

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- Learn as much as possible about the *cultures* of the families in the program. Incorporate books, pictures, toys, music, and other materials that are familiar to children into daily activities. This brings family cultures into play areas in positive ways.
- Learn to say a few important words in the *home language* of children whose families speak a different language (Consult with parents about which phrases are most important).
- *Model* pleasant, polite interactions with family members and other adults. Children may imitate words and actions.
- Implement activities that will support children in exploring the similarities and differences among the children and families (read books, such as “We are Alike, We are Different” and then take photos of children’s faces for a class book with words such as, “We all have eyes, but our eyes are different. We all have hair, but our hair is different”).
- Allow and support children’s choice of playmates. Help children play together, including children who are different from each other. Model and encourage gentle touch while playing. Make a special effort to help children who speak different languages play together by helping them communicate with each other.
- Make scrapbooks or memory books and revisit them with the children.
- Talk with children about what makes a family and what it means to be a good family member. Read books about many different types of families, including a variety of family configurations and cultures.
- Invite family members to share family customs, stories, celebrations, food, music, dance, traditions, and clothing from their culture.
- Make bread and other dishes from various cultures, such as fry bread, tortillas, or lefse.
- Involve children in making simple decisions as a group, such as voting for which snack to have that day. Help them see what “consensus” and “fairness” means.
- Talk with children about their ideas of what a neighborhood is. Take a walk around the neighborhood if possible, pointing out buildings, houses, schools, parks, playgrounds, or other features. *Observe* different types of buildings in the neighborhood.
- Involve children in helping others, such as making cards for the elderly.
- Model cooperation and negotiation. Ask children to help develop positive rules/expectations for the group. Tell children what we want them to do (“Use walking feet.”) instead of what we don’t want (“No running!”). Display these rules with both words and pictures to help children see what is expected of them.
- Create opportunities for children to work together, for example to prepare and distribute a special snack for other classes.