Building Partnerships with Newcomer Families and Communities: Intercultural Early Learning Program

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Role of Schools in Integration of Newcomer Children and Families

- Schools are the first major institutions that children of newcomer families encounter on their own and in which major socialization, outside of home, occurs.

- **For children**, schooling is a process through which they must come to terms with host counties’ societal expectations, while trying to remain connected to family and home culture.

- **For parents**, the formal educational structure is often intimidating as they encounter many barriers.
Early Socialization Environments

- Socialization goals vary according to cultural goals
- Home environment – parental ethnotheories
- Early learning and care environment – majority cultural ethnotheories
Children from immigrant and refugee families need to become familiar with the language, beliefs, and behaviours of both their heritage and majority cultures in order to “have a sense of belonging and be able to participate successfully within both” (Oppedal, 2006, p. 97).
Directions of influence: Unbalanced Approach

Community -> Family

Early Learning Programs

LEARNING CIRCLE
SCHOOL
SYSTEM
PUBLIC
Overcoming Barriers

- By challenging the shallow representations of cultural diversity (with their focus on celebrations of culture through food, dance, and music) represented in the “piñata curriculum or the snowshoe curriculum” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 550)

- By exploring new approaches to curriculum and pedagogy leading to the genuine inclusion of refugee and immigrant children, families’, and communities’ “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti & González, 2005; Kirova, 2010; Massing, Kirova, & Hennig, 2013; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 2005),
Engaging in Dialogue

Practice that is grounded in principles such as

- citizenship
- democracy
- collegiality and
- dialogue

involves all stakeholders including parents and communities of all children.

Such dialogue is defined by some as “intercultural” (Meer & Modood, 2011, p. 177) as a productive way of overcoming the limitations of multicultural coexistence.
Inter-cultural Early Learning Program’s goals

To be genuinely responsive to the unique early learning needs of newcomer children

- To provide cultural and linguistic continuity for young newcomer children through both first language and English instruction
- To be culturally relevant and inclusive of the newcomer families’ perspectives
- To be holistic, strength-based and equity-based, building on the combined expertise of government organizations, community partners, communities, and researchers
- To be collaborative, inter-relational, and interdependent
Finding a Balanced Approach

- Community
- Family
- Intercultural Early Learning Programs
- Learning Circle
- School
- System
- Public
Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Curriculum

- Negotiating cultural meanings
- Developing curriculum and classroom pedagogy that involved ethnocultural community members and parents’ on-going input
- Use of multiple languages in the classroom (First language Facilitators)
- Developing curriculum topics
  - Choosing common everyday experiences with culturally specific expressions
  - Developing culturally relevant activities
- Culturally relevant activities
  - Songs
  - Story telling
  - Arts and Crafts
  - Cooking
  - Play
- Meaningful classroom environment with cultural artifacts used in daily activities

(Kirova & Paradis, 2010)
First language and culture facilitators in the classroom

• Provide cultural and linguistic continuity
• Affirm cultural identity and belonging
“Yes, from my home I saw a volcan(o) and a mountain... Some mountain with the sky... Sometimes the sky is different (in Canada)---it's like a red, right? In El Salvador the sky is so blue!”
“When I was making the work, I was reminded of my grandmother and my uncle because we live all the family, enjoy the food or fire...”
Materials as Connections to “Home”
References


