

Practice Guideline on Child Development – Section 3

Pause and reflect on your lived experiences

RECEs have their own unique lived experiences, ideas, practices and knowledge they bring to the space. This diversity enriches the program and the social and cultural contexts of the children, families and communities they work with. Using only westernized social contexts as a guide for children’s development could prevent RECEs from viewing children with the complexity they deserve.

With colleagues, consider the two scenarios below and reflect on the following:

- Your view and understanding of child development;
- The role of culture and history;
- Your practice and the historical and contemporary experiences you’ve had; and
- How you can adapt your practice to reflect your growing awareness and knowledge of a range of child development perspectives.

You can add your thoughts and reflections below.

Learning garden

Alia is in kindergarten and her family owns a local grocery store that sells homegrown produce. An RECE named Regina who works in the kindergarten program is holding some harsh judgments about the family who is focusing on gardening with Alia rather than on her homework. The family recently discovered Alia’s interest to participate in nurturing the garden as she started asking questions about seasons, seeds, sunlight and temperature. Alia enjoys watering the plants, preparing the soil and transporting the seedlings in her wagon to plant them in spaces she is preparing with the help of her grandmother, auntie and cousins.

Alia regularly talks about her garden during the class sharing circle and brings in some of her plants. She also shares some insights into what her family does together in their store. Regina thinks this helps bring the natural world indoors and she enjoys having conversations with Alia about her garden and plants. But Regina is also frustrated because she feels the family should be focusing on strengthening Alia’s number recognition skills so her math learning and development matches that of her peers.

Regina says to a colleague, “plants are great and all, but Alia is really behind in math. She doesn’t recognize numbers that she should know by now, like the other children. It also makes my life easier when she doesn’t need extra support with math.”

- How might you support Regina and her perspective? Conversely, how might you challenge it?
- How might you involve Alia’s family and the early-learning team in this conversation?
- How would you balance the kindergarten learning outcomes with what is important to Alia and her family?

Differing perspectives

Two RECEs, Rafael and Yolanda, have different views about what is important in relation to child development. Yolanda believes spoon-feeding a pre-school child is a demonstration of care and love. She believes children thrive with touch, care and attention, and they will learn to feed themselves in due time. Rafael, on the other hand, values supporting and encouraging children to be independent, believing that it's important to promote their development of fine motor and self-help skills by showing them how to use utensils to feed themselves during meal and snack times. This, Rafael thinks, helps children gain confidence and fit in better with their peers.

- How have you approached differing views with a colleague in your practice?
- What things did you consider and what were the outcomes?
- Did you see yourself in this scenario? How did it make you think about your practice?
- As a supervisor, how would you support this educator team?
- Who else would you involve in the conversation?