

Preface



In today's increasingly diverse world, it is essential that teachers develop competence in three key areas:

- Understanding important differences among people
- Seeing and appreciating differences as strengths within families, communities, and programs
- Making decisions about care and education that reflect cultural competence

This book is a part of this important evolution in the professional preparation and development of teachers.

This text takes new and experienced early childhood educators on a reflective journey to explore personal attitudes and values related to human diversity and culturally competent teaching. It also identifies and explains effective strategies for supporting and celebrating diverse children and families.

Three facets serve as overarching themes throughout the text: *self*, *others*, and *group*. Reflective activities prompt readers to understand their own biases, background experiences, and values, while interactive experiences prompt readers to explore the similarities and differences of others. A final piece of the three-part puzzle encourages readers to practice instructional strategies that promote belonging and partnership among groups of children, professionals, and families in various early childhood settings.

The purpose of this text is to support professionals as they develop awareness and an appreciation of differences and the confidence to apply culturally competent teaching practices to ensure success for each child and family.

Features of the Text

A key feature of this text is the use of individual stories about diverse family contexts (In My Family) and classroom experiences (Classroom Story Corner). Each story brings a genuine and real-world aspect to the text, offering important glimpses into the unique experiences of individual children, families, and teachers as a way of emphasizing the differences and similarities among us. Each chapter also includes robust practical strategies for applying instructional practices that are culturally relevant and validating both in the classroom



(Curricular Connections) and in partnership with families (Family Partnerships). Videos are woven through each chapter of the Pearson eText to help students understand the content, issues and teaching applications.

Each chapter wraps up with a series of critical thinking discussion prompts and activities to promote self-reflection and interactive perspective-taking. Through these culminating activities, readers are guided to examine their personal ideas and background in the context of the richly diverse world in which we live and work.

Guiding Concepts

First and foremost, this book is wholly focused on the belief that our individual differences and diverse family contexts are tremendous assets to our communities. Beginning from a place of truly valuing, honoring, and celebrating our differences, we can then layer in the important and meaningful ways in which we share similarities. Only from a place of valuing differences and validating similarities can we truly form connected, reciprocal partnerships with colleagues, children, and families, partnerships that are equitable and promote in each and every member a sense of belonging and inclusiveness.

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