culture as it is most commonly depicted today—middle-class, White, suburban, able-bodied, English-speaking, mother-and-father (nuclear) family—is rapidly changing, and thus the early care and education profession must change to meet the demands of this new dynamic.

How?

The Council for Professional Recognition focuses on unifying and professionalizing the ECE community through ensuring that teacher knowledge and experience align to create a qualified workforce. For those ECE professionals who do not feel equipped to deal with the potential challenges of a diverse setting, the answer lies in obtaining a CDA credential. The CDA involves multiple sources of evidence—training, parent engagement and observation—that ensure that diversity is woven into the classroom setting.

But, the ECE professional—today and tomorrow—must also cast aside any personal bias that impacts child development; develop tools that promote inclusiveness, and establish a classroom environment and anti-bias curriculum that allows children in their charge to discern and embrace their differences and similarities.

The old adage that "familiarity breeds contempt" cannot apply in this context. With an open environment that promotes an unbiased view of all cultural milieus, familiarity breeds understanding. For this to occur, however, ECE professionals must gain the skills for self-awareness and reflection, and broaden their own exposure to diverse populations.

The Council supports all efforts to bring diversity and inclusion into every early care setting. ■

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Why CDA?

“The CDA™ represents expert consensus about what early educators should know and be able to do. It plays a significant role across the spectrum of early childhood settings in the United States, from employer-sponsored child care to federal government – funded entities.”

Valora Washington, CEO
Council for Professional Recognition



Why CDA?

The Child Development Associate™ (CDA) National Credential represents the crossroad where education and experience meet. This crossroad epitomizes competence and is a pathway to learning best teaching practices for many early educators, including:

- **A lead teacher** who already holds an academic degree, but needs to gain hands-on practical skill and competency in early care and education

- **An assistant teacher** with experience, but little formal education
- **A family child care provider** who must improve the quality of his/her setting to meet licensing requirements
- **A high school student** interested in pursuing a career in working with young children

The CDA helps early educators meet current state and national professional requirements. CDA recipients are competent practitioners who value vital knowledge and skills **and** formal education. It has stood the test of time, with more than 350,000 CDAs awarded since the early 70s, and 20,000 new CDAs and 18,000 renewals in 2013 alone.

But there's more.

1. **The CDA** online process is streamlined, with credentialing decisions taking days rather than months.
2. **The CDA** is portable, recognized in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, community colleges, school districts and the military.
3. **The CDA** is the only national multilingual credentialing system that assesses educators in the language of their daily work.

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