



Inclusion in Early Childhood Education

**Programming for Early Childhood
Education in a context of increasingly
diverse settings: Lessons learned from
Dominica**

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Introduction

- The U.S Department of Education uses the term Linguistically and Culturally Diverse as an educational term to define children enrolled in educational programs who are either Non-English- Proficient (**NEP**) or Limited-English-Proficient (**LEP**). Educators use this phrase, linguistically and culturally diverse, to identify children from homes and communities where English is not the primary language of communication (Garcia (1991))



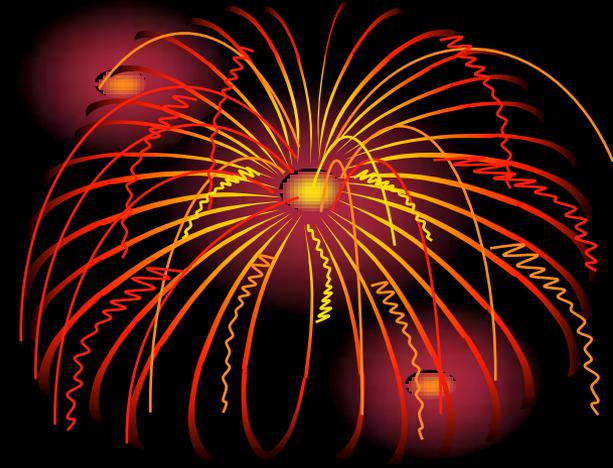


- ❑ EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, Children in Early Childhood settings must be:
- ❑ Supported and taught in their first language in order to develop sufficient confidence before beginning to acquire a second language.
- ❑ Linguistic specialists argue that children who learn their mother tongue for the first six to eight years of their lives perform better on test scores;
- ❑ Develop higher self esteem than those who have to cope with learning in the official language from an early age or who make the transition from mother tongue to official language too soon.



- ❑ Children in early childhood settings reflect the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the nation.
- ❑ All children deserve an childhood education that is responsive to their families, communities, racial, ethnic backgrounds and the diverse learning styles., and cultural backgrounds.
- ❑ for young children to develop and learn optimally, the early childhood professional must be prepared to meet their diverse developmental ,cultural, linguistic and educational needs; they should respect children's linguistic and cultural the diverse learning styles.

The Challenge



- Over the past two to three years Early Childhood Educators in Dominica have been faced with the new challenge of how best to respond to the needs of the increase number of children from culturally diverse backgrounds .

The challenge(cont'd)



- ❑ In the past all children entering early childhood education settings (preschool or day care) spoke either English or our local dialect Creole .
- ❑ Dominica is now an island of great cultural diversity .
- ❑ Our population is now made up of Chinese, Haitian, and Spanish (Cuba and Venezuela) nationals

The challenge (cont'd)



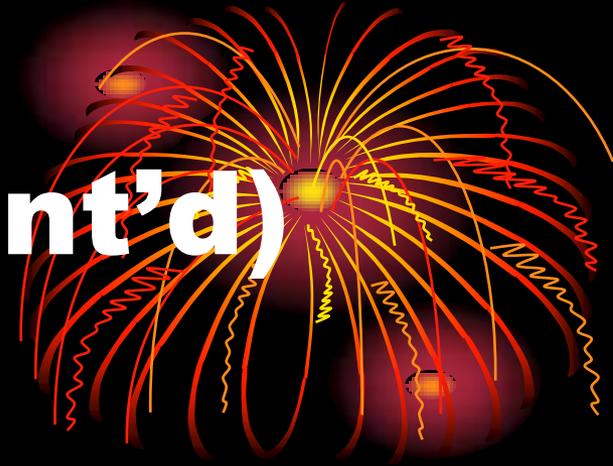
- While our diversity creates opportunities to learn and share both similar and different cultures , our teachers are not equipped with the knowledge and skills as to how to tend the growth of the tender plants .

The challenge (cont'd)



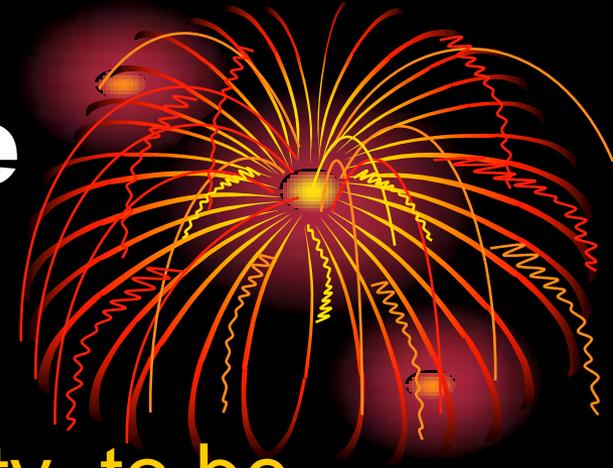
- The early childhood educators now have to become more knowledgeable about how to relate to children and families whose linguistic or cultural background is different from their own.
- Provide high quality care and education for increasing number of children who are likely to be linguistically and culturally diverse

The challenge (cont'd)



- ❑ Address the specific needs or issues of the child , family and program.
- ❑ Educational programs and families are now faced with the responsibility to respect and reinforce each other as they work together to achieve the greatest benefit for all children.
- ❑ Create bilingual learning environments as these are the most developmentally appropriate for children's growth, learning and development.

Responding to the challenge



- View them as the opportunity to be trained in additional languages or to recruit additional staff who can already speak the language and;
- as opportunities to reflect, question and effectively respond to the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse children.

Constraints/ Misconceptions



- ❑ If we encourage the use of many languages in our centre, this would be divisive.
- ❑ It might lead children to be intolerant of one another.

Fact

- ❑ Children will understand that each other has a different language and culture.
- ❑ Each child is equally important.
- ❑ We can learn to be tolerate and support one another in play and learning activities.



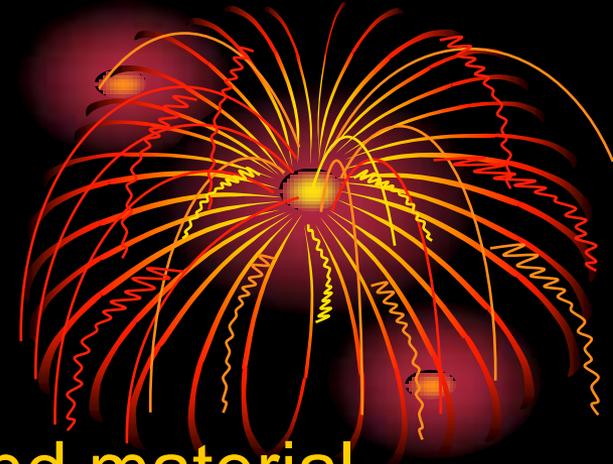
ECERS “Promoting Acceptance and Diversity: Ratings:



MINIMUM

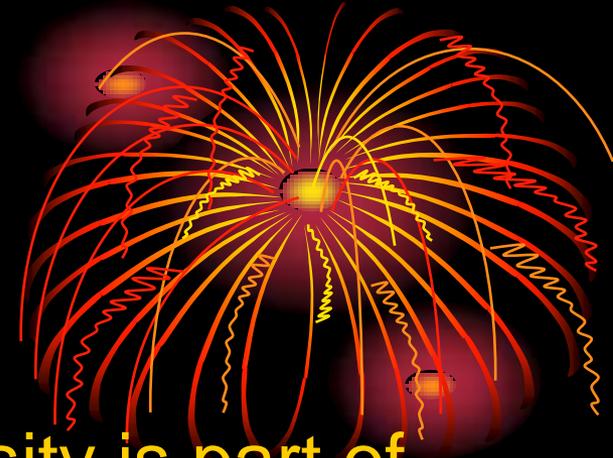
- ❖ Some racial and cultural diversity visible in materials;
- ❖ Multi cultural dolls, books or bulletin board pictures, music tapes for many cultures;
- ❖ Material show diversity (e.g. different races, cultural ages abilities and gender) in a positive way;
- ❖ Staff intervene appropriately to counteract prejudice shown by children or other staff adults.

Ratings



- GOOD: Many books, pictures and material showing people of different races, cultures, ages abilities and gender in non stereotyping roles are made accessible and some props representing various cultures in dramatic play (dolls of different races, cooking of different cultures, cooking and eating utensils form various cultural groups)

Ratings



- EXCELLENT: Inclusion of diversity is part of daily routines and play activities (the foods of different culture are a regular part of meals and snacks; music tapes and songs from different cultures are included at music time; activities are included to promote understanding and acceptance and diversity(parents are encouraged to share family customs with children; many culture are represented in holiday celebration)

Findings

- ❑ Most centres made adequate provision of materials and toys reflecting diversity in cultures, races, ages, abilities or gender.
- ❑ Staff were not observed making opportunities to :
 - ❑ Discuss similarities or differences with children
 - ❑ Taking care to establish rules for fair treatment of others - (i.e... those in the group, communities, those they will be meeting at school
 - ❑ Assisting children to develop their own rules for generous, fair and non discriminatory treatment.



Way forward

- Support and train early childhood educators to develop strategies for the management of differences and conflicts arising as a result of the increasing diverse settings.



Way forward(cont'd)

- Early childhood educators need to become more knowledgeable about how to relate to children and families whose cultural and linguistic background is different from their own.



Recommendations for Educators



Responsive Learning Environment:

- ❖ Stop and reflect on the best ways to ensure appropriate educational and developmental experiences for all young children so the unique qualities and characteristics of each child is acknowledged.

Recommendations for Educators



- ❖ Recognize that all children have unique qualities and are cognitively, linguistically and emotionally connected to the language and culture of their home.
- ❖ Acknowledge that children can demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities in many ways.
- ❖ Make the most of children potential, strengthening and building upon the skills they bring when they enter the programs.

Recommendations for Educators



- ❖ Focus on the learner and allow opportunities for children to express themselves across the curriculum including art, music, dramatization and even block building
- ❖ Understand that it takes time to become linguistically proficient and competent in language.
- ❖ Be patient and tolerable.

Recommendations for working with families (family involvement)



- ❖ Actively involve parents and families in the programs.
- ❖ Encourage and assist all parents in becoming knowledgeable about the cognitive value for children of knowing more than one language
- ❖ Provide strategies to support, maintain and preserve home language/culture
- ❖ Actively seek parents involvement and establish a partnership with children families

Recommendations for working with families (family involvement)



- ❖ Make provisions with families in their home language and provide parent-teacher encounters that both welcome and accommodate families.

Recommendations for profession preparation



- Pre-service/in-service training and professional development in areas of culture, language and diversity.
- Make every effort to understand the languages and culture background of young children. This is essential in helping children to learn.



❖ Recruit and support early childhood educators who are trained in languages other than English.

Recommendations for programs and practice



- ❖ Recognize that children will acquire the use of another language (English) even if their home language is used and respected.
- ❖ Support and preserve home language /culture.
- ❖ Develop alternative and creative strategies for young children learning.

Conclusion

- When ECE acknowledge and respect children home language and culture, ties between the family and programs are strengthened. This atmosphere creates opportunity for learning because young children feel supported, nurtured and connected not only to their home communities and families , but also to teachers and the educational setting.



Conclusion



- Administrative support for diversity should be the goal of the educational setting and at the same time education practices should focus on educating children toward the school culture and preserving and respecting the diversity of home language and culture that each child bring to the early learning setting.
- The immigrants who come to our shores in Dominica are not mere visitors. They are there to stay, therefore ECE and families must work together in order to achieve high quality child care and education for all children.

THANK YOU

