Responsiveness to ALL Children, Families, and Professionals:
Integrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity into Policy and Practice

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For optimal development and learning of all children, individuals who work with children must respect, value, and support the culture, values, beliefs, and languages of each home and promote the meaningful, relevant, and active participation of all families. Legislation and recommended practices call for individualized approaches to serving infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities and their families. Individualized services begin with responsiveness to differences in race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, education, income, family configuration, geographic location, ability, and other characteristics that contribute to human uniqueness (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

In this concept paper, we extend these commitments to explicitly address implications for culturally and linguistically responsive practices. The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has adopted the following seven (7) characteristics of responsive organizations:

1. Respect for the values and practices of all members;
2. Encouragement of multiple viewpoints to enrich the whole organization;
3. Seeking ways to extend competence of the leadership as well as practitioners, with regard to differences in family cultures, values, and languages;
4. Development, implementation, and review of policies and procedures in recruitment and leadership development at all levels of service to ensure meaningful local, state, national, and international representation and participation of people from different cultural, ethnic, and language backgrounds;
5. Encouragement and support of the development and dissemination of products that address family cultures, values, and languages;
6. Meetings and conference presentations that incorporate the impact of family cultures, values, and languages in all early childhood activities and services; and
7. Incorporating evidence-based practices with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These practices are critical to assessment and intervention, including practices with young children who are dual language learners and those who speak various dialects of English.

DEC is committed to supporting and advocating for responsiveness to ALL children, families, and professionals by integrating cultural and linguistic diversity into policy and practice. Respecting diverse values and practices is an ongoing commitment of DEC.

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
www.dec-sped.org

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