

Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework Family and Community Knowledge Systems: Culture

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Introduction

This specialized companion document to the Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework focuses on culture. It is organized to show its integral relationship to and continuity with the currently adopted Knowledge and Competency Framework. It follows the same format.

Culture is the lens through which each human being understands and connects with the world. It affects, for example, one's understanding of time, communication, and how to approach the task at hand. As an early education professional, it is therefore essential to understand one's own cultural lens as well as those of the children and families with whom one interacts.

Family and Community Knowledge Systems are the means through which culture is transmitted and affirmed. These systems are deep and varied. They include all the ways children, and the families and communities in which they are embedded, learn and engage with the world. A door to understanding values, attitudes, and behaviors and implementing culturally responsible practices can be opened by seeing these systems through the ways in which the content of the framework can interact with them. Many of these values, attitudes, and behaviors are supported and explained by [NAYCE's Advancing Equity framework](https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity) (<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity>) and the [Irving Harris Foundation's Diversity Tenets Initiative](https://diversityinformedtenets.org/about/the-tenets/) (<https://diversityinformedtenets.org/about/the-tenets/>).

For example, character development, fairness, and stewardship are important life-long assets within family and community knowledge systems, and they relate strongly to equity. These concepts loom large in the lives of many children of color, and they notice when the values of equity are not reflected in experiences with early childhood professionals. Equity issues present themselves early in their young lives through the experiences of parents, grandparents, older siblings, other family, and friends.

Young children notice when the harshest disciplines are given to boys or to children with darker skins. They are listening when older siblings, parents, and grandparents describe apartheid-like conditions in which advanced classes and attendant opportunities seem to be reserved for white children.

Professional development and its essential core, personal development, sit at the center of this Knowledge and Competency Framework. It assumes a commitment to life-long learning and reflection, an openness to new understandings, and a willingness to be inconvenienced. Such a commitment is a journey toward excellence as an early education professional, and a key role in launching children and families on their paths of "self" and "other" discoveries.

I. Child Development and Learning

An educator understands theories of development, research, and best practices to help children acquire physical, social, emotional, language, cognitive and creative skills; understands individual differences and approaches to learning; understands the critical role of family, culture, and community; and understands the interrelationships among culture, language, and thought.

Element I.A.1 Understanding Child Development Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
<p>Recognizes all areas of development including physical, social and emotional, executive functioning (planning, organizing and monitoring of goal oriented behaviors), cognitive, creative, and language are rooted in culture. See the film documentary, "Babies," (http://www.focusfeatures.com/babies)</p> <p>Describes how a particular developmental expectation can vary significantly in different cultures.</p> <p>Recognizes and names some culturally based developmental expectations that are more advanced than U.S. standards and are considered “normal” within that culture.</p>	<p>Chooses and applies current best practice, research-based, and appropriate cultural practices to encourage the foundation of development including physical, social and emotional, executive functioning, cognitive, creative, and language. Incorporates research-based effective practices developed or identified by culturally rooted researchers of color.</p> <p>Prepares learning experiences that will enable children from different cultural communities to build upon strengths and developmental expectations identified by culturally rooted researchers.</p> <p>Gives examples of ways that culturally based developmental expectations are embedded in both curricula and teaching strategies and modifies his/her approach appropriately to fit the needs of each child.</p>	<p>Co-creates with coworkers, families and community members adaptations of major theories and research-based, best practices and appropriate cultural practices related to children’s health and physical, language, literacy, cognitive, social and emotional, executive function and creative development.</p> <p>Explains asset-based research on development by researchers of color in meetings with parents and staff and asks for ideas about how to incorporate it into the program.</p> <p>Designs, recommends, and advocates for professional development training on culturally based developmental expectations and how to recognize and build upon them.</p>
<p>Encourages character development in each child, including values such as honesty, trustworthiness, respect, fairness, and stewardship.</p> <p>Observes and can describe how specific values are demonstrated in different cultural contexts.</p>	<p>Promotes and supports character development by reinforcing values of various children and families in the classroom setting.</p> <p>Prepares learning activities that show how values are demonstrated in different cultural contexts.</p>	<p>Models and coaches character development, by collaborating with families to adopt classroom and program policies that highlight these values.</p>

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Identifies social skills that are valued by different cultural communities. Encourages social skills children will need to interact well with their cultural and community networks .	Promotes and supports social skills children will need to interact well with their cultural and community networks. Prepares classroom activities that include illustrating and discussing particular social skills in different cultural settings.	Prioritizes sharing information with staff and colleagues on ways to recognize and promote social skills children from different cultural communities will need to interact well with their cultural and community networks.
Recognizes and names core values that are held by families from different cultural communities and the culturally different ways the same values can be expressed.	Chooses a variety of strategies to support and encourage children as they express family or community values.	Co-creates with staff, colleagues, and families a variety of strategies for incorporating values into the program and celebrating them.
Describes the demographics of young children in her/his geographic area and distinguishing features of different cultural groups. Practices cross-cultural knowledge and skills that work well with children from a broad range of cultures.	Plans classroom activities that draw upon the experiences of children from the range of cultures represented in the classroom. Models cultural knowledge and skills that work well with children from a broad range of cultures.	Develops with parents and staff practical strategies for sharing information across cultural groups within the program and recognizing good ideas. Coaches and trains staff on cross-cultural knowledge and skills that work well with children from a broad range of cultures.

Description

Culturally rooted means being grounded in a particular way of viewing the world in accordance with the ideas and values of one’s people.

“Cultural and community networks” refer to the ways in which people are connected. They can be geographic, for example people who live in proximity. They can also be connections among people who share a strong set of interests, a particular way of life, or a certain heritage. These networks can be local, regional, national and/or international.

Core values are ones that are most deeply held and are given the highest priority.

“Cross-cultural” refers to ideas, values, or practices that are shared or understood across two or more cultural groups.

II. Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences

An educator establishes and maintains safe and healthy environments, and plans and implements a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences that promote cognitive, social and emotional, physical, and creative growth and development.

Element II.A.1.2 Creating a Positive Learning Environment Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Demonstrates respect for and responsiveness to all children including those with disabilities, special health care needs, historic trauma , and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	Ensures inclusion, in all aspects of program, of children with disabilities, children with special health care needs, historic trauma, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	Assesses, evaluates, and continually improves the environment to ensure it is culturally and linguistically responsive and promotes the respect of differences.
<p>Recognizes negative images and behaviors in the larger society toward child and his/her cultural, ethnic, social, gender, or language group.</p> <p>Recognizes the negative impact of a lack of images that affirm the identities of children from a minority cultural, ethnic, social, gender, or language group.</p>	<p>Modifies the classroom environment to counteract negative images and behaviors in the larger society toward child and his/her cultural, ethnic, social, gender, or language group and to promote positive ones.</p> <p>Chooses, discusses, and reinforces books, images, examples of languages, and activities to show a variety of seldom seen, positive images throughout the year, not just on special occasions.</p> <p>Anticipates the impact of popular media images and messages that may have negative impacts on children from some cultural communities and researches effective ways to counter them in the classroom.</p>	<p>Advocates for changes in the program environment and promotes shared learning among co-workers to counteract negative images and behaviors in the larger society toward child and his/her cultural, ethnic, social, gender, or language group and to promote positive ones.</p> <p>Selects and promotes to staff and colleagues sources of books, images, music, and activities that show a variety of seldom seen, positive images of children and families from a variety of cultural, ethnic, social, gender, and language groups.</p>

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
<p>Recognizes and gives examples of ways to show respect for the home language or dialect of children (including sign language) as they learn standard English.</p> <p>Recognizes and gives examples of ways to support efforts by families to have their children reclaim and/or preserve their home language.</p>	<p>Plans ways to demonstrate respect visually and in learning activities for the home languages and/or dialects (including sign language) of children and their families.</p> <p>Anticipates interest and identifies classroom strategies that support efforts by families to have their children reclaim and/or preserve their home language.</p>	<p>Organizes and promotes professional development training on ways to incorporate across the program respect for and preservation of the home language or dialect of children (including sign language) as they learn standard English:</p>

Description

Historic trauma refers to the range of physical, emotional, psychological, and economic injuries inflicted across generations upon a group of people, based upon their identity, and expressed by individual members of that group.

Element II.A.1.5 Observing, Recording, and Assessing Development Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
<p>Encourages children to interact with others one on one and in small and large groups as they explore, experiment, and problem solve, affirming individual and cultural differences.</p>	<p>Offers children meaningful, hands-on activities that support and practice newly acquired skills, encourages exploration and experimentation, building upon skills exhibited at home and at school.</p>	<p>Constructs learning environments and teaching methods that allow children to make choices, participate in individual, small group and large group experiences, and explore, experiment and problem-solve, building upon skills exhibited at home and at school.</p>
<p>Recognizes advanced skills and abilities that children exhibit at home and are valued within their culture and by their families.</p> <p>Encourages families to notice and talk about skills and abilities that children exhibit at home.</p> <p>Dismisses assumptions that children of color are often developmentally behind, and is able to recognize advanced skills as well as boredom in children of color.</p>	<p>Engages families in conversations about child’s advanced skills and abilities exhibited at home that may not be easily observed/defined at school.</p> <p>Plans effective and affirming learning activities by asking questions of families and eliciting details that contribute to developing teaching strategies that work well for children from different cultural backgrounds.</p>	<p>Using family input, collaborates with co-workers to accurately interpret and appropriately connect skills and abilities children are exhibiting at home and at school to the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress and other standards and assessments used in the field.</p>

Element II.B.1.4 Promoting Curiosity

Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Talks honestly, knowledgably, and respectfully about similarities and differences that children recognize in people, families, and communities.	Provides practical opportunities for children to learn about themselves, their family, and languages spoken by those in the program and community.	Creates practical opportunities for co-workers and children to learn about interests, traditions, languages, cultures, and countries of origin of other families in the program and community within the program environment.
<p>Recognizes cultural differences in styles of communication and approaches to problem solving with welcoming and affirming curiosity, rather than judgement.</p> <p>Describes optimum forms of essential skills, such as courtesy and consideration, in different cultural traditions.</p>	<p>Prepares exploratory activities that enable children to use a variety of approaches to learning, including communal skills, interdependence, and independence.</p> <p>Shows and discusses ways that essential skills, such as courtesy and consideration, are expressed in different cultural traditions and establishes a classroom standard.</p>	Collaborates with staff, families, and colleagues to design ways to share information about cultural similarities and differences across the program and to establish program standards for character development, courtesy, and consideration.

Description

Communal, interdependence, and independence refer to a continuum of skills ranging from sharing with everyone in the group (communal), to mutual sharing between some members (interdependence), to working alone (independence).

III. Relationships with Families

An educator establishes and maintains positive collaborative relationships with families to meet the needs of children.

Element III.A Understanding Families

Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Recognizes the importance of children’s relationship with their family and supports parent and family strengths and emerging competencies.	Supports and reinforces parent and family strengths, emerging competencies, and positive parent-child interactions; suggests culturally congruent strategies to help family envelop child into busy lives and to find pleasure in parenting their child.	Builds on strengths of parent(s) and family; reinforces positive adult-child interactions; promotes culturally specific child rearing competencies in maximizing opportunities, facing challenges and solving problems.
Recognizes the socio-economic, legal, and judicial context in which families from different cultural communities exist. Recognizes and employs positive cultural messages communicated about children from a range of backgrounds to strengthen connections with families and their communities.	Relates positive cultural messages about children from a range of backgrounds to suggested learning activities that can also contribute to their families, households, and their communities, recognizing that every cultural group may have culturally rooted goals for their children. Engages families in conversations to determine what types of learning activities can also contribute to families, households, and their communities, bridging the connection between home and school.	Collaborates with colleagues to design ways to integrate a range of positive cultural messages communicated about children of varied cultural backgrounds into the program environment. Organizes training and coaching sessions in which culturally specific child rearing techniques recommended by culturally rooted researchers of color are pointed out and explained.

Description

A **positive cultural message** promotes values and skills that are treasured in a community. For example, in cultures that are highly interdependent, a positive cultural message could be, “Children are observant and helpful.”

Element III.B.7 Engaging Families

Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
<p>Recognizes that families pass their cultural perspectives, traditions, and culture to children; encourages family members to share talents, skills, and cultural practices in the early childhood program; and reflects on changes or adaptations that can be made in response.</p>	<p>Invites family members to share their cultural perspective, talents, skills, and cultural practices and arranges opportunities for families to participate in learning activities with children at home, highlighting different cultural practices.</p>	<p>Promotes and mentors co-workers to consider the influence of culture on programmatic values, decisions, and behavior of self and others.</p>
<p>Recognizes cultural perspectives and strengths exhibited by families, such as intergenerational and community cohesion and resiliency.</p> <p>Recognizes need to change or adapt practices, methodologies, framework, and/or strategies in response to what she/he has learned from families and communities.</p>	<p>Changes or adapts teaching practices, methodologies, and framework to build upon the cultural strengths and perspectives of families and communities.</p> <p>Plans intergenerational activities with families that emphasize a variety of cultural values such as interdependence, problem solving, and stewardship.</p>	<p>Designs and advocates for reflective sessions in which staff and colleagues can analyze and compare cultural assumptions that influence programmatic design, operational processes, and instructional framework.</p> <p>Promotes programmatic changes and works with co-workers on adaptations that build upon the cultural perspectives and strengths of families and communities.</p>

Element III.C.2 Linking Families to Relevant Resources Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Describes community, health, and social resources for families, including those that are culturally congruent .	Identifies culturally congruent community resources that are trusted by community and provides families with information; refers parents and families to community agencies, health, or social services when needed.	Analyzes, evaluates, and applies current promising practice and research-based practices that are culturally congruent to determine when a referral is needed.
<p>Recognizes and describes essential elements of organizations that are culturally congruent with specific cultural communities.</p> <p>Recognizes and describes essential elements of organizations that provide excellent services to individuals from a wide range of cultures.</p>	<p>Connects families to culturally or socially supportive organizations, advocates, and events in their communities.</p> <p>Identifies a variety of resources that accommodate individual as well as cultural preferences.</p> <p>Dismisses the assumption that individuals from particular cultural groups will always prefer services from their own cultural community.</p>	<p>Builds relationships with culturally and socially supportive organizations and recommends to staff and families organizations, advocates, and events in communities reflective of the families of the children served.</p> <p>Collaborates with staff to create ways to help families establish relationships with culturally or socially supportive organizations, advocates, and events in their own cultural communities as well as those within the dominant culture.</p>
Lists and locates knowledgeable and trusted community-based organizations, institutions, and businesses reflective of the cultural communities of the families served.	<p>Engages with knowledgeable and trusted community-based organizations or institutions to provide advice, services, and expertise.</p> <p>Gives families the option to connect with community-based organizations and institutions or those in the dominant culture respecting each family’s right to make informed choices.</p>	<p>Advocates for and prioritizes engaging knowledgeable and trusted community-based organizations, institutions, and businesses to deliver services and expertise to the program.</p> <p>Collaborates with staff to create ways to help families establish relationships outside the program setting with knowledgeable and trusted community-based organizations and institutions or those in the dominant culture.</p>

Description

A **culturally congruent** organization is one that broadly shares the worldview, assumptions, and values of participants and whose leadership and staff are reflective of the culture.

A **culturally supportive** organization is one that reflects and affirms the participant’s worldview, assumptions, and values, and includes knowledgeable lead and line staff.

IV. Assessment, Evaluation, and Individualization

An educator observes, records and assesses children’s skills in the context of their family and culture to identify strengths, needs, and approaches to learning to plan appropriate activities, interactions, and environments; and assesses and evaluates program quality in an effort to continually improve programming.

Element IV.A. Observing, Recording, and Assessing Development Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Observes each child daily, using guidelines set by the program and informed by parents/families.	Utilizes a variety of methods, including some that are culturally specific , on multiple occasions to observe and assess strengths, needs, interests, preferences, and ways of responding to people and events.	Explains to co-workers assessment theories and research methods, including some that are culturally specific, and the importance of sharing results with families.
Recognizes when classroom observations and assessments do not capture or reflect skills and abilities valued by families, some of which may be culturally specific.	Chooses appropriate tools that are culturally specific and engages with families to help identify skills and abilities and to inform assessments of children.	Advocates for and prioritizes culturally appropriate and culturally specific tools to be used in the program for child assessments. Trains and coaches staff on ways to use supplemental information from families in child assessments.

Description

“**Culturally specific**” refers to concepts, beliefs, and practices that are extremely important to a particular cultural group, but may not be important to or even recognized by others. These core concepts, beliefs, and practices can be doorways to learning for children and bridges of understanding to families and communities.

V. Not included in this companion document

VI. Professionalism

The educator of young children demonstrates a view of professional development as a career-long effort and responsibility, including engaging in personal learning as a daily and as a career-long effort and responsibility to inform instructional practices and interactions with children. The educator must understand:

- engaging in continuous learning is essential in providing effective care and education.
- how to apply effective practices.
- which behaviors demonstrate professional and ethical behavior.

Element VI.A.3 Engaging in Professional Development Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Recognizes strengths and opportunities for growth and change by seeking out situations in which one is a cultural, racial, or ethnic minority; responds to helpful feedback by monitoring and changing behavior.	Reflects on teaching and program practices, observations of children, outcomes, feedback, and constructive criticism from peers of a different race, culture, or ethnicity to further develop personal goals for teaching and improving practices.	Evaluates individual differences, multiple perspectives, and values observed in a variety of instructional practices, paying particular attention to unintended, culturally based assumptions.
Explores and reflects upon own cultural identity, assumptions, preferences, privileges, and biases, describing how they originated and are reinforced or mitigated.	Identifies ways in which one’s own culture and privilege influences practices, methodologies, and strategies. Determines what changes must be made to effectively teach children from different cultural backgrounds.	Promotes and collaborates with co-workers, student teachers and practicum students to institutionalize support for self-reflection on personal privilege, cultural awareness, and implicit bias for themselves and program staff.
Recognizes the centrality of culture , race, and ethnic identity in healthy development	Expresses and models curiosity and knowledge about the work of researchers of color regarding principles for healthy child development in specific cultural communities. Implements key principles specific to healthy child development in specific cultural communities in own practice.	Recommends researchers of color, promoting and collaborating with co-workers, student teachers and practicum students to embed their relevant work into program policies and practices. Designs accountability measures with staff and co-workers for their roles in children’s healthy development.

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
Observes and reflects upon own disciplinary practices to note if particular types of children are being adversely and disproportionately singled out, for example, children with darker skins, or children who are more proactive and assertive.	<p>Chooses coaches and guides for recognizing own implicit biases and developing strategies for overcoming them.</p> <p>Chooses coaches and guides for help with effective classroom management techniques for children from a broad range of cultures.</p>	Promotes and organizes opportunities for staff and co-workers to receive information, practical training, mentoring, and coaching, emphasizing the role of implicit bias in sabotaging effective classroom management techniques for children from a broad range of cultures.

Description

“**Centrality of culture**” refers to the overarching role that shared belief systems--ways of knowing, doing, and being—play in our understanding of the world and our place in it. These belief systems affect how we interact, our assessments, and our priorities.

VII. Health, Safety, and Nutrition

An educator of young children understands the importance of establishing and maintaining an environment that ensures the health, safety, and nourishment of each child. The educator must understand:

- how to ensure safety
- how to provide healthy nutrition
- how to establish healthy practices

Element A. Establishing Healthy Practices

Competencies

Level 1- Explores	Level 2 – Implements	Level 3 –Designs and Leads
<p>Recognizes racism as a health issue and describes the ways it negatively impacts the well-being of children who have witnessed, perpetrated, and/or have been victimized by it.</p> <p>Albert Einstein College of Medicine (https://einstein.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/the-impact-of-racism-on-child-and-adolescent-health)</p>	<p>Identifies and implements healthy strategies to reduce the effects of racism on children who have witnessed, perpetrated, and/or have been victimized by racism.</p> <p>Identifies examples of good health, healing, and prevention from different cultural traditions.</p> <p>Implements teaching strategies incorporating examples of good health, healing, and prevention from different cultural traditions.</p>	<p>Creates opportunities for self and coworkers to understand more deeply the health impacts of racism on children who have witnessed, perpetrated, and/or have been victimized by racism, and to develop strategies to reduce its effects within the program.</p> <p>Understands, articulates, and demonstrates through actions that culture is healing; culture is key to good health; and culture is prevention.</p>