

Things you can do with children

Video 1 and the following **For Reflection Activities** can be used in staff meetings or individually to reflect on how you and your centre support and develop cultural competence in infant / toddler programs.

“All children need to experience many cultures, their own and others”

“All children need to swim in many cultures so they get used to cultural differences early, because caring attitudes start here”.

➤ Discuss how cultural diversity is experienced in your early childhood program?

Ask yourself the following questions to decide how you can include/increase cultural diversity in the early years environment:

- Do the infants and toddlers who enjoy their own distinct culture at home feel familiar aspects of their cultures represented at their early childhood centre?
E.g. familiar sleep routines, eating routines and so on.
- What are infants and toddlers hearing?
E.g. Do they hear key words in languages other than their own? Or do they hear key words in their home languages? - such as hello, goodbye, lunchtime, bedtime, pet word for sleep time, nappy/bathroom/toilet/change nappy, water, fruit, inside/outside, milk.
- What songs, music, finger plays and/or stories do they hear from other cultures or that are familiar from their home culture?
- What are infants and toddlers seeing?
E.g. Posters, statues, mobiles, fabrics, puzzles, learning environment décor such as choice of light shade as seen in the video, Tibetan flags, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, international flags.
- What can infants and toddlers feel and touch?
E.g. Fabrics, natural materials, cultural art experience.
- What are the tastes that infants and toddlers experience?
E.g. Are culturally diverse snacks and meals provided for all children so that they experience the foods of diverse cultures? Are culturally familiar snacks and meals provided for a child whose culture is distinctly different to the centre’s culture?
- Can you say ‘Hello’ in the languages of your centre’s community?

“Acknowledgement of country” (Fifth Avenue Childcare and Kindergarten)

- With support of an advocate from your local Aboriginal community **create an acknowledgment to country** to say on a regular basis with the children in your group.
It might be a simple poem of thank you for the earth, the sky, the animals, the plants and the name of your local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. (This is the way that Red Apple Early Learning Centre in Vermont Victoria acknowledge country).

“Have things in the room that represent different cultures and different diversities” (Robert Nguyen)

- **Consider the extent to which the diversity of your community, state and country is represented in your dramatic play area.**

E.g. dolls, dolls clothes, dress-ups, posters, fabrics, plants, crockery, cooking utensils, eating utensils, bedding, mobiles, natural materials, flag colours and so on. Many of these items can be purchased from second hand shops.

Include elements from all cultures including English speaking cultures such as England, Scotland, Ireland, United States, Canada, New Zealand and others.

“When a child is upset and pushing you away, from my experiences, they obviously want their parent or guardian, but really thinking from the child’s perspective ‘I’m pushing you away because I don’t know you but in a sense I still need you so I might say no but I’m saying I don’t want you right now”
(Robert Nguyen)

- **How do you enable a child their sense of agency and/or choice of how they are managing feelings of separation while still reassuring and responding to them from a distance?**