Addressing Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Culturally and linguistically responsive and affirming practices are not a separate standard but rather are embedded within each of the standards. EI/ECSE candidates should be well prepared in their professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach in diverse, inclusive settings. In order to be well prepared EI/ECSE candidates must understand the broader societal context and biases including those around gender, sexual orientation, ability and disability, language, national origin, indigenous heritage, religion, and other identities.

Beginning with Standard 1 (Child Development and Early Learning) Component 1.2 notes that EI/ECSE candidates are expected to recognize that young children may exhibit individual differences in development within a normative range, and that their own social and cultural background influences what they view as normative. Furthermore, the standard notes that they are able to identify how the family’s social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics may influence, as well as support, their child’s development, including the timing and order of developmental milestones. Similarly, Standard 2 (Partnering with Families) Component 2.1 states that candidates form “respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with families”. In order to achieve this outcome they must engage in self-reflection of their own cultures and beliefs, evaluate the impact of these on their partnerships, and use the knowledge gained to inform their interactions with families. Standard 3 – (Collaboration and Teaming) Component 3.2 indicates the importance of using a variety of collaboration strategies and again that these need to reflect culturally and linguistically responsive practices as the EI/ECSE candidate works with families and other adults. Standard 7 (Professionalism and Ethical Practice) Component 7.3 requires that EI/ECSE candidates exhibit leadership skills in advocating for improved outcomes for young children, families and the profession. As a part of this leadership and advocacy role they are expected to access evidenced-based resources to be informed of issues around implicit bias and to limit the impact of their own biases in interactions with families, children, and other professionals.

Standards 4 (Assessment Processes); 5 (Applications of Curriculum Frameworks), and 6 (Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction) all are focused directly on the teaching and learning process and each directly addresses the need for EI/ECSE candidates to understand and use culturally responsive and affirming practices as they engage infants, toddlers and young children in learning and support their development. For example, in Standard 4 (Assessment Processes) Component 4.1 candidates are expected to make decisions regarding assessment tools and methods that include attention to those that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Standard 5 (Curriculum Framework) Component 5.1 notes that as EI/ECSE candidates design and facilitate learning experiences that they must reflect culturally responsive experiences that support the unique abilities and needs of each and every child and their family. Finally, Standard 6 (Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction) states that EI/ECSE candidates are expected to facilitate equitable access and participation for all children and families by using culturally responsive and affirming practices.

In summary EI/ECSE candidates are able to in partnership with each child’s family create equitable, culturally responsive and affirming early learning opportunities across multiple contexts. These learning opportunities are designed such that each child experiences responsive interactions that nurture their full range of social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and linguistic abilities; and reflect and model fundamental principles of fairness and justice.

These materials support the CEC Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE) 2020. The Standards are available at: https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-standards-early-interventionists-early-childhood-special-educators
Access this and other products at: https://www.dec-spied.org/ei-ecse-standards