

5-2016

# Culturally Responsive Policy In An Urban HeadStart Program

Tanya M. Johnson  
*National Louis University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss>

Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), and the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Johnson, Tanya M., "Culturally Responsive Policy In An Urban HeadStart Program" (2016). *Dissertations*. 163.  
<https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss/163>

This Dissertation - Public Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons@NLU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@NLU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@nl.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@nl.edu).

A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:  
CASE STUDY OF BALDRIDGE CRITERIA PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR  
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT  
  
IMPLEMENTING THE PRE-K -3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE APPROACH FOR DISTRICTS PARTNERING  
WITH COMMUNITY BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS  
  
POLICY ADVOCACY  
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE POLICY IN AN URBAN HEADSTART PROGRAM

Tanya M. Johnson

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

March, 2016

A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

CASE STUDY OF BALDRIDGE CRITERIA PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR  
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

IMPLEMENTING THE PRE-K -3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE APPROACH FOR DISTRICTS PARTNERING  
WITH COMMUNITY BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

POLICY ADVOCACY  
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE POLICY IN AN URBAN HEAD START PROGRAM

Tanya M. Johnson

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Dissertation Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
EDL Doctoral Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member, Dissertation Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, NCE Doctoral Programs

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean's Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, National College of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Approved

Copyright by Tanya M. Johnson, 2016  
All rights reserved

## Document Organization Statement

This document is organized to meet the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement with a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

### Works Cited

Browder, L.H. (1995). An alternative to the doctoral dissertation: The policy advocacy concept and the policy document. *Journal of School Leadership*, 5, 40-69.

Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Shulman, L.S., Golde, C.M., Bueschel, A.C., & Garabedian, K.J. (2006). Reclaiming education's doctorates: A critique and a proposal. *Educational Researcher*, 35(3), 25-32.

Wagner, T. et al. (2006). *Change leadership: A practical guide to transforming our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A THREE PART DISSERTATION:  
POLICY ADVOCACY  
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE POLICY IN AN URBAN HEADSTART PROGRAM

Tanya M. Johnson

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

June 2016

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this Culturally Responsive policy is to provide a framework for implementing and enhancing cultural responsiveness in an urban Head Start program. By increasing awareness of culturally responsiveness and providing on-going professional development and resources, the policy will have a significant impact on ensuring that staff are prepared and supported in the implementation of culturally responsive best practices. The policy maintains that culturally responsive pedagogy facilitates and supports the achievement of all students. Teachers must create a culture where all students regardless of their cultural background are welcomed and provided with the best opportunity to learn.

..

## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	i
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	ii
<b>Table of Tables</b> .....	v
<b>Table of Figures</b> .....	vi
<b>SECTION ONE: Vision Statement</b> .....	1
How I became aware of this particular policy issue.....	3
Demographics of Wilder Head Start .....	5
Current Wilder Head Start Policy.....	8
Theoretical Framework .....	12
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.....	12
Funds of Knowledge .....	14
Microaggressions and Racism.....	17
Manifestation of microaggression .....	18
Anti-Bias Education .....	19
Head Start Guiding Principles.....	20
Head Start Framework .....	22
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Teaching Standards .....	23
What are the crucial issues that make this a policy problem in need of a response? ....	24
What policy am I recommending/advocating as a solution to address the original policy issue? .....	27
Recommended Policy for Wilder Head Start Program .....	28
How do I envision the recommended/advocated policy will be effective in meeting the issue? .....	32



<b>SECTION TWO: Analysis of Need</b> .....	36
Education Analysis.....	36
Economic Analysis.....	41
Social and Political Analysis.....	44
Moral and Ethical Analysis.....	49
<b>SECTION THREE: Advocated Policy Statement</b> .....	52
Goals and Objectives of Policy .....	52
Whose needs, values, and preferences are being represented by the policy? .....	53
<b>SECTION FOUR: Policy Argument</b> .....	55
“Pros” and “Cons” of Policy .....	55
Pros.....	55
Cons.....	56
<b>SECTION FIVE: Policy Implementation Plan</b> .....	57
Organizational level .....	58
Individual level.....	63
Teaching Practices.....	63
Develop a Vision.....	64
Professional Learning Community (PLC).....	65
<b>SECTION SIX: Policy Assessment Plan</b> .....	67
<b>SECTION SEVEN: Summary Impact Statement</b> .....	70
What makes this the appropriate and best policy? .....	71
What and whose values are at the center of the policy?.....	71
How are the needs and concerns of all stakeholders included sufficiently? .....	72
“As Is” Culturally Responsive Practices.....	72
Competencies.....	72

Condition.....	73
Culture.....	73
Context.....	73
“To Be” Moving Toward the Goal.....	73
Final Reflections .....	74
Implementation Plan .....	74
Lessons Learned.....	75
Lesson one: change.....	76
Lesson two: Microaggressions .....	77
Challenges to Implementation.....	78
Knowledge of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.....	80
Recommendations .....	82
References.....	83
<b>APPENDIX A: Policy Self-Assessment.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: Policy Program Checklist .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: AS IS Culturally Responsive.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: TO Be Cultural Responsive.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: Cultural Policy PowerPoint.....</b>	<b>106</b>

## Table of Tables

Table 1 Ethnicity of Wilder Head Start Students.....	5
Table 2 Race of Wilder Head Start Students .....	5
Table 3 Ethnicity of Wilder Head Start Staff.....	6
Table 4 Race of Wilder Head Start Staff .....	6
Table 5 Policy Research Base .....	15
Table 6 Forms of Subtle Racism.....	18
Table 7 Multicultural Principles and Implications.....	21
Table 8 Roles and Responsibilities During Implementation .....	32
Table 9 Ethnicity of Wilder Head Start Staff.....	54
Table 10 Race of Wilder Head Start Students .....	54
Table 11: Head Start Multicultural Principle and Policy Plan for Implementation... <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	
Table 12 Principles and Implementation .....	60

## **Table of Figures**

Figure 1 Framework for Effective Practice .....	23
Figure 2 Journey Toward a Culturally Responsive Approach.....	26
Figure 3 Four Data Activities: Guiding Questions .....	68

## **SECTION ONE: Vision Statement**

The late great author and poet Maya Angelou said, “Our young children must be taught that racial peculiarities do exist, but beneath the skin, beyond the differing features and into the true heart of being, fundamentally we are more alike, my friend, than we are unlike.” (Angelou, 2014, p.7) This statement reminds us that differences do not have to separate. Realizing that what makes us similar and what makes us different are most often the result of cultural diversity, creates the opportunity to build cultural competence within our institutions and individuals to ensure that children are well-served. According to the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) at Georgetown University, the work of Cross, et. al., 1989, provides a definition for cultural competence that established a foundation. They said, “cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively together (<http://nccc.georgetown.edu/foundations/frameworks.html#ccdefinition>).

Children learn “how to be” through the culture they experience at home and in school. Every institution (from schools to families to governments and corporate institutions) has its own culture. Culture includes the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols accepted as true (generally without thinking about them) that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. When school culture is significantly different from the culture that students encounter at home or at church, there is an opportunity to help students develop cultural competence. But there must be culturally relevant (and familiar) teaching practices to ensure that students are not harmed as a consequence of these different cultural values and beliefs. Often times, behind

disparities in school-related performance lay dramatic differences in culture. Competent teachers must be prepared to address their own cultural biases in order to meet the needs of all children, if they are going to help bridge the divide between the culture of home and the culture of school.

In an article titled “Positive Development of Minority Children” in the *Social Policy Report* the author stated that, “promoting optimal development among minority children should ***strengthen or support what families are already doing well within a cultural context*** (emphasis added) and also address the challenges or barriers many low-income minority families face” (Cabrera, 2013, p. 1). Head Start and other early childhood education programs were designed to do this by incorporating knowledge of and respect for families’ culture and implementing best practices that include quality learning environments, intentional teaching, and family engagement strategies. When these programs are well designed and implemented with fidelity, they support the development and learning of young children.

In the family, and in early education settings, children gain cultural information as they form relationships, participate in daily routines, and get involved in learning activities. Early childhood programming was designed to support development and school readiness for all children. Children thrive in this context of stable and supportive relationships with adults who love and care for them.

Early childhood programs need policies that are explicitly designed to strengthen teacher and student relationships and enhance cultural responsiveness. These relationships form the foundation for learning, and early learning has been demonstrated to significantly impact future academic success. Policies that guide the practice of

delivering high-quality early childhood education are critical. These policies need to be clearly articulated. They must be designed in a manner that makes them able to be implemented, tracked and measured, and they must be reinforced through rigorous and continual professional development practices.

### **How I became aware of this particular policy issue**

During the fall of 2014, I began a new job as a Head Start Center Director for a non-profit organization. As Director at Wilder Head Start, I am responsible for daily oversight of the program's operations. This includes ensuring successful cognitive, social, emotional, and physical outcomes for children by establishing and monitoring exemplary early childhood programming utilizing developmentally appropriate, research-based curricula and creating high quality early childhood environments.

I believe in being intentional, supportive, flexible, authentic, and individualize my approach with staff. For the first couple of months, my main goal was to build meaningful relationships with the staff and observe the culture of the program. Each morning, I went to each classroom to greet the staff, hold a brief conversation about their evening and ask if they needed anything. During the second month of employment, I noticed some negative interactions with the staff and parents. On one incident, I had to mediate and ask the parent to come into my office. The parent shared that the teacher speaks down to me like I am a child and don't know any better. Then I starting hearing comments from staff that were negative and demeaning. At this time, I was unsure of how to describe the comments but they made me feel as though there was a disconnection with the teachers and parents and the teacher and the children.

In the winter of 2015, my supervisor asked me to attend a Head Start training on a new initiative for Supporting School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys. The purpose of this training was to develop tangible resources and training modules for educators and others working with young children to improve their interactions, teaching strategies, and collaborative efforts with parents, and communities to enhance school readiness outcomes for young African American boys (professional development training, 2015). It was at this training that I had an “AHA” moment and some clarity to the negative comments from the staff about the families and my perception of how some of the teachers were not connected to the families and children. The presenter described the teachers approach as microaggression.

After the training, each program was given an opportunity to continue the discussion on Supporting School Readiness and Success of Young AA Boys by participating in a yearlong Community of Practice (CoP). I was asked to form a committee and be the lead. We began our work in the spring of 2015. Throughout the year, we met monthly, watched and participated in required webinars, developed a goal, and implemented a program-wide initiative entitled, Father Read. The purpose of Father Read was to increase male presence in the buildings. Monthly, a flyer goes home asking dads to come in and read to a classroom. To the fathers take ownership of the program, we provided them a place to meet, have coffee, and choose a book to read.

During my summer coursework in 2015, one of the assigned books was *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*. The content in this book brought more clarity in helping me understand the deficit-based approach of the teachers and staff in the organization and my role, as a lead in helping them make a paradigm shift. The program



needed to revise the cultural competence policy so it is relevant and meet the needs of the population we serve.

**Demographics of Wilder Head Start.**

*The Tables 1-4 show the demographics of the staff and children of Wilder Head Start. The program serves approximately 1200 families with a 92% poverty level. While the overwhelming majority of children and staff of Wilder are African American, fewer than 10% of the 24 members of the Board of Directors of the school are African American. This is a critical factor considering the decisions that are being made for families living in poverty and will be discussed in more detail late in this policy proposal.*

*Table 1 Ethnicity of Wilder Head Start Students*

	# of participants	% of participants
Hispanic or Latino Origin	63	4.7%
Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino Origin	1,264	95.3%

*Table 2 Race of Wilder Head Start Students*

	# of participants
American Indian or Alaska Native	3
Asian	72
Black or African American	1,173
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1

White	35
Biracial or Multi-Racial	35
Other Race	7
Unspecified Race	1

(Head Start Service Snapshot 2014-2015)

*Table 3 Ethnicity of Wilder Head Start Staff*

	# of participants
Hispanic or Latino Origin	14
Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino Origin	288

*Table 4 Race of Wilder Head Start Staff*

	# of participants
American Indian or Alaska Native	3
Asian	13
Black or African American	179
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3
White	96
Biracial or Multi-Racial	1
Other Race	4

Unspecified Race	5
------------------	---

(Head Start Service Snapshot 2014-2015)

I observed that the practices and interactions in the Wilder Head Start's program were not culturally responsive and did not consistently demonstrate respect for the culture of the families the program served.

Through observation, I heard staff comments such as, "I am not doing home visits because I don't go to the ghetto," or, "did you hear how loud and ghetto the parents were in the hallway?" and, "I can't believe the mom sent her child to school looking like that."

These types of remarks are considered biased interaction, which research described as micro aggressions. According to Sue (2010), microaggression is defined as, "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults toward people from non-dominant cultures." (p. 5)

Perpetrators of micro aggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with non-dominant community members. "Micro aggression is often treated as an isolated incident; violators may not even know they did something wrong. This is the case with the staff at Wilder. They don't know the impact of their comments. Because they are often missed and usually repeated over time, micro aggressions become egregious," (Lindsey, Robbins, and Terrell, 2009, p.113) and have a negative impact on the target audience (in this case, young children). These micro aggressions indicated a mismatch in the cultural cohesion between staff and the Head

Start children and families they were hired to serve. After observing these behaviors, I decided to read the policy related to cultural competence.

### **Current Wilder Head Start Policy**

The policy was not easily accessible for the staff. As a new employee, I had to ask my supervisor for a copy and she immediately referred me to a tenured site director who had to search for it. Although it is an important policy for the agency, and being culturally responsive is addressed in the Head Start Program Performance standards, this policy was not discussed during my new staff orientation with my immediate supervisor or two program-wide orientations five months prior. However, the policy clearly states (Wilder, 2014):

**Purpose:** To support and respect the home language, culture, and family composition of each child.

**Policy:** Children and families are provided acceptance of diversity through the ongoing demonstration of respect for the values and beliefs of each family. Understanding and respecting the cultural and linguistic diversity, social background, religious beliefs, and child rearing practices of each family is fundamental to the program.

**Procedure:** Teachers and staff will model respect and help children demonstrate appreciation of others. Providing books and materials that reflect families' home languages and culture as well as that of others in the community is a priority.

Seeing this validated my assumption that there was an expectation of cultural competence integrated into the design and culture of the Head Start program as a whole.

Head Start is a nationally administered, federally-funded program that supports the importance of building positive relationships in the context of a child's culture. It provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income families.

According to the Office of Head Start's website, President Lyndon B. Johnson initiated the program in response to the War on Poverty in January of 1964. Based on research on the effects of poverty on education, Head Start was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children of low-income families with access to a comprehensive program to meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. A key tenet of the program established that it be culturally responsive to the communities served.

According to the Wisconsin Head Start Association/ Head Start in Wisconsin, the program serves over a million children and their families each year in urban and rural areas in all 50 states. There are 42 Head Start programs that serve children ages three and four and 20 Early Head Start programs that serve children ages birth to three in Wisconsin. The programs are operated by a wide variety of organizations including: public/private non-profit organizations, Community Action Agencies, public schools, Cooperative Educational System Agencies (CESA), a public university, and Tribal government (Wisconsin Head Start Association, "About" para. 3). Wilder is a grantee in Milwaukee that serves 1300 children, 1200 of whom are African American.

As I critically reflected on the staff's practice of micro aggression at Wilder Head Start, three thoughts emerged: (1) the current policy did not have expectations to support culturally responsive practices, (2) the staff did not understand cultural competency, (3),

they lacked the experience or training in the practice of cultural competency in their classrooms. There was a severe “disconnect” between theory and practice. Auerbach (2012) described this as the, “Neo-institutional theory” which suggested that institutional expectations (including policies) do not always match the behavior of individuals within the institution. In the Book, *School Leadership for Authentic Family and Community Partnership*, the author clarified that “if the program level policies are loosely coupled with the classroom practice” the policy and practice exist at “two separate levels, with little connection and no accountability” (p.146). This was obviously a contributing factor in the agency. According to Sue, (2010) to successfully address systemic and individual microaggressions, organizations must develop a systemic and long term commitment to educate the entire workforce concerning diversity issues, to address the barrier that block multiculturalism, and to increase the sensitivity of employees at all levels to the manifestation and power of microaggression (p.229).

The article, “Intentional Approaches to Supporting Diversity in Early Childhood Programs,” offered a series of questions to guide the review of the policy. The guiding questions were: (1) Do your policies reflect your intentionality? (2) Are your professional development efforts helping your staff to better support children who are culturally, linguistically and ability diverse? (Catlett, 2013) These questions helped me look beyond the surface of the policy and examine it with a critical eye. Using the guiding questions, I discovered that the policy did not reflect intentionality, and there were no professional development efforts connected to the policy.

The current policy lacked clearly defined expectations on how to be culturally responsive, professional development to support the staff, and the resources required to

help staff successfully implement the theory of cultural relevance in practice (Adamu & Hogan, 2015). To implement a policy of cultural relevance that relied on a culturally competent staff, the agency needed to prioritize professional development opportunities and conversations that supported the facilitation of difficult discussions about race and culture.

Currently, the agency has a new professional development department that provides staff with relevant training. However, the staff did not have enough experience or training to inform a process to effectively and authentically interact with students and families whose culture is not the same as their own. The consequence of this was a policy that could not be actualized because the policy's main focus is to include books and stories about diverse families/cultures. This is not relevant to the needs of the program nor does it implement anything substantial or impact the school readiness goals.

After reviewing the staff's professional development training log, I discovered that during the 2013 – 2014 and 2014 – 2015 program years, the only training the agency provided to address culture and/or culturally responsive teaching was the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) and the Wisconsin Pyramid training. The content of these trainings mentioned cultural responsiveness, but only on a surface level. For example, during the WMELS training, participants were asked to think ecologically about a child by taking into consideration how a child's development was influenced by aspects of his/her physical and social environment and were asked to consider the child or family's culture.

The Wisconsin Pyramid training is a developmentally appropriate, evidence-based framework designed to promote social and emotional competence in young

children ages birth to 5. That training asks participants to reflect on a child's culture and how it connects to his/her behavior. This is the extent of the training that was provided to the staff on cultural relevance and competence. It is evident, based on the levels of inappropriate interactions, the staff needs on-going training on cultural responsiveness.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The next section will take a deeper dive into culturally relevant pedagogy and related terms to help build the foundational and the framework for the policy. The terms that will be discussed are: culturally relevant pedagogy, funds of knowledge, the concept of microaggressions, anti-bias curriculum, Head Start framework, and National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Professional teaching Standards.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

It must be clearly understood by anyone working with young children that culture is central to learning. Culture plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in shaping the thinking process of groups and individuals. A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural differences in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to Ladson-Billings, characteristics of culturally responsive teaching are:

- Positive perspective on parents and families
- Communication of high expectations



- Learning within the context of culture
- Student-centered instruction
- Culturally mediated instruction
- Reshaping the curriculum
- Teacher as facilitator

The article, “Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching,” reminded me that individuals can not teach what they do not know. This statement applies to knowledge both of subject matter as well as cultural relevance. Too many teachers are inadequately prepared to teach ethnically diverse students, and this fact may lead well-intended teachers to view the children they teach from a “deficit perspective.” A deficit-based approach occurs when staff focus on what’s wrong with children. The following are characteristics of deficit-based thinking:

- Focus on student/families as the major problem;
- Communicate failure, helplessness, and low expectations for certain children, families and communities;
- Describes a list of things considered to be “wrong” with a child’s learning and development or things a child cannot do;
- Blames the victims of institutional racism and oppression for their own victimization; and
- Fails to provide sufficient information about strengths and strategies to support a child’s learning and development (Supporting School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys Professional Development Training, 2015).

## **Funds of Knowledge**

Educator must focus children's strength and the knowledge that they bring to the classroom. One strategy to accomplish this is focusing on the families' "funds of knowledge." The term, "funds of knowledge," refers to the, "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being." (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2001 p. 133). These "funds" should be drawn upon by teachers in a strength-based approach to teaching. And, as teachers develop a deeper awareness and appreciation of their students' "funds of knowledge," they understand more deeply what contributed to or interfered with children's learning. This is culturally responsive teaching: teaching to and through the strengths of each child's culture (Gay, 2000, p. 106). Wilder Head Start needed to implement a plan for moving from a deficit approach to a strength-based approach. The discovery of a mismatch prompted reading on culturally responsive teaching and ways I could support staff as a leader. In the article, "Academically Effective + Culturally Responsive = Well-Rounded Educator," (Pedrus, 2011, p.17) the author paints a vivid picture of this equation. Academically effective and culturally responsive teachers are aware of their students' cultural heritages and incorporate them into lessons based on modern concepts. They build bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences or between academic abstractions and lived socio-cultural realities.

Culturally responsive systems incorporate multicultural information into all subjects and skills routinely taught in schools and draw from a variety of instructional techniques that suit different learning styles. In another article, "Intervention in School Clinic," Brown (2007), validated that culturally responsive teachers learn to value how

deeply culture influences the way that children learn (Stoicovy, 2002). Gay(2000), Villegas and Lucas (2002), and Ladson-Billings (2001), listed the characteristics of culturally responsive teachers who they believe are able to plan and deliver culturally responsive instruction and therefore meet the needs of all of their students.

Table 5 Policy Research Base

<b>Framework</b>	<b>Culturally responsive teachers...</b>
Ladson-Billings (2001) identified three prepositions relevant to culturally responsive teachers	Focus on individual students' academic achievement Have attained cultural competence and help in developing student Develop a sense of sociopolitical consciousness
Gay (2000) identified five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching	Develop a cultural diversity know base Design culturally relevant curricula Demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community Establish cross cultural caring, and build a learning community Establish congruity in classroom instruction

The book, *Cultural Proficiency, a Manual for School Leaders*, helped to clarify why some of the staff's interactions with the children and families seemed insensitive and inappropriate: there was a lack of cultural proficiency among the staff and the administrators.

Cultural proficiency is a model for shifting the culture of the school or district; for individual transformation, and organizational change. For some people, cultural proficiency is a paradigm shift from viewing cultural differences as problematic to learning how to interact effectively with other cultures (Lindsey, Robbins, Terrell, 2009). The book discusses four tools for developing cultural competence: barriers, guiding

principles, continuum, and essential elements which could prove useful in helping staff integrate cultural competence in their lives and work.

I informally reflected on the staff's interactions and about where the staff's current interactions fell on the "cultural proficiency continuum" tool. This tool had six points that revealed unique ways of seeing and responding to differences. The first three points along the continuum were comprised of unhealthy values, behaviors, policies, and practices. They are as follows:

- **Cultural destructiveness** – seeking to eliminate the culture of others,
- **Cultural incapacity** – trivializing and stereotyping other cultures, and
- **Cultural blindness** – not noticing or acknowledging the culture of others and ignoring the discrepant experiences of cultures within schools  
(Lindsey, Robbins & Terrell, 2009).

The three points on the other end of the continuum represent healthy individual values and behaviors as well as healthy organizational policies and practices. They are as follows:

- **Cultural pre-competence** – increasing awareness of what you and the school don't know about working in diverse settings,
- **Cultural competence** – aligning our personal values and behaviors and the school's policies and practices in an inclusive manner of all cultures, and
- **Cultural proficiency** – Advocating for lifelong learning for the purpose of being increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of cultural groups in the school and community (Lindsey, Robbins & Terrell, 2009).

The following are examples of statements and points that represented the first three points on the continuum: cultural destructiveness ( i.e. “These parents don’t value education, they bring their child here and don’t work with them at home); cultural incapacity (i.e. “That student act like he needs special education and I need some extra help dealing with him.”); and cultural blindness (i.e. the organization doesn’t include training around diversity and fails to discuss the program’s cultural expectations to students, families, and staff). The aforementioned comments validate the belief that the staff was engaged in unhealthy, values, behaviors, and practices. This was alarming, especially since Head Start had research-based multicultural guiding principles that should have been the foundation for implementing culturally appropriate practices.

### **Microaggressions and Racism**

As I reviewed the research, I discovered the connection between racism and microgressions. In the article, “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,” there was a discussion of the different forms of racism and the manifestation of microaggressions.

#### **Racism**

There are three forms of implied racism: modern racism, symbolic racism and aversive racism. The Table 7 gives a description of the three forms of racism and the primary researcher responsible for describing it. This table was original found on [understandingprejudice.org](http://understandingprejudice.org).

Table 6 Forms of Subtle Racism

<b>Type of Racism</b>	<b>Description of Main Features</b>	<b>Primary Citations</b>
Modern Racism	Modern racists see racism as wrong but view racial minorities as making unfair demands or receiving too many resources	McConahay (1986)
Symbolic Racism	Symbolic racists reject old-style racism but still express prejudice indirectly (e.g. as opposition to policies that help racial minorities)	Kinder & Sears (1981); McConaha & Hough (1976); Sears (1988)
Aversive Racism	Aversive racists believe in egalitarian principles such as racial equality but have a personal aversion toward racial minorities	Gaertner & Dovidio (1986)

**Manifestation of microaggression.** In reviewing the literature on subtle forms of racism, the word racial microaggression was discovered. Racial microaggression are

subtle insults directed at people of color (Solo`rzano et al., 2000). I observed this on several occasion when staff made comments like, “what do you expect from them, they don’t know any better.” There are three forms of racial microaggressions that are discussed: microassault, microinvalidation, and microinsult.

1. Microassault – an explicit racial derogation characterized by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior or purposeful discriminatory actions
2. Microinvalidation – communication that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color
3. Microinsult – communication that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Cucceri, Holder, Nadal & Esquilin, 2007).

### **Anti-Bias Education**

According to the National Center for Education statistics, students of color made up 45 percent of the population in Pk-12. At the same time, only 17.5 percent of educators in the workforce were of color. These statistics are alarming especially when nearly half of the children currently under the age of five are minorities and no racial or ethnic group will be a majority in the year 2050 (Deruy, 2013).

In the article, “Culturally Responsive and Anti-Biased Teaching Early Childhood Pre-service Teachers,” Nganga clearly states, “the dominant group controls the curriculum, the marginalized people are expected to learn the culture and history of the

major group, without opportunity to see or hear themselves or validate their own histories and love experiences.” (Nganga, 2015, p.1)

According to Kuh, Keenan, Given & Beneke (2016), Anti-Bias Education (ABE) is a way of teaching that supports children and their families as they develop identity in a diverse society. In the book, *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*, Derman-Sparks & Edwards discuss four goals of ABE that are applicable to children of all backgrounds. What’s unique about the goals is that each interacts and builds on the other three. The goals are:

1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidences, family pride, and positive social identities;
2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep caring human connections;
3. Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts;
4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skill to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, xiv).

### **Head Start Guiding Principles**

According to the Head Start, the guiding principles were developed to guide Head Start/ Early Head Start staff in accomplishing the program goals and intended to serve as a framework for multicultural programming. The multicultural principles and key implications are listed in Table 8.



Table 7 Multicultural Principles and Implications

<b>Head Start Multicultural Principle</b>	<b>Key Implication</b>
<b>Principle 1:</b> Every individual is rooted in culture.	Culture is real and important but understanding it is not simple or easy.
<b>Principle 2:</b> The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are the primary sources for culturally-relevant programming.	Program that actively embrace learning from families provide the most effective support for children’s development.
<b>Principle 3:</b> Culturally-relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the cultures of different groups and discarding stereotypes.	Culture is not an absolute factor in children’s development and children’s development is impacted by choice.
<b>Principle 4:</b> Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices and adaptations is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.	Culture shape the goals or desired outcome valued within a particular society.
<b>Principle 5:</b> Every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.	Family culture is a source of strength, especially for young children.
<b>Principle 6:</b> Effective programs for children who speak languages other than English require continued development of the first language while the acquisition of English is facilitated.	Programs should seek and support the continued development of children’s home language.
<b>Principle 7:</b> Culturally-relevant programming requires staff that both reflect and are responsive to the community and families served.	The Head Start Program Performance Standards reflects this principle. Staff members must be hired who reflect both the children’s and the families’ linguistic and cultural background.
<b>Principle 8:</b> Multicultural programming for children enables children to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual and cultural differences.	Culture differs in many ways in their approach to feeding and mealtime.
<b>Principle 9:</b> Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases.	Our personal cultural backgrounds influence how we think the values that we hold and the practices we use to support children’s development.
<b>Principle 10:</b> Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are	Administrative leadership is essential to developing systems and services that

incorporated in all systems and services and are beneficial to all adults and children.	address cultural relevance and dual-language development.
---	---

(Office of Head Start, Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five, 2008)

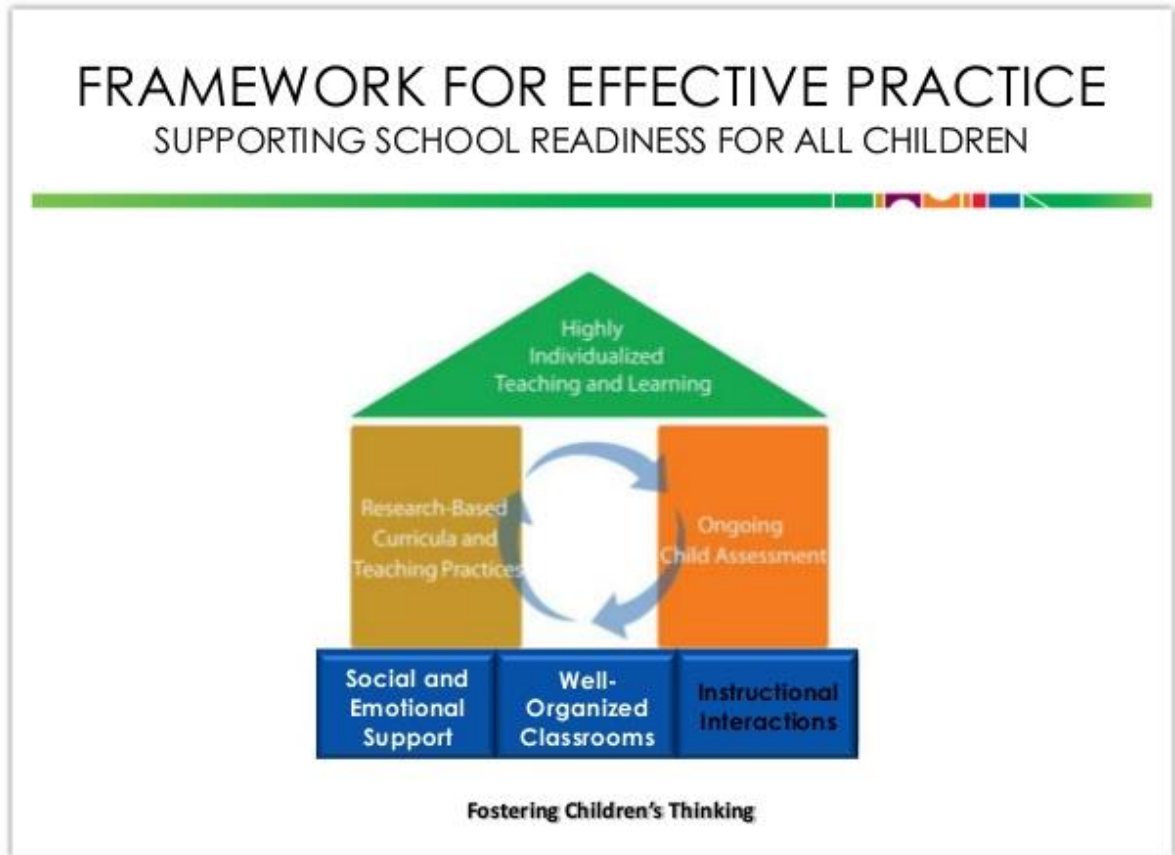
In order for teachers to embed these multicultural guiding principles and act in a culturally responsive manner, they must believe in and understand how to implement cultural relevance and responsiveness in their daily practice. This calls for culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002) which addresses the need for teachers to develop the knowledge, skills, and predispositions to teach children from diverse racial ethnic, language, and social backgrounds.

**Head Start Framework**

Head Start Framework for Effective Everyday Practice is designed to resemble a house (House Framework for Effective Everyday Practice, NCQTL, 2014) see Figure 1). The purpose of the house is to represent four fundamental elements of keeping the house together: foundation, pillars, and roof. The foundation represents engaging interactions and environments. According to the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL, 2014), effective, engaging interactions and environments are the foundation for all learning in early childhood classrooms. The following characteristics helps stimulate children’s thinking and skills: social and emotional support, well-organized classrooms, and instructional interactions and material. Social and emotional support and promotes a positive climate in the classroom through the teacher’s interactions with the children. A well-organized classroom has a daily schedule, routines, learning centers that are well defined and appropriate interactions between the teacher and child. The instructional

interactions and material in preschool must support and extend children’s thinking, problem solving, and conversational skills and vocabulary (NCQTL, 2014).

Figure 1 Framework for Effective Practice



### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Teaching Standards**

To effectively meet the needs of children from diverse backgrounds, early childhood programs must work toward building culturally competence among children and staff alike. This competence requires going beyond enrollment and recognition of cultural diversity when they provide culturally relevant and diverse opportunities for young children and families. Cultural competence is a critical component of

developmentally appropriate practice and infuses both NAEYC standards for professional preparation and standards for programs serving young children (NAEYC, 2012, p.1). The National Association for the Education of Young Children embedded cultural competence within their standards. The purpose of the standards is to ensure the quality of children's daily experiences in early childhood programs and promotes positive child outcomes in 10 NAEYC standards:

- Relationships
- Curriculum
- Teaching
- Assessment of child progress
- Health
- Teachers
- Families
- Community Relationships
- Physical Environment
- Leadership and management

According to a NAEYC Trend Brief on Supporting Cultural Competence Accreditation of Programs for Young Children Cross-cutting Themes in Program Standards, there are 31 cultural competence criteria within the 10 standards. The one fact that emerges in the cultural relevant pedagogy is said best by NAEYC (2012). As early childhood programs continue to serve an increasingly diverse population of young children, cultural competence in programs and classrooms will become an increasingly critical aspect of their experiences in preparing them for school and beyond.

**What are the crucial issues that make this a policy problem in need of a response?**

In the article, "Promoting Educators' Cultural Competence to Better Serve Culturally Diverse Students," (National Education Association, 2008), a case was made

to address the cultural gap. According to the author, a culture gap is developed when educators struggle to interact appropriately with students from cultures other than their own. This can be a factor in students' academic performance. Ladson-Billing (1995) validated this when she referenced Native American educator Cornell Pewewardy (1993) who asserted that one of the reasons Native American children experienced difficulty in schools was that educators traditionally have attempted to, "insert culture into education, instead of inserting education into culture." (p.2). The 2008 National Education Association (NEA) policy brief stated that culture, "plays a critical role in learning," and that, "every student brings a unique culture to the classroom." (p.2) Educators must become knowledgeable about their students' distinctive cultural backgrounds so they could translate that into effective instruction and enriched curriculum.

When a family's race, ethnicity, language, and culture is not recognized and understood as a significant contributor to the values, mores and behaviors of that family there is a risk of isolation and alienation, which creates disparity. This kind of disconnect becomes a barrier that compromises the child's readiness for school. Cultural mismatch between home and school and educators' lack of knowledge about culturally responsive educational practices were significant factors that contributed to achievement gaps among student groups.

Effective educators teach in the context of the child's culture. To accomplish that at Wilder Head Start, the staff must make a paradigm shift from a deficit approach to strength-based teaching. This will require the staff to implement critical reflectivity. Critical reflectivity is an approach to self-awareness that we all share accountability for the attitudes and intentions of our society and social structure. It includes personal

responsibilities to address inequalities as seen in regulations, policies, procedures, services and daily interactions (Kondrat, 1998). This strategy is aligned with Head Start Multicultural Principle 9 as mentioned earlier, this principle stressed culturally relevant and diverse programming that examines and challenges institutional and personal biases (OHS, 2009).

Figure 2 Journey Toward a Culturally Responsive Approach



(Figure taken from Supporting the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys Training, 2014)

In framing a culturally responsive strength based approach to education it was important to understand the cultural backgrounds of students, teachers, and staff. Wilder Head Start served low income children, most of whom were African American. The staff was comprised of White, African American, and Asian people. These individuals had demonstrated that they were deficient in cultural responsiveness.

**What policy am I recommending/advocating as a solution to address the original policy issue?**

In his book, *Doing the Right Thing for Children*, Sykes (2014) noted that building strong competencies at the organizational level was a requirement for any leader in the field of early childhood education. Organizational competence is one of the most powerful tools available when it comes to effecting positive change for children. As I continued to reflect on the existing policy, I realized another reason for wanting to revise the agency's culturally responsive policy: social justice. Social justice is recognizing and acting upon the power that we have for making positive change. As an early childhood leader, I want to be a change agent for young children. I reflected on how I could help decrease the staff's deficit-based approach to children and families.

Promoting social justice requires a strong inclination to speak up when someone is being treated unfairly. The micro aggressions exhibited by agency staff was the opposite of social justice. I couldn't believe the level of disrespect the staff displayed toward the children and families. It made me feel uncomfortable and question their purpose for working in the program. To my dismay, it was extremely concerning to me. As an early childhood educator, it paramount that teachers give children a good start that will contribute to building the foundation for lifelong learning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct clearly states (NAEYC, 2005) "Above all, we shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children." This principle has precedence over all others in the NAEYC Code.

Knowing that the staff did not embrace this code of ethics made me realize there was a disconnect and the staff did not know about the code. In my experience, the code of ethics is something that must be taught to staff. As an Early Childhood Manager of licensed childcare programs, I provided the staff training on the Code of Ethics to help them understand the “why.”

Based on the staff’s micro aggressions and deficit-based approach with children, families, and each other, and the school readiness goals data, the policy needed to be revised to include specific requirements on its implementation and enforcement. By expanding the current policy to work toward a strength-based approach and with the addition of professional development to build on the individual and systemic cultural competency, this policy revision would strengthen the services provided to children at Wilder Head Start. It will help fill the gap of staff’s lack of knowledge and understanding on being culturally responsive.

According to the National Education Association, only one-third (1/3) of states required teacher candidates to study some aspect of cultural diversity in their core preparation courses, and/or to have a teaching practicum in a culturally diverse setting. The original Wilder Head Start policy indicated that cultural competence was expected, but did not address how it would be implemented or monitored. Establishing clear expectations for HOW the policy would be realized is critical to ensuring culturally responsive practices are sustained and embedded. Based on the aforementioned information, the following policy was recommended.

### **Recommended Policy for Wilder Head Start Program**



**Purpose:** To provide a framework for implementing and enhancing culturally responsive teaching practices, establish HOW the policy will be implemented and make explicit the expectations for monitoring progress toward the identified goal (i.e., all staff demonstrate cultural competence and implement culturally responsive teaching practices). This policy will help staff understand the impact and practice of cultural competence.

**Policy:** Increase awareness of what the practice of cultural competence looks like within the organizational structure of Wilder Head Start; establish metrics that explicitly define expectations for the practice of culturally relevant teaching; and provide on-going professional development resources and coaching to ensure that staff have the resources to implement culturally responsive best practices.

**Common Language:** This section will provide a definition for terminology that is relevant to the policy.

According to Cohen (1978), culture is more than a single aspect of human life- it is universal, group, and family. At the universal level, all humans are essentially the same. For example, all cultures make use of language by combining information into stories. In addition, people everywhere have ways of expressing anger, sadness, or happiness; ways of raising children; and ways of making a living. At the group level, human behaviors are patterned in ways that are shaped from childhood. For example, within each community cultural group, many expectations about “how to act” are transmitted from generation to generation. At the family level, individual families make different decisions about how to live their lives. For example, some people may choose to live as their parents did, whereas others may choose to do things quite differently.

Finally, culture can be viewed at the individual level. For example, each individual chooses the extent to which he or she wishes to participate in and pass on the traditions, beliefs, and values of his or her group and family.

Cultural competency begins with an understanding of “culture” Cultural competency is the ability to work effectively across cultures. For individuals, it is an approach to learning, communicating and working respectfully with people different from themselves. Culture can refer to an individual’s race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, immigration status and age, among other things. For organizations, cultural competency means creating the practices and policies that will make services more accessible to diverse populations, and that provide for appropriate and effective services in cross-cultural situations (Olsen, Bhattacharya & Scharf, 2007, p.2).

- Culture encompasses many things, some of which are more important for teachers to know than others because they have direct implications for teaching and learning. Among these are ethnic groups, cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relationship patterns (Gay, 2002).
- Cultural competence is behavior that aligns with standards that move an organization or an individual, toward culturally proficient interactions (Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell 2009). According to the National Centre for Cultural Competence website, there are five key components of cultural competence:
  - A valuing of cultural diversity – integrating respect for diversity into programs, policies, and service and also recognizing that members of certain cultural groups may have cultural as well as individual needs;

- Conducting a cultural self-assessment – develop an awareness of one’s own culture and community, assumptions, and biases and identifying actions to reduce such barriers;
  - Managing the dynamics of difference – the dynamics of cultural difference are proactively managed, improving the interactions between different cultures;
  - Acquiring and institutionalizing cultural knowledge- a need exists to integrate an understanding of different cultures into service delivery and practices,
  - Adapting to diversity and cultural context- cultural knowledge is embedded throughout the hierarchy of the organization. Policy, practice, service delivery and behaviors are adapted to fit the cultural diversity of the community engaged (National Center for Cultural Competence, “Info About,” para 2).
- Cultural Competency professional development will address cultural/linguistic topics and strategies to ensure cultural proficiency, which will enable staff to respond effectively to people who differ from one another.

**Responsibility:** The agency will develop a professional development plan and model that will differentiate the content to meet the needs of all employees. In the revised policy, the table below explains the roles and responsibilities for implementing the Cultural Competency Professional Development Policy.

Table 8 Roles and Responsibilities During Implementation

Role	Responsibility
All agency staff	Attend a minimum of 15 hours of cultural competency training each calendar year. The agency will provide each staff member with a certificate of completion. Each staff is required to complete a Cultural self-assessment.
Site Director	Ensure staff complete the required hours of training. Classroom walkthroughs using a cultural competency checklist.
Professional Development Specialist	Provide research-based cultural competency training.
Culturally Responsive Coach	Focus on assisting staff to implement culturally responsive best practices.

**How do I envision the recommended/advocated policy will be effective in meeting the issue?**

According to the Head Start Act, professional development means, high-quality activities that improve the knowledge and skills of Head Start teachers and staff relevant to their roles and functions, in program administration and the provision of services and instruction, as appropriate, in a manner that improves services delivery to enrolled children and their families. (p. 6)

The recommended policy would prompt Wilder Head Start program to re-evaluate, update, and align policies, practices and systems to embed cultural competence which would assist teachers in being culturally responsive and reflective of their interactions with children and families. According to the Office of Head Start Administration (OHSA) for Children and Families, culture is the fundamental feature of

Head Start programs, systems, and services. The program is effective when its systems and services support the cultural diversity of enrolled families.

Below is a structure that will be used to embed cultural competence at the organizational and individual level. Cultural Competency at the organizational level is key to supporting culturally competent practices (NCCC, 2006). This is crucial for the program, especially since there was a mismatch between what was written in the policy and what was actually practiced in the previous policy. The pieces that must be in place to achieve organizational cultural competency include:

- Philosophy,
- Mission Statement,
- Policy structures, procedures, practices,
- Diverse, knowledgeable and skilled staff,
- Dedicated resources,
- Community engagement and partnerships,
- Advocacy,
- Parent training, and
- Information published and disseminated.

Cultural Competency at the individual level (Mays, Siantz, and Viehweg, 2002) requires the following of individual members of the organization:

- They must become culturally aware,
- Be willing to gain cultural knowledge, and
- Develop cultural skills.

It was extremely difficult to be a culturally competent provider in an organization or system that did not support employees with policy, structure and resources (NCCC, Goode, 2006).

The United States' population is becoming increasingly diverse. This trend is especially salient in the K-12 student population (Villegas, Lucas, 2007). The advent of multicultural education in the 1970's signaled the first systemic attempt to respond to children's cultural background by taking culture into account while enhancing learning and development. To achieve this, teachers need a broad range of knowledge and skills. To be responsive to a diverse population, teachers also need to understand how children and youth learn and develop in different cultural context (Villegas, 2007, p. 372).

Research also indicated that relationships are pivotal in a child's development and learning. In Wisconsin, an early learning standards committee developed nine guiding principles to support the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS). The standards were based on research and supported by evidence-based practices. The WMELS provided a framework for families, professionals and policy makers to:

- Share a common language and responsibility for the well-being of children from birth to first grade,
- Know and understand developmental expectation of young children, and
- Understand the connection of early childhood with K-12 educational experiences and lifelong learning.

The guiding principles reflected the knowledge-base in scientific research, values, and commitment to young children and families (WMELS, 2013). The second guiding

principle of WMELS validated the importance of building relationships. It stated that, “early relationships matter- beginning at birth a child forms relationships with adults who guide their learning and development... A child’s growth and development is shaped within the context of those relationships” (p10). As educators, we must focus on developing these relationships in the context of the child’s culture.

According to the Head Start Program’s Multicultural Principle # 1, every individual is rooted in culture. Culturally responsive teaching means teaching to and through the strengths of each child’s culture. This practice validates and affirms the child by using the child’s cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles so that learning experiences are effective and relevant (Gay, 2000).

## **SECTION TWO: Analysis of Need**

As the preceding demonstrated, relationships with adults who respect their cultural orientation are pivotal in a child's development and learning. Understanding children's development requires that educators view each child within the educational, sociocultural, and political context of that child's family, education setting, and community as well as within the broader society (NAEYC, 2009). In Wisconsin, to help early childhood educators recognize the importance of relationships and school readiness, an early learning standards committee developed a platform of nine (9) guiding principles to support the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS). The standards reflect all the domains of a child's learning and development to ensure educators teach to the "whole child." The impact on children cut across multiple domains including education, economics, social, political, and moral/ethical complexities.

### **Education Analysis**

Children do not come to the education system from a homogenous culture nor from a level socio-economic playing field. Instead, they come to school with greater or lesser advantage depending upon the socio-economic status of their families. Research has been done to document cultural patterns in school readiness and school achievement that educators should consider, including culturally-responsive teaching.

Culturally-responsive teaching is grounded in a constructivist lens of learning (Villegas and Lucas, 2000). From a constructivist perspective, learning is a process by which students generate meaning in response to the new ideas and experiences they encounter in school. Traditional educational settings are pedagogically didactic. They do



not leave room for differences in learning styles, questioning the content, or cultural impacts on teaching and learning. As a result, students whose cultural heritage includes traditions that value different learning and teaching modalities may experience a cultural mismatch, lose interest and/or be incorrectly labelled through a deficit lens.

In these settings, unless that child adapts to the dominant mode of learning, he or she could be labelled less than capable by teachers and other students. School culture should be assessed to determine the role it plays in identifying children with problems and the role that didactic pedagogy plays in reinforcing those problems (King, Sims, and Osher, 2007). The data showed that “difference” can predict negative academic outcomes. As educators, we must consciously work at transforming both ourselves and our professional practices so that school is a place where all students feel welcomed, and authentic relationships across differences make academic success possible (Howard, 2006).

As an avid supporter of early childhood education (and putting young children at the center of decisions) this policy is recommended to improve practices at Wilder Head Start Program. It is imperative that young children are provided high quality programming despite their social economic status.

High quality programs are considered to be an intervention to bridge the achievement gap. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defined “early childhood” as ages birth to age-8. Studies indicate that the achievement gap could begin as early as infancy, when the physical conditions and stresses of poverty take their toll on the development of the child’s brain and therefore the ability to learn (Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2005).

The article, “Closing the Gap: Early Childhood Education,” argues that since the achievement gap is complex and difficult to close, the most obvious solution is prevention programming. This seemingly formidable task could be translated into a straight forward educational goal: school readiness for all young children. School readiness is a prerequisite for entering Kindergarten as well as a strong predictor of later school success. And, it requires more than just “ready” children.

School readiness, in the broadest sense, is about children, families, early environments, schools, and communities. Skills and development are strongly influenced by families and through children’s interactions with other people as well as their environments before coming to school (Maxwell and Clifford, 2004). A growing body of research notes that children who attend quality preschools have higher rates of school readiness, better language ability and math skills, and fewer behavior problems. “Children who start early start strong” (President Barack Obama, 2010). Understanding cultural differences would help educators learn the culture of the children in their classroom and how to bridge the gap between what the children knew and what they wanted them to learn. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the children who attend the program are African American as is the majority of teaching staff. Although they are coming from the same culture, they do not share the same values. There is a disconnection that stems from teachers not having high expectations. As the population becomes more diverse, educators are called on to exercise cultural relevance in their teaching. Gay (2000; 2002), has asserted that the academic achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds would improve if educators were to

make the effort to ensure classroom instruction was conducted in a manner that was responsive to the students' home culture.

Early childhood educators and leaders must be change agents and advocate for teachers to implement best practices that research has demonstrated most effective in improving the lives and learning of young children (Brown, 2008). The overarching best practice in early childhood education is “Developmentally Appropriate Practices” (DAP). DAP is defined as a research-supported set of beliefs about children and how they grow, develop and learn, which provides the framework for making decisions about how to guide and support development and learning. According to DAP, early childhood educators must understand that:

1. Knowledge must inform decision making,
2. Goals must be challenging *and* achievable, and
3. Teaching must be intentional to be effective (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p 9-10).

To implement the proposed policy with fidelity, these three DAP criteria must be followed. The first criteria, “Knowledge Must Inform Decision Making,” requires that teachers have the information, resources, and support to ensure that their practice of teaching was developmentally appropriate. DAP requires that early childhood educators take into consideration “knowledge” in three key areas:

1. *What is known about child development and learning*—this refers to research-based knowledge of age-related characteristics that help teachers make general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children's learning and development.

2. *What is known about each child as an individual*—refers to what educators learn about the specific children and the implications this information has on how best to adapt and be respond to that individual variation.

3. *What is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live*—refers to the values, expectations, and behavioral and linguistic conventions that shape each of the children's lives, at home and in their communities, that educators must strive to understand in order to ensure that learning experiences in the program or school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family.

For the teachers and staff at Wilder Head Start, this indicator required work. The staff was not using what was known about children and their families in the classroom. The agency required the use of a Home Visit Form, which teachers completed twice a year. The intent of the home visit was to help the teacher better understand the child's cultural context. The form consisted of the following categories:

- Family's observation of child at home,
- Child's interest,
- Family relationships,
- My child can...
- I want my child to learn,
- What are your STAR (safe, thoughtful, accountable, respectful) expectations at home? And,
- What social skills would you like to see developed?

The home visit provided an opportunity to use what was learned about the child and incorporate it into the classroom. However, the teachers saw it as a checklist of something that was expected to be completed and not as a resource to help them be intentional and developmentally appropriate with children.

Knowledge must inform decisions and be implemented with fidelity in order for the second two DAP principles to work. It was my goal for the new culturally responsive policy to help fill this gap and ensure that best practices are implemented correctly and with fidelity. Only then can the teacher see those children *as they are* in order to make decisions that are developmentally appropriate for each of them

The second principle of Developmentally Appropriate practice, that goals must be challenging *and* Achievable is accomplished when teachers meet children where they are, keeping in mind the desired outcomes as well as what is known about children as a group and individually. From this place, the teacher must plan experiences to promote the children's learning and development.

The third principle is that teaching must be intentional to be effective; a hallmark of developmentally appropriate teaching is intentionality. Good teachers are intentional in everything they do—setting up the classroom, planning curriculum, making use of various teaching strategies, assessing children, interacting with them, and working with their families. Excellent teachers translate the developmentally appropriate practice framework into high-quality experiences for children through the decisions they make.

### **Economic Analysis**

As a national program, Head Start has established performance expectations that inform funding decisions. The parent agency overseeing all Head Start Programs, the

federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reorganized, removed, and updated more than 2,400 standards to reduce the burden on providers, limit “micromanaging.” According to the Five Big Changes in the New Head Start Performance Standards (Lieberman, 2015), shifting Head Start from a “compliance-oriented culture to an outcomes-focused one.” These new standards were intended to, “make Head Start more approachable for potential grantees.” (Lieberman, 2015) The Designation Renewal System (also known as re-competition) allows for new grantees to compete *to replace lower-performing programs* (emphasis added). The “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007” required that the Office of Head Start (OHS) include in the monitoring reviews of Head Start agencies a valid and reliable research-based observational instrument that assesses classroom quality, including the assessment of multiple dimensions of teacher-child interactions that are linked to positive child outcomes and later achievement.

The tool selected was the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). This tool has 10 dimensions of teacher-child interactions rated on a 7-point scale (from low to high). The 10 CLASS dimensions are further organized into three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional support. Accordingly, the CLASS tool assessed the following:

*Emotional Support:* the degree to which teachers establish and promote a positive climate in their classroom through their everyday interactions,

*Classroom Organization:* the classroom routines and procedures related to the organization and management of children’s behavior, time, and attention in the classroom, and

*Instructional support:* This assessed how teachers implemented the curricula to most effectively promote cognitive and language development.

As part of compliance, The OHS conducted regularly scheduled monitoring visits to grantees. In the spring of 2015, Wilder Head Start program received notification that a federal review would be conducted in May, 2015. The monitoring system was aligned with a comprehensive five-year continuous oversight plan.

The Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) protocol measured grantee performance and compliance related to Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Head Start Act in general, as well as other fiscal regulations and requirements. The monitoring protocol considered teacher-child interactions, as addressed through the CLASS. These instruments were used to gather information that was used to assess the core performance areas of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees. This information was used to determine program strength, areas of concern, areas of non-compliance, and deficiencies. During the review, monitors conducted CLASS observations in random selected classrooms.

According to the CLASS website, emotional support referred to specific teaching behaviors that helped children develop warm, supportive relationships, experience enjoyment and excitement about learning, feel comfortable in the classroom, and experience appropriate levels of autonomy or independence. The results indicated the scores were low and below the national mean in the category of emotional support. The national mean for emotional support was 6.10; the Wilder Head Start agency score was 5.46. The data suggested that there was a deficit within the Wilder Head Start Program which needed to be addressed.

This caused great concern because programs that were unable to achieve the required benchmarks were being replaced by new program providers. Many of the performance benchmarks that programs were required to meet were impacted by the staff's ability to operate in a culturally relevant format. The inability to act in a culturally responsive manner had a negative impact on student performance and program morale and participation. This had the potential to lead to degeneration in programming and could potentially result in a program's de-funding. Investing in cultural competency and culturally relevant teaching practices therefore makes financial sense. However, there is a cost to doing that.

The professional development and support systems (coaching) necessary to ensure that all staff had access to the tools and resources that would assist them in building their cultural competence came at a cost. Although there currently is a budget for the professional development, these additional costs need to be built in to the agency's annual operating budget as more and different professional development services. Once they were integrated in to the annual budgeting process, implementing an effective professional development system on an ongoing and consistent basis would become easier to manage.

### **Social and Political Analysis**

For the purpose of this policy, culture is so linked to social and political issues, that trying to discuss them separately doesn't make sense. Culture is a social and political construct that must be understood.



Culture is the context in which children develop and in which families raise children. It's been described as the sum total of who we are (Boutte and DeFloriment, 1998). Once educators have a common understanding of the word "culture," then and only then will they become culturally responsive. Culturally responsive teaching refers to teaching to and through the strengths of a child's culture. It validates and affirms the child by using the child's cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles so that learning experiences are effective and relevant (Gay, 2000).

There are several initiatives nationally and locally designed to assist early childhood programs and schools to be more intentional in addressing the cultural/academic gap. Many of these programs require greater emphasis on preparing teachers to be culturally competent and effective with culturally relevant teaching. At the national level, On February 27, 2014, President Obama launched his signature initiative, "My Brother's Keeper." My Brother's Keeper was intended to help every boy and young man of color willing to do the hard work to get ahead, to improve life outcomes, and overcome barriers to success. President Obama began the initiative with the following statement, "we need to give every child, no matter what they look like, where they live, the chance to reach their full potential. Because, if we do, if we help these wonderful young men become better husbands and fathers, and well-educated, hardworking good citizens, then not only will they contribute to the growth and prosperity of this country, but they will pass on those lessons to their children, and on to their grandchildren, will start a different cycle. And this country will be richer and stronger for it- generations to come" (White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014).

The “My Brother’s Keeper” Task Force report clarified that the purpose of the initiative was to serve as a mechanism to highlight and build on “what works” inside and outside of government for improving expected life outcomes of these young people (boys and young men of color) and removing barriers to their success. This initiative focused on six key milestones that are predictive of later success:

1. Entering school ready to learn,
2. Reading at grade level by third grade,
3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career,
4. Completing post-secondary education or training,
5. Successfully entering the workforce, and
6. Reducing violence and providing a second chance (The White House, Office of the Press, 2014).

One of the key milestones included in that report addressed culture and aligned to the Head Start program’s goal to promote School Readiness. This milestone included one recommendation that provided a framework for revising the current cultural competency policy. Recommendation 5.6 of that Milestone focused on the importance of providing training and resources to help teachers become culturally responsive. It stated that a priority on providing training in evidence-based strategies and practices to early childhood teachers will help them recognize bias, address the social and emotional needs of children and enhance cognitive development.

The second initiative was offered through the Office of Head Start (OHS), which sponsored training in January 2015, in Chicago, IL. All Head Start grantees in Region 5 (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) were given the

opportunity to attend. The training was on Supporting the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys. This initiative came about as a result of My Brother's Keeper. The two-day training focused on:

1. An overview of The National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (NCCLR) and the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys Project,
2. Key Cultural concepts and theories related to African American boys,
3. Learning through experiential exercises how to embed cultural concepts into reflective practice,
4. Planning and discussing ways to implement key strategies into practice and program policy,
5. Increasing awareness in Early Head Start/Head Start child care communities of issues affecting young African American boys,
6. Developing recommendations and strategies for best practice approaches to address issues affecting young African American boys,
7. Creating and implementing the guide in early childhood settings, and
8. Identifying critical partnerships needed to drive the work forward.

In an effort to continue the work, The National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (NCCLR) provided an opportunity for Head Start Grantees who attended the two-day training to engage in a Community of Practice (CoP) to strengthen efforts to address the needs of African American boys and families to support their school readiness and success. The goals of the CoP were to:

1. Provide individualized technical assistances to grantees as they developed a plan to implement a culturally responsive strength-based program to support the school readiness and success of young African American boys and families in their organization,
2. Link a culturally responsive strength-based framework to other professional development T/TA, and quality improvement activities, and
3. Support decision-makers at various levels to make informed decisions about linking a culturally responsive strength-based framework to their program policies, practices, and goals.

In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, there are implications of a cultural responsive gap. In *My Brother's Keeper*, there is a clear focus on the need for training and resources to help teachers become culturally responsive. After reviewing the current policy, and attending trainings that validates this point, it became clear to me that Wilder Head Start needed to improve in this area. Supporting School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys is used as a platform to help bring awareness to programs. It has helped the participants who attended the training to realize the need to have a culturally responsive policy. The training helped start the crucial conversation about culture and respecting the parents. For example, the Fatherhood specialist shared a story about a dad who didn't feel comfortable at one of the Head Start sites. He felt as though the security staff made the environment tense; they don't smile or greet parents. This information helped the team to work on a plan to increase male presence in the building (hence the Fathers Read program). Two other critical concerns were considered

when deciding on a revised policy related to cultural competence: The “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007” and the “Social Policy Report Brief”.

The other critical issue that was considered was the data in the Social Policy Report Brief Highlighting the Positive Development of Minority Children (Cabrera, 2013). This document highlighted the positive development of minority children and answered the question that helped educators and all stakeholders understand why it mattered. In recent decades, the development and well-being of ethnic and racial minority children had received sustained attention from policymakers and practitioners. Much of the focus had been directed at problems in the children’s development, which eclipsed attention away from what families and communities were doing right to promote optimal child development.

### **Moral and Ethical Analysis**

The initiatives and the policy brief indicated that there was a need to globally address culture, which leads to being culturally responsive and culturally competent. Awareness of the role of cultural background and experiences, attitudes, and values in creating unconscious bias that influence communication and connection with others can begin to shift relationships in a positive direction. If cultural competence training is implemented correctly, participants will develop the following characteristics:

1. Cultural self-awareness,
2. Appreciating the values of diverse views,
3. Avoiding imposing own values,
4. Resisting stereotyping,

5. Examine own teaching bias, and
6. Building on student strength.

I attended two trainings over the past two years on the topic of the importance of being culturally responsive: Supporting the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys and The Black Child Development Institute-Milwaukee Affiliate (BCDI) event, “The State of the Black Child: Continuing the Conversation, Being Informed and Having Impact.” Both of the events had implications on cultural relevance. The Head Start initiative, “School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys” focused on:

1. Providing an overview of NCCLR and the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys,
2. Exploring key cultural concepts and theories related to African American boys,
3. Learning through experiential exercises how to embed cultural concepts into reflective practice, and
4. Planning and discussing ways to implement key strategies into practice and program policy.

This training explored cultural relevance and how important it was as a tool for informing school readiness. The other event that I attended, entitled, “The State of the Black Child: Continuing the Conversation, Being Informed and Having Impact,” addressed the importance of being culturally relevant by providing the space for professionals to engage in collegial conversations about the state of the black child. In a plenary discussion at this event, one of the panelist quoted New York Post columnist Charles M. Blow and how he eloquently connected the Black Lives Matter movement as

an allegory to the moral and ethical ethos surrounding the issue of cultural competence. He said that “when people respond to black lives matter with “all lives matter” it grates on African-Americans because “until this country values all lives equally, it is both reasonable and indeed necessary to specify the lives it seem to value less.” In other words, until this country achieves true equity for all of its citizens, it is important for each individual to increase their cultural competence as a method for moving toward equity. When you discuss Cultural Responsiveness and Black Lives Matter there is no real way to separate the moral and ethical from the social and political when discussing topics like this. However, for the sake of clarity, in this proposal, I will not be doing so.

## **SECTION THREE: Advocated Policy Statement**

### **Goals and Objectives of Policy**

The proposed policy revision would help staff develop a common language and understanding for how to interact and respond to children and families in a culturally responsive manner and teach staff how to build on children's strengths rather than repairing perceived deficits. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), this shift is crucial in a comprehensive early childhood program such as Head Start, especially since the program is focused on increasing school readiness for disadvantaged children.

The goal of this policy is to engage in a paradigm shift and use the child's "funds of knowledge" to implement a strengths-based approach. A strengths-based approach is a positive psychology perspective that emphasizes the strengths, capabilities, and resources of children and families (Cabrera, 2013; NCCLR, 2015) rather than focusing on the problems they have or challenges they face, which is a deficit-approach. According to a Funds of Knowledge handout disseminated at the Success for School Readiness training (2014), Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005), suggest the following Funds of Knowledge categories:

- Home Language
- Family Values and Traditions
- Caregiving
- Friends and Family
- Family Outings



- Household Chores
- Educational Activities
- Favorite TV Shows
- Favorite Occupations
- Scientific Knowledge

Once the teachers are familiar with each child's "funds of knowledge," it would lead them more efficiently implement a strength-based approach.

**Whose needs, values, and preferences are being represented by the policy?**

This policy was needed to ensure that the Wilder Head Start program was culturally competent and culturally responsive to the children enrolled in the program. It was their needs that would be better met when the policy was enforced with fidelity. When culture is overlooked or not understood, children are not well-served. By engaging staff in on-going professional development it would increase their "funds of knowledge," and make them better teachers. "When teachers shed their role of teacher and expert and instead, take on new role as a learner, they can come to know their students and families in a new and distinct ways. With this new knowledge they begin to see that their students lived experiences contain rich cultural and cognitive resources that deepen the classroom experience (Moll, 1992).

The challenge was to create a more productive classroom, one grounded in mutual respect between teachers and students. This challenge was even more difficult when students and teachers came from different cultural backgrounds or when students differed in terms of race, ethnicity, socio economic status, cultural and linguistic backgrounds,

sexual orientation, ability, and academic aptitude (Gay, 2006). As discussed previously, Wilder’s school demographics as exemplified by Tables 9 & 10 clarify who will be impacted by the proposed policy change.

Table 9 Ethnicity of Wilder Head Start Staff

	# of participants
Hispanic or Latino Origin	63
Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino Origin	1,264

Table 10 Race of Wilder Head Start Students

	# of participants
American Indian or Alaska Native	3
Asian	72
Black or African American	1,173
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1
White	35
Biracial or Multi-Racial	35
Other Race	7
Unspecified Race	1

(Head Start Service Snapshot 2014-2015)

## **SECTION FOUR: Policy Argument**

Maschinot (2008) reported that as we think about the significance of diversity in the United States and the fact that early care and educational services are often the first point of contact with mainstream culture for immigrants and minority families, it is essential that providers have a deep understanding of background and lived experiences of the families they work with (p.11). Research demonstrates that culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell, 2009).

### **“Pros” and “Cons” of Policy**

In this section, the advantages and disadvantages of the culturally responsive policy will be discussed. There are three areas that are paramount to implementing a culturally responsive policy at Wilder Head Start program.

#### **Pros**

The advantages of this policy include helping staff value diversity, have meaningful relationships, and positive communication. The first step in valuing diversity is appreciating differences in the children and staff. The program needs to help build adequate bridges between the home and school.

The policy will help staff to develop meaningful relationships. As the staff work to build meaningful relationships that will decrease their microaggressions. In the article, “Recognizing and Addressing Microaggressions in Teacher-Family Relationships,” Daha

reports that teachers, in their interactions with families, can unintentionally use words and behaviors that deliver negative and denigrating messages.

The policy will help staff engage in positive communication with the families.

Culturally responsive educators:

- Consistently communicate high expectations to students
- Communicate in non-judgmental ways
- Recognize that some students' behavior may be a result of inappropriate code-switching for different contexts (Gay, 2002; Richards et.al, 2007)

Being culturally responsive takes many forms and will impact every aspect of the agency's operation including policies, procedures, staffing, curriculum, and all stake holders.

### **Cons**

The disadvantages of the policy are also barriers to implementation. Lack of knowledge is the biggest barrier. Simply put, the teachers don't have a knowledge base in being culturally responsive so that knowledge base will need to be built. Culturally responsive teaching uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance style of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective; it teaches to and through the strengths of the students. This can be challenging for teachers who have limited experience beyond their own cultural framework. Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups and for teachers with limited exposure to other cultures, this experience can prove challenging.

## **SECTION FIVE: Policy Implementation Plan**

To achieve cultural proficiency, Wilder Head Start relied on research-based methods. Cultural proficiency includes the ability to release old paradigms, transition between the old and the new, and begin to use new behaviors and processes in a consistent way. One method that would be used to begin the process is Kotter's eight stage model of organizational change. Kotter (1996) advocated this model as the standard for any organization undergoing major changes.

The first step in the Kotter model is the development of a sense of urgency. This could be accomplished by establishing a common language among all members of the organization. Kotter described a sense of urgency as imperative to gaining needed cooperation among members in order to move forward as a cohesive unit. While cultural proficiency was easy to describe, it was difficult for some people to achieve because it challenged personal world views.

Howard (2006) suggested that there are three simultaneous statistical realities that contribute to a lack of cultural proficiency among schools:

- (1) The pool of available teachers is predominantly white,
- (2) The student population is increasingly diverse and growing in the number of children of color, and
- (3) Children of color are most at risk for being on the negative end of the achievement gap.

Howard goes on to say that while diversity is not a choice, our response to it is a choice. Children's awareness of racial differences, advantages and disadvantages have an

impact on their social-emotional development. Research on early social emotional development indicated that a family's culture had a significant influence on all areas of a baby's development. Social emotional development is an ongoing process of skills acquisition and mastery, involving emotions, perception, cognition, and language. There is a direct relationship between a child's social and emotional well-being and overall success in school and life (WMEL, 2003). To address this, the Wilder Head Start policy would be implemented both at the organizational level and at the individual level.

### **Organizational level**

During the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, teacher preparation addressed diversity as a critical component in effective teacher interaction with students in an increasingly multicultural population (Oran, 2009). A plan for developing cultural competency among district staff would incorporate a focus on learning. The four tools of cultural proficiency would be used as a conceptual framework. In the book, *Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for School Leaders*, Lindsey, Robbins & Terrell (2009) discuss overcoming barriers, the guiding principles of cultural proficiency, the cultural proficiency continuum and the essential elements of cultural proficiency. The next section gives a description of the barrier to cultural proficiency, the guiding principles of cultural proficiency, cultural proficiency continuum, and the essential elements of cultural competence.

Understanding barriers and the process through which to overcome them is critical because overcoming barriers is the first step toward cultural proficiency. But, , Lindsey, Robins, &Terrell (2009) point out there are caveats to successfully overcoming those barriers, including:

**Caveat 1: Systemic Oppression** – The understanding that racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism exist within our educational systems and documenting and describing the ill effects of those systems on the lived experiences of all people participating in those systems. Being able to understand oppression as a systemic issue apart from personal behavior is important.

**Caveat 2: A Sense of Privilege and entitlement** – Systems of oppression impact both those who are harmed and on those who benefit. Those harmed from systemic oppression respond emotionally as well as from being well informed of “systems” practices that personally and negatively impact them. On the other hand, many of those who benefit from historical and current practices are oblivious to the negative effects of systemic oppression, because they have the option to choose not to see.

**Caveat 3: Unawareness of the need to adapt** – Many educators and schools struggle with change that involves issues of culture. For those who are resistant, change is often experienced as required by an outside force that judges their current practice as deficient. Whether accurate or not, this polarization creates an adversarial relationship between those “forcing” the change and those “being” changed.

The implementation of this policy is on-going and is currently in the initial planning stage. In the chart below, the Head Start Multicultural Principles are aligned to the implementation plan for this policy. I wanted to ensure the policy is intentional and helps support Head Start’s mission and the mission and vision of Wilder Head Start program.

Table 11 Principles and Implementation

Principle	Implementation
<p>Culture is ever present. Culture is a defining aspect of your humanity. It is predominant a force in shaping values and behaviors.</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization - The staff, environment, interactions, and communication would be appropriate and culturally responsive to the population served in the agency.</p> <p>For example, the staff would use information from the home visits to learn from families about their expectations, home language, or routines to help bridge home and school.</p> <p>Microaggressions would decrease and staff would focus on the family's strengths.</p>
<p>People are served in varying degrees by the dominant cultures – the cultural expectations that the dominant group uses as criteria for success.</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – The cultural policy would be embedded into the new staff orientation which is referred to as Module A and Module B.</p> <p>During the modules, an administrator presents on different aspects of the agency. This would be an opportune time for the professional development specialist to discuss the cultural policy and the professional development to support it.</p> <p>I envision culturally responsiveness to be a thread throughout that connects and align all aspects of the agency. It is not just important for the children and families in Head Start but all children and families as well as all staff.</p>
<p>People have group identities and personal identities. Culturally proficient</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – Effective communication would be evident amongst each department and with families.</p>



<p>leaders know that to guarantee the dignity of each person, they must also preserve the dignity of each person's culture.</p>	<p>Leadership would acknowledge that personality problems can be due to cultural differences instead of making comments that as adults they should know better.</p> <p>When an issue arises, leadership will serve as advocates for culturally responsive problem-solving strategies.</p>
<p>Diversity within culture is important. Because diversity within cultures is as important as diversity between cultures, it is important to learn about ethnic groups not as monoliths (e.g. Asians, Latinos, or whites) but as the complex and diverse groups that they are.</p> <p>Within each major ethnic group are many distinctive subgroups such as wealth, income, education, and lifestyle (p. 103).</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – Upon hire, the organization would provide training on the intercultural differences to help eliminate any inappropriate comments or interactions such as, mentioning that the race of the director is the reason she doesn't know what she is doing and will need a lot of help.</p>
<p>Each group has unique cultural needs that must be respected –In the past 50 years, educators have learned to acknowledge in their curricula and in their teaching different learning styles, different cognitive styles, and the different ways people is unique only in that each group wants different information.</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – Increased culturally responsive practices. Teachers would bridge the children's home life into the classroom.</p> <p>If a child is use to sleeping with the light on, the teacher would respect this and help transition the child at rest time instead of turning off the light and demanding that the child goes to sleep.</p> <p>The CLASS scores would increase in the emotional domain. Teacher would receive ongoing practice based coaching.</p>
<p>The family as defined by each culture is the primary system of support in the education of children. This principle provides a different frame of reference by which teachers, parents, and education leaders assume greater responsibility for finding authentic ways to engage in culturally proficient</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – Family engagement would be an integral part of the program and would include culturally proficient practices such as the home school connections.</p>

<p>practices to support student achievement.</p> <p>Community centric- “Parents involved in activities that meet the basic needs of their children such as going to school well fed, rested, and clean.”</p> <p>School centric- “Parents involved in activities that are structured and defined for parents by schools (p.79)</p>	<p>The Head Start performance standards requires funded programs to provide, monitor, and report in-kind activities. Volunteering or becoming active in the program or completing home activities with their child.</p> <p>The home activities are sent home every week and teachers have a difficult time getting them back because there is a disconnection in what children know and what is expected.</p>
<p>People who are not a part of the dominant culture, have to be at least bicultural. Parents have to be fluent in the communication patterns of the school as well as the communication patterns that exist in their communities.</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – The staff will work with families to help them know that their home cultural values and norms are honored.</p> <p>The staff will work closing building positive relationships to strengthen and align the home and school connection.</p>
<p>Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are social and communication dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted, and accepted.</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – a decreased to Positive Behavior Support Team for misbehavior of a 3 and 4 year old.</p>
<p>The school system must incorporate cultural knowledge into practice and policy making.</p>	<p>Implementation in the context of the organization – Culturally proficient educators are self-consciously aware of their own cultures and the culture of their program.</p> <p>This crucial knowledge, because in addition to the cognitive curriculum, the cultural norms and expectation of the school must be taught (p. 107). Each staff member will do a self-assessment of their own biases to help them have a strength-based approach in their classroom.</p>

## **Individual level**

Cultural competence must be incorporated into the organizational-level policies and practices in order to support diverse students and grow cultural competency at the classroom level. The strategies for building cultural competency have been validated to have the strongest impact on student performance. These strategies must be incorporated into individual-level teacher practices. Gay (2000) recommend teachers be multi-cultural themselves in order to effectively and authentically teach students about multiculturalism and proposed that culturally responsive teachers validate, facilitate, liberate, and empower ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success (Gay, 2000 p. 43-44).

## **Teaching Practices**

In order for a classroom to be considered culturally responsive, teachers must be equipped to teach who is in front of them. Teachers must be able to change their own focus from the “what” or content in the curriculum to the “who” – who is the learner in the classroom? Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

There are seven characteristics of culturally responsive teaching:

1. Positive perspectives on parents and families
2. Communication of high expectations
3. Learning within the context of culture
4. Student-centered instruction

5. Culturally mediated instruction
6. Reshaping the curriculum
7. Teacher as facilitator

These characteristics were embedded into a professional development plan to help staff understand that being culturally responsive in their practices would provide students with opportunities to connect their learning experiences to their own lives. Despite this ever-increasing sentiment that encouraged teachers to encompass the changing face of students in the classroom by incorporating multicultural, diverse, culturally responsive practices that demonstrated respect for diversity in race, ethnicity gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and linguistic disability, too often a “Eurocentric” attitude persisted. In order to change that landscape, the professional development would be aimed at projecting a more inclusive and diverse voice regarding curriculum materials used in the classroom setting.

### **Develop a Vision**

The next step was to develop a vision and strategy. This is aligned to Stage 3 of Kotter’s framework for change. Here he recommends that organizations create a vision that assists in directing the change effort. According to Kotter, organizations should also develop high level strategies for achieving that vision. The agency must lay out the vision and strategies with detailed action steps that will yield positive results. It was imperative for staff to know, believe in, and align their practices with the vision. This alignment, along with and knowing the “why,” would help transform theory to practice.

## **Professional Learning Community (PLC)**

In order to become culturally responsive, educators must be provided with instruction on how to assess their own cultural viewpoints and biases, engage with student's culture, employ culturally responsive pedagogy and effectively engage with diverse families and communities. Recommendations to assist in this included:

1. Data collection of activities that would guide educators in their own reflection and provide valuable information about the culture of the organization, and
2. Embracing culturally proficient guiding principles.

This would be accomplished through the creation of a Profession Learning Community (PLC). DuFour (2004), stated that the professional learning community model could be grouped into three major themes that represented the core principle of professional learning communities:

1. A solid foundation consisting of collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values, and goals,
2. Collaborative teams that work interdependently to achieve common goals.

DuFour (2004) believe that educators who are building a professional learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote a collaborative culture, and

3. A focus on results as evidenced by a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Professionals learning communities judge their effectiveness on the basis of

results. Working together to improve student achievement becomes the routine work of everyone in the school.

Through professional learning communities, “teachers have a unique opportunity to counteract unhealthy influences in a child’s life for better or for worse. A child becomes what he experiences. While parents possess the original key to their child’s early life experience, teachers have a spare key. They, too, can open or close the minds and hearts of children” (Ginott, 1993).

## **SECTION SIX: Policy Assessment Plan**

The policy would be assessed using a continuous improvement framework. There were three recommended strategies that would be incorporated: Pre/post assessment, Data Activities and the “Pathway to Cultural Competence” tool. The first step to monitoring the policy was to administer a pre and post assessment. According to NCCR, this process could lead to the development of a strategic plan with clearly defined short term and long term goals. NAEYC also validated this approach. The key to effective use of the criteria and assessing levels of cultural competence for each became the actual metric of the measurement.

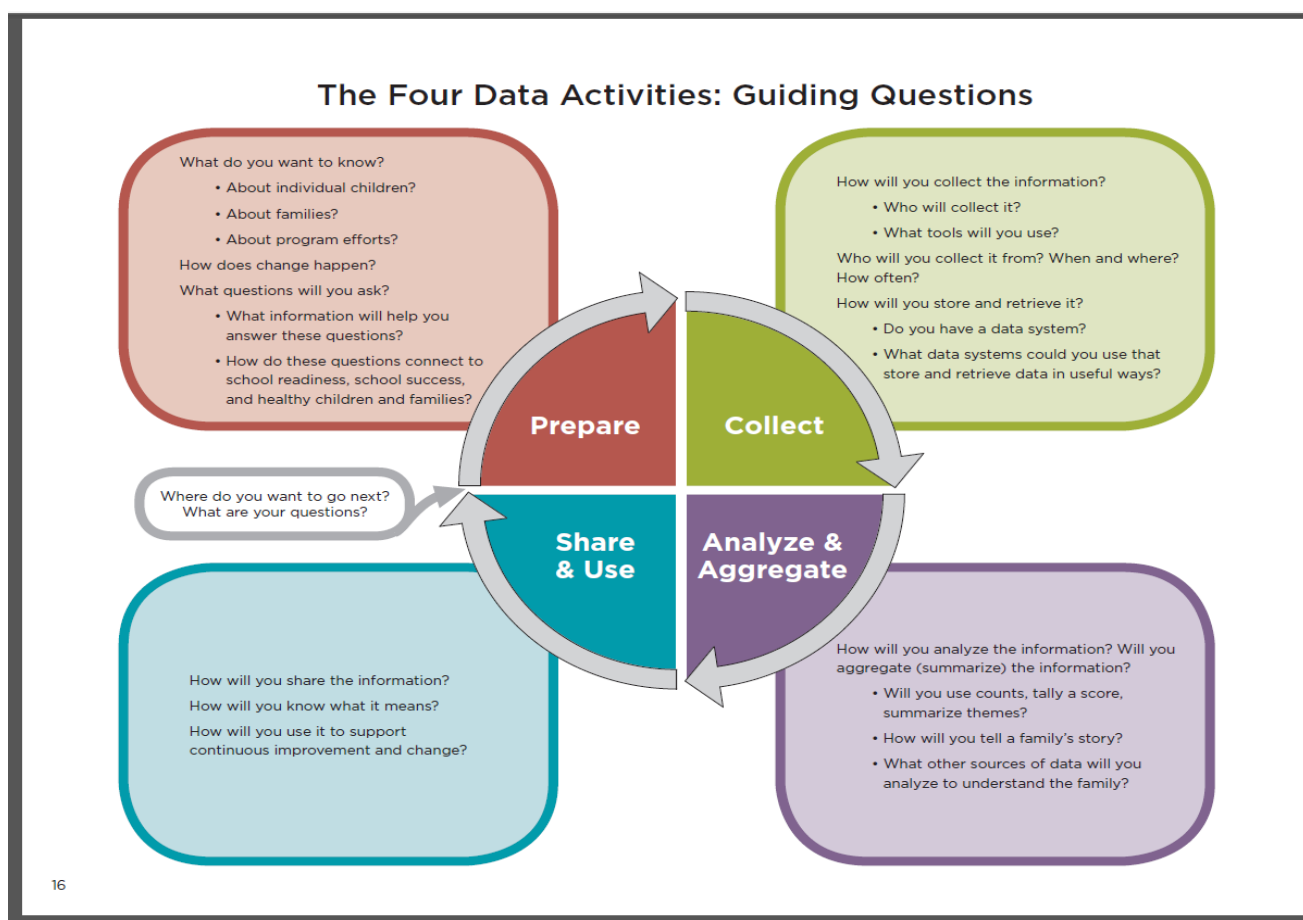
In the book, *Evaluating Professional Development*, Gusky (2000) recommended using formal pre and posttests, pointing out that these assessments serve many valuable purposes. They are useful in documenting precisely what participants gain from a professional development experience (Gusky, 2000). Self-assessment was another important tool that provided a baseline of information as well as a starting point for conversation about becoming culturally proficient.

The second recommendation was the “4 Data Activities” framework (Office of Head Start, 2015). This framework provided guiding questions in the four steps of data-driven practices: prepare, collect, analyze & aggregate, and share and use. What follows is a brief description of the four areas and a visual diagram clarifying the application of the four areas in this policy change initiative.

- Prepare – planning for data collection ensured that programs know up front what data they need to collect to make sure they are completing task in a timely manner and to track progress towards their goal and objective.

- Collect – data collection must be intentional and organized.
- Analyze and aggregate – putting the data to use by looking at it in different ways. Turn it into usable information.
- Share and use – this was the most relevant parts of the data process. Use the data to make significant program decisions, guide program improvement efforts, solve problems, and identify new critical questions based on the results of the data analysis (Office of Head Start, 2015).

Figure 3 Four Data Activities: Guiding Questions



*Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (2013)*



The last recommendation was the “Pathways to Cultural Competence” framework. This is a tool for programs to use in assessing the extent to which they are implementing culturally competent practices developed by the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative. The tool consists of a Teacher Checklist and a Program Checklist. Both of the checklists consists of four underlying principles: teacher reflection, intentional decision-making and practice, strength based perspective, and on-going two-way communication (see Appendix B).

## **SECTION SEVEN: Summary Impact Statement**

This policy was proposed to provide staff with the intellectual tools to become culturally responsive to the populations the program serves. “As teachers of culturally diverse students, we need to educate ourselves about the realities of structural racialization in society and recognizing how colorblindness is just another form of implicit bias” (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia Lopez, 2002). The intention of the proposed policy was, in the long term, to impact student outcomes as long term academic success begins with school readiness, which is directly linked to high quality early childhood education.

Children’s development and learning benefit from culturally competent teaching and the real efficacy of this competence resides in attitudes, beliefs, motivational intent, or emotional investment rather than indirect instructional content (Day, 2006). This policy would help Wilder Head Start meet their school readiness goals, especially in social emotional readiness. The program’s social emotional readiness goal was that 85% of children would demonstrate the social competence needed to regulate their own emotions and behaviors at or above the developmental expectation.

In, *School Readiness and Social-Emotional Development*, Bowman (2006) discusses social-emotional problems and school success recommending that teachers understand cultural differences in order to more effectively address children’s disruptive behaviors in school. Some behavior problems stem from developmental or psychological pathology, but many children simply have not learned mainstream expectations for their behavior. Classroom teachers need to know about the culture of the children in their

classroom and how to bridge between what the children know and what they (as the teacher) want them to know.

### **What makes this the appropriate and best policy?**

This policy was the result of the staff's inappropriate and insensitive comments about the children and families enrolled in the program. Sue (2010) referred to these negative comments as microaggressions. A culturally responsive policy would address the staff deficit approach and help put theory into practice in an intentional way. The cultural disconnect was also linked to the organization's low score on the social emotional domain on the CLASS assessment, which was conducted in the spring of 2015.

### **What and whose values are at the center of the policy?**

Early childhood best practices were at the center of this policy. Children learn best in the context of their culture. Children learn from those they are raised around. They learn what their role is as a child in their community. For example, some families serve food from the stove to the table; the parent fixes the child's plate and the child may have to wait to eat until everyone is served. When this child attends a school program they may be served meals from individual bowls in the middle of the table and the child may be expected to fix their own plate. Because the expectation is opposite of their lived experience, the child is conflicted about what to do. The proposed policy would put children and their lived experience at the core of the policy by requiring that the adults who teach them are prepared to meet them where they are and help them grow and learn in a respectful, safe, and supportive environment.

## **How are the needs and concerns of all stakeholders included sufficiently?**

The method that was used to include the concerns of all stakeholders was culturally responsive practices through the “As Is – To Be” framework and Wagner’s 4C’s diagnostic tool. These approaches are an analytic framework for understanding the interrelated parts or elements of the change process in schools or districts. They help leaders think about “what” they need to think about to achieve the goal throughout their school or district (Wagner, 2006). The first step in the change process was to create a sense of urgency around being culturally responsive. The following section provides a brief description of the competency, condition, culture, and context and how they were addressed in the change plan.

### **“As Is” Culturally Responsive Practices.**

The challenges in the four arenas of change: competencies, condition, culture and context, are illustrated in the 4C framework. (Appendix C)

**Competencies.** Wagner (2006), describes competencies as the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influence student learning. It is pivotal to begin with developing the skills of all stakeholders to help bring about change. All the stakeholders at the individual level and at the institutional level needed training to help ensure everyone had a common language and understanding of what it meant to be culturally responsive.

In the book, *Change Leadership*, Wagner advised that competencies are most effectively built when professional development is focused, job-embedded, continuous, constructed, and collaborative. Everyone must understand how children grow and

develop and what children should know and be able to do in the context of their culture. This training must be ongoing to help sustain and deepen that knowledge. When working with young children we have to understand early childhood and what is developmentally appropriate. It is imperative that educators help children learn in both their cultural context and individual interest/experiences.

**Condition.** Wagner (2006) indicated that conditions are the external architecture surrounding student learning: the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources. The condition of the organization was a deficit-based approach to families. Through this policy change the organization would transform to a strength-based culture.

**Culture.** Wagner (2006) indicated that culture is the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system. The Head Start organization was not rooted in culture. The staff did not use children's experience and knowledge to enhance their learning. The policy change would cultivate a culture of respect and curiosity that bridged the divide of difference through understanding.

**Context.** Wagner (2006) indicated that context is the skill demands all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens and the particular aspirations, needs, and concerns of the families and community that the school district serves. How could they learn to be successful in their communities if we dismissed the cultural context from which the children have/ and needed to be successful in their communities and in their families?

**“To Be” Moving Toward the Goal**

In this section, the focus is on the outcomes. Once the policy is implemented with fidelity, what will the organization look like if the “As Is” challenges were addressed? The outcomes in the four arenas of change: competencies, condition, culture and context are illustrated in the 4C framework (Appendix D).

The *competencies* would be strengthened through professional development and on-going training and support. Everyone would have a common understanding and language about being culturally responsive. Once this was accomplished, the insensitive and negative comments would decrease and there would be evidence of meaningful relationships. The *culture* would be positive and transparent. There would be no opportunity or tolerance for biases. Hence the *context* would change to embrace the population that the program serves. In the article, “Good Teachers Embrace Their Students’ Cultural Backgrounds,” Quinton (2013), states, “all good teachers build a bridge between what students know and what they need to learn. Lack of cultural understanding can easily disrupt the classroom learning.”

### **Final Reflections**

This section will briefly discuss the implementation plan, lessons learned and challenges to implement the proposed policy.

### **Implementation Plan**

The proposed policy was presented to the Supporting School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys Committee of Wilder Head Start. This committee had worked together for more than a year. The members present at the

meeting included the School Leader/Principal, Early Childhood Teacher, Head Start Center Director and a representative from the Office of Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Center. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the sustainability of the initiative. I presented some key information based on the questions in the policy paper (see appendix E).

Based on the information presented, the committee agreed that the policy would be a good next step to help sustain the initiative. The school leaders agreed that the current policy was “shallow” and needed to be revised. The proposed policy would help the organization begin to make a paradigm shift that would include important systems change. We began to develop an action plan and timeline. Through brainstorming, it was determined that the committee would do the work to lead the initiative. The following action plan and time line was developed:

- The committee would create a vision and policy language and present to senior management by March 24, 2016.
- The committee anticipated the senior management would provide feedback within 30 days (April 24, 2016).
- The committee would work on an implementation plan (presented in the policy paper) over the summer of 2016
- The committee planned to present to the organization during the professional development week in August 2016.

## **Lessons Learned**

There were many lessons learned throughout this process but the main theme that emerged were: change is hard and I developed a new awareness of the ongoing issue of microaggressions.

**Lesson one: change.** Although an old adage says that change is inevitable, the staff at Wilder Head Start Program did not deal with the thought of change very well. They did not see the policy as being urgent because it would require them to step outside of their comfort zones. This was demonstrated at a Site Directors meeting when I made the suggestion of using the information on the home visit sheets (e.g. parent practices and expectations for their child) as a framework for helping staff become aware of culturally responsive practices; this would be a way of bridging home within the school environment. The suggestion was not well received by the other three site directors (two of whom were African Americans and one Caucasian) and the school readiness coach (Caucasian) who immediately stated a laundry list of reasons why it wouldn't work (e.g. teachers would be confused, we would have to do a lot of work in a short amount of time). I was perplexed at their responses and I couldn't understand their push-back.

As an early childhood educator, I make decisions based on what's best for children, not what is easiest or most convenient. As I reflected on the situation, I noticed the Site Directors were uncomfortable with the recommendation and their responses reminded me of one of the barriers I discussed earlier in the organization level, Caveat 3: Unawareness of the need to adapt. In Caveat 3: Lindsey, Robbins and Terrell (2009) mentioned people who resist change do so when an outside force judges their current practices as a deficient. The Site Directors considered me an outsider, who after only eight months of employment, made a recommendation that was considered a judgment.



This was especially true of the Site Director who has been employed for 22 years in various positions throughout the agency (e.g. parent volunteer, assistant teacher, lead teacher, curriculum lead, and site director). She always responded, “This is how we have always done it” to any comment or question about policies and procedures. This is an example of the types of resistance I encountered throughout the change process. Self-reflecting on this I felt like the directors were comfortable with the current practices and did not want to change. Despite the push back, I moved forward making staff aware of the importance of being culturally responsive to the children through resources and ongoing discussions during our team meetings. However, it wasn’t until the agency received the results of the CLASS that it became a priority. As mentioned earlier, the program scored low in emotional support which includes teacher sensitivity and regard for student perspective. If we had considered my suggestions of using the information on the home visit, this would have been a great starting point for the staff to bridge home and school.

**Lesson two: Microaggressions.** This lesson can serve dual roles and serve as a lesson learned and a challenge to implementation. Working on this policy has brought clarity on microaggressions and the impact it has in programming.

I have increased my knowledge of the topic of microaggression and it has helped me to reflect and understand my part in making statements such as, saying to a few of the African American staff, “why do you have to be so loud?” Although I didn’t think this was a form of microaggression, I now realize it is and the message that I am conveying is to assimilate to the dominant culture. This validates what Sue (2005) reported as the

power of racial microaggression lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator and often times, the recipient.

The greatest challenge society and the mental health profession face is “making the invisible visible.” That can only be accomplished when people are willing to openly and honestly engage in dialogue about race and racism (Sue, 2007, p. 281). Now that I am aware, I can help facilitate a common language and understand for others in order to implement this policy.

### **Challenges to Implementation**

Some challenges were mentioned previously in the pros and cons section that would also be considered as hurdles. The two biggest challenges at this agency is political pushback/ cultural blindness and the staff’s lack of knowledge about culturally responsive practices.

Cultural blindness is one of the six points on the cultural proficiency continuum which indicates unhealthy behaviors. Cultural blindness is defined as, “not noticing or acknowledging the culture of others and ignoring the discrepant experiences of cultures within the school; treating everyone in the system the same way without recognizing the needs that require differentiated interactions” (Lindsey, Robins & Terrell, 2009, p. 6). In the agency, the development department is charged with getting funders to donate to the program. In their quest to get funders, the Development Director, who is Caucasian, gives tours of the facility. On one occasion, the supervisor was scheduled to do a tour, and as she did a walk-through of the building, she noticed some photos of children displayed in the hallway that made her feel uncomfortable. The display consisted of poster-sized

pictures of her students dressed as famous African Americans. At the top of each picture was the saying, “because of them, we can.” The famous African Americans that the Development Director had issues with were: Martin Luther King Jr, Michael Jackson, Rosa Parks and a picture of two children wearing hoodies. The following are the comments from the Director:

- The picture that looked Martin Luther King Jr. resembled Adolf Hitler standing with his right arm in an upward position which could be interpreted as being affiliated with the Nazi salute.
- The picture that represented Michael Jackson she felt indicated that the agency is promoting the use of drugs since he died from a drug overdose.
- The picture that represented Rosa Parks holding her jail number was offensive; The director wanted to know why the child had to hold the number.
- The picture of the two boys wearing hoodies indicated that the agency promotes the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

The Director took her concerns about the display to the Board President, who is also Caucasian. In spite of being bothered by the staff’s behavior, the President removed the pictures off the wall. She explained that it was done to keep the peace. Regardless of the children and families who will see that their pictures were taken down, the president condoned this micoraggressive behavior. She acknowledged that she has work to do with her staff. From my perspective, not only does the President have work to do with the Director of Development, she has a lot of work to do with ALL staff in the agency, including herself, and especially teaching staff, who have direct contact with young children. When the pictures were taken down this was the opposite of what Sue (2012)

described as invisible to visible. She made the visible invisible – and denied and disrespected the culture of the children and families.

### **Knowledge of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

In this section, I will discuss the importance of culturally relevant practices in children's literature to demonstrate the gap in staff's knowledge in this critical area.

#### **What is Culturally Relevant Literature (CRL)**

Literature that supports children's racial identity and academic self-concept and helps to accelerate children's literacy learning is known as culturally relevant literature. Fleming (2013), describes the importance of culturally relevant literature as mirrors and windows. If CRL serves as mirrors, children can see themselves reflected in the school curricula and when it serves as a window it helps children learn about the broader world.

There is a lack of theory to practice. While doing a CLASS observation, a teacher who is doing a curriculum study on buildings, read the story of the Three Little Pigs, to a classroom of 15 African American children. Although she did a great job of helping the children understand what materials were used to make the house, this story did not help the children to see themselves reflected in the story. As early childhood educators, we need to think about the self-efficacy of the children; they need to see themselves to know that they can achieve. This is a deficit with the teachers in the program. One of the criteria that Fleming (2013) recommends for selecting culturally relevant literature is to think about the accuracy of characters and culture. The teacher did not do this when she selected the Three Little Pigs. Although, the book was recommended in the Creative

Curriculum Building study, it still was not culturally relevant to the children in the classroom. The staff doesn't have the knowledge base to implement a culturally relevant curriculum or integrate culture into their teaching. There is a need for professional development and on-going support.

There are seven things that Ladson Billing's suggest teachers need to be able to do: (1)Positive perspective on parents and families (2)Communication of high expectations, (3)Learning within the context of culture, (4)Student-centered instruction, (5)Culturally mediated instruction (6)Reshaping the curriculum, and (7)Teacher as facilitator. The staff at Wilder Head Start need support in all seven areas. This is evident in the examples of microaggression mentioned earlier in the paper (e.g. the teacher's negative comment about the parents). Since the staff doesn't have a lot of training on being culturally responsive, they struggle with learning within the context of culture. These seven characteristics would be a great framework to help design meaningful professional development and as evaluative tool. Once again, I agree with Howard (2006) you can't teach what you don't know. Day (2006) propose several recommendations to prepare culturally competent teachers to be thought of as some basic principles and strategies as opposed to being a recipe for a teacher preparation curriculum. These include: (a) providing a deep understanding of culture, (b) providing a deep understanding of race and culture bias and how it affects schools, (c) providing strategies to authentically learn about cultural groups, and (d) developing an activist mentality (p. 8).

## **Recommendations**

The purpose of this policy advocacy was to offer insight to the organization on implementing a strengths-based approach to culturally responsive practices. One recommendation was to revise the current cultural policy to address the needs of the agency. A goal of the recommended policy was to take a deeper dive into understanding, respecting, and valuing differences. It was imperative that early childhood educators and administrators at Wilder Head Start value diversity. King (2010) reminded us that people come from very different backgrounds and their customs, thoughts, ways of communication, values, traditions, and institutions vary accordingly.

Perhaps Margaret Mead said it best: *"If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place."*

## References

- Adamu, M. H. (2015, October ). *Point of Entry The Preschool-to-Prison Pipeline*. Retrieved from Americanprogress: <http://www.americanprogress.org>
- Angelou, M. (2014). *Rainbow in the cloud the wisdom and spirit of Maya Angelou*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Auerbach, S. (2012). *School leadership for authentic family and community partnership*. New York, NY: Routledge .
- Bouttee, G. &. (1998). The complexities of valuing cultural diefferences without overemphasizing them: Taking it to the next level. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 54-62.
- Bowman, B. (2006). *School readiness and social- emotional development: Perspectives on cultural diversity*. National Black Child Development Institute, Inc.
- Brown, M. (2007). Educating all students: Creating culturally responsive teachers, classrooms, and schools. *Interventions in School and Clicnic*.
- Cabrera, N. (2013). *Social policy report: Positive development of minority children*. Society for Research in Child Development.
- Catlett, C. (2013). Intentional approaches to supporting diversity in early childhood. *Director's Link*.
- Cohen, R. (1978). Ethnicity: Problem and focus in anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* , 379-403.
- Committee, W. M. (2011). *Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)*. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction .
- Copple, C. A. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate pactice in early childhood programs*. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Cultural Competence*. (2006). Retrieved from National Center for Cultural Competence: <http://www.ncccc.georgetown.edu>
- Daha, M. (2016). Recognizing and addressing microaggressions in teacher-family relationships. *Exchange*.
- Darling-Hammond, D., French, J., Garcia-Lopez, S.,. (2002). *Learning to teach for soical justice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Day, C. B. (2006). Culture and the Early Education of Young Children: Prepare personnel to teach children from many cultures. 1-14. Retrieved from Organization of American States: <http://portal.oas.org>
- Derman-Sparks, L., & Olsen Edwards, J. (2010). *Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves*. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Deruy, E. (2013). *Student diversity is up but teachers are most likely white*. Retrieved from American Association of College for Teacher Education: <https://aacte.org>
- DuFour, R. (2004). Schools as learning communities. *Educational Leadership*, 6-11.
- DuFour, R. (2004). What is a Professional Learning Community? *Educational Leadership*, 6-11.
- Fleming, J. E. (2013). *More mirrors in the classroom: Using urban children's literature to increase literacy* .
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Practice, & Research*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing For Culturally Responsive Teaching . *Journal of Teacher Education Vol. 53, No. 2, March/April* , 106-116.
- Gay, G. (2006). Connections between classroom management and culturally responsive teaching. In C. E. Eds, *Handbook of Classroom Management* (pp. 343-370). N.J: Erlham.
- Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. (2006). *National Center for Cultural Competence*. Retrieved from <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/foundations/policies.html>
- Ginott, H. G. (2016). Retrieved from GoodReads: <http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes>
- Greco, P. P. (2013). *Our Journey with quality*. Menomonee Falls.
- Guskey, T. (2000). *Evaluating Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, INC.
- Howard, G. (2006). *We Cant Teach What We Don't Know White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- King, M. A. (2007). *Promoting Educators' Cultural Comptence To Better Serve* . Washington DC: NEA Human and Civil Rights Department .



- Kondrat, M. E. (1999). Who is the "Self" in self-awareness: Professional self-awareness from a critical theory perspective. *Social Service Review*, 451-477.
- Kotter, J. (1996). *Leading change* . Boston, MA : Harvard Business Press.
- Kozleski, E. (2011). *Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters!* Retrieved from Equity Alliance: <http://equityallianceatasu.org>
- Kuh, L. L. (2016, January). Moving Beyond Anti-Bias Activities: Supporting the Development of Anti-Bias Practice. *Young Child*, pp. 59-65.
- Ladson-Billing, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But That's Just Good Teaching! THE Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice Volume 34, Number 3*.
- Lieberman, A. (2015, June 17). *New America EdCentral*. Retrieved from [www.edcentral.org](http://www.edcentral.org)
- Lindesy, R., Robins, K., & Terrell, R. (2009). *Cultural Proficiency A Manual for School Leaders* . Thousand Oaks: Corwin a SAGE Company.
- Maschinot, B. (2008). The Changing Face of the United States The Influence of Culture on Early Childhood Development. *Zero To Three*, 1-50.
- Maxwell, K. & Clifford, R. (2004, January). School Readiness Assessment Beyond the Journal. *Young Child*, 42-46.
- Mays, R., Siantz, M., & Viehweg, S. (2002). Assessing Cultural Competence of Policy Organization. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, pp. Volume 13(2) 139-144.
- Moll, L. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice* , 132-141.
- Moll, L., Amanti, N., & Gonzales, N. (2005). Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, Communities and Classrooms. New York: Routledge.
- NAEYC. (2005). *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Trend Brief. (2012, August). Supporting Cultural Competence Accreditation of Programs for Young Children Cross-Cutting Theme in Program Standards. *NAEYC Accreditation* .
- National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC). (2006). *Conceptual Framework/Models Guiding Principles*,.

- National Education Association. (2008). *Promoting Educators' Cultural Competence To Better Serve Culturally Diverse Students*. Washington D.C.: National Education Association Human and Civil Rights Department.
- New America Ed Central*. (2015, August). Retrieved from <http://www.edcentral.org>
- Nganga, L. (2015). Culturally Responsive and Anti-Biased Teaching Benefits Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 1-16.
- Office of Head Start . (2010). *Revisiting and updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start programs serving children ages birth to five*. Washington DC.
- Office of Head Start*. (2008). Retrieved from Head Start website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>
- Office of Head Start National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness. (2015, January 27 - 28). Supporting School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys: A Region V Professional Development Training. Chicago.
- Olsen, L., Bhattacharya, J., & Scharf, A. (2007). *Cultural Competency: What It Is and Why It Matters*. Retrieved from California Tomorrow: <http://www.californiatomorrow.org/>
- Oran, G. (2009, December 23). *Education.com*. Retrieved from [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)
- Ounce of Prevention Fund*. (2005). Retrieved from Early Childhood education and the achievement gap: [http://www.ounceofprevention.org/early\\_edition/](http://www.ounceofprevention.org/early_edition/)
- Pedrus, P. (2011, April ). Retrieved from [http://works.bepress.com/patti\\_pedrus/10/](http://works.bepress.com/patti_pedrus/10/)
- Pewewardy, C. (1993). Culturally Responsible Pedagogy in Action: An American Indian magnet school. In J. K. E. Hollins, *Teaching diverse populations: Formulating a knowledge base* (pp. 77-92). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Quinton, S. (2013, November 11). *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/11/good-teachers-embrace-their-students-cultural-backgrounds>
- Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five. (2008). Office of Head Start.
- Services, D. o. (2008). *Revisiting and Updating The Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five*. Zero to Three.
- Skyles, M. (2014). *Doing the Right Thing for Children Eight Qualities of Leadership*. St. Paul: Red Leaf Press.

- Solo'rzano, D. (2000). Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of Africa American College Students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 60-73.
- Stoicovy, C. (2002). A case for culturally responsive pedagogy. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 11(1) 80-84.
- Sue, D. W. (2005). Racism and the Conspiracy of Silence . *Counseling Psychologist* 33, 100-114.
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* . John Wiley & Sons.
- Sue, D., Capodilupo, C., Torino, G., Bucceri, J., Holder, A., Nadal, K., and Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life. *American Psychologist*, 271-286.
- Supporting Cultural Competence Accreditation of Programs for Young Children Cross-cutting Theme in Program Standards. (2012, August). *NAEYC Accreditation Trend Brief*. NAEYC Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation .
- Sykes, M. (2014). *Doing the Right Thing for Children: Eight Qualities of Leadership*. New York: Red Leaf Press.
- Tamara, V. A. (2007, March). The Culturally Responsive Teacher. *Educational Leadership*, pp. 28-33.
- TeachStone . (2015, June). Retrieved from Classroom Assessment and Scoring System: [Teachstone.com/resources/research](http://teachstone.com/resources/research)
- The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default>
- Ticknor, A. S. (2015). Sustaining Social Justice Learning: What Teachers Educators can Do. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*: .
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Office of Head Start. (2007, December 12). *Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007*. Retrieved from [http://acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/about head-start](http://acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/about-head-start)
- Villegas, A. (2007). Disposition in Teacher Education: A Look At Social Justice. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 370-380.
- Villegas, A. M.& Lucas, T. (2007). The Culturally Responsive Teacher. *Educational Leadership*, 64 (6), 28-33.

Wagner, T. (2006). *Change leadership: A practical guide to transforming our schools*. Wiley.

Wisconsin Head Start Association. (2015, June). Retrieved from <http://whsaonline.org>

## APPENDIX A: Policy Self-Assessment

### PROMOTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

#### Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Behavioral Health Services and Supports to Children, Youth and their Families

**Directions:** Please select A, B, or C for each item listed below.

A = Things I do frequently, or statement applies to me to a great degree

B = Things I do occasionally, or statement applies to me to a moderate degree

C = Things I do rarely or never, or statement applies to me to minimal degree or not at all

### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I display pictures, posters and other materials that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of children, youth, and families served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I insure that magazines, brochures, and other printed materials in reception areas are of interest to and reflect the different cultures of children, youth and families served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When using videos, films, CDs, DVDS, or other media resources for mental health prevention, treatment or other interventions, I insure that they reflect the cultures of children, youth and families served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When using food during an assessment, I insure that meals provided include foods that are unique to the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of children, youth and families served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I insure that toys and other play accessories in reception areas and those, which are used during assessment, are representative of the various cultural and ethnic groups within the local community and the society in general.

## COMMUNICATION STYLES

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. For children and youth who speak languages or dialects other than English, I attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that I am better able to communicate with them during assessment, treatment or other interventions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I attempt to determine any familial colloquialisms used by children, youth and families that may impact on assessment, treatment or other interventions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I use visual aids, gestures, and physical prompts in my interactions with children and youth who have limited English proficiency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I use bilingual or multilingual staff or trained/certified interpreters for assessment, treatment and other interventions with children and youth who have limited English Proficiency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I use bilingual staff or multilingual trained/certified interpreters during assessments, treatment sessions, meetings, and for other events for families who would require this level of assistance.
11. When interacting with parents who have limited English proficiency I always keep in mind that:
- \_\_\_\_\_ \* limitations in English proficiency are in no way a reflection of their level of intellectual functioning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \* their limited ability to speak the language of the dominant culture has no bearing on their ability to communicate effectively in their language of origin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \* they may or may not be literate in their language of origin or English.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. When possible, I insure that all notices and communiqués to parents, families and caregivers are written in their language of origin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I understand that it may be necessary to use alternatives to written communications for some families, as word of mouth may be a preferred method of receiving information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I understand the principles and practices of linguistic competency and:
- \_\_\_\_\_ \* apply them within my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \* advocate for them within my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I understand the implications of health/mental health literacy within the context of my roles and responsibilities.

Tawara D. Goode •National Center for Cultural Competence • Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development • University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service • Adapted from ***Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Settings***• June 1989. (Revised 2009).  
Page 2

## VALUES AND ATTITUDES

- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I use alternative formats and varied approaches to communicate and share information with children, youth and/or their family members who experience disability.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I avoid imposing values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. In group therapy or treatment situations, I discourage children and youth from using racial and ethnic slurs by helping them understand that certain words can hurt others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I screen books, movies, and other media resources for negative cultural, ethnic, or racial stereotypes before sharing them with children, youth and their parents served by my program or agency.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I intervene in an appropriate manner when I observe other staff or parents within my program or agency engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, bias or prejudice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I understand and accept that family is defined differently by different cultures (e.g. extended family members, fictive kin, godparents).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I recognize and accept that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant or mainstream culture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I accept and respect that male-female roles in families may vary significantly among different cultures (e.g. who makes major decisions for the family, play and social interactions expected of male and female children).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I understand that age and life cycle factors must be considered in interactions with individuals and families (e.g. high value placed on the decisions of elders or the role of the eldest male in families).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. Even though my professional or moral viewpoints may differ, I accept the family/parents as the ultimate decision makers for services and supports for their children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I recognize that the meaning or value of behavioral health prevention, intervention and treatment may vary greatly among cultures.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I recognize and understand that beliefs and concepts of emotional well-being vary significantly from culture to culture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I understand that beliefs about mental illness and emotional disability are culturally-based. I accept that responses to these conditions and related treatment/interventions are heavily influenced by culture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I understand the impact of stigma associated with mental illness and behavioral health services within culturally diverse communities.

Tawara D. Goode •National Center for Cultural Competence • Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development • University Center for

Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service • Adapted from ***Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity in Early***

***Intervention and Early Childhood Settings***• June 1989. (Revised 2009).

Page 3



## VALUES AND ATTITUDES (CONT'D)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I accept that religion, spirituality and other beliefs may influence how families respond to mental or physical illnesses, disease, disability and death.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I recognize and accept that folk and religious beliefs may influence a family's reaction and approach to a child born with a disability or later diagnosed with a physical/emotional disability or special health care needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I understand that traditional approaches to disciplining children are influenced by culture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. I understand that families from different cultures will have different expectations of their children for acquiring self-help, social, emotional, cognitive, and communication skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. I accept and respect that customs and beliefs about food, its value, preparation, and use are different from culture to culture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. Before visiting or providing services in the home setting, I seek information on acceptable behaviors, courtesies, customs and expectations that are unique to families of specific cultures and ethnic groups served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. I seek information from family members or other key community informants that will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse children, youth, and families served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. I advocate for the review of my program's or agency's mission statement, goals, policies, and procedures to insure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural diversity and cultural and linguistic competence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. I keep abreast of new developments in pharmacology particularly as they relate to racially and ethnically diverse groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. I either contribute to and/or examine current research related to ethnic and racial disparities in mental health and health care and quality improvement.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. I accept that many evidence-based prevention and intervention approaches will require adaptation to be effective with children, youth and their families from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

#### How to use this checklist

This checklist is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of personnel to the importance of cultural diversity and cultural competence in human service settings. It provides concrete examples of the kinds of values and practices that foster such an environment. There is no answer key with correct responses. However, if you frequently responded "C", you may not necessarily demonstrate values and engage in practices that promote a culturally diverse and culturally competent service delivery system for children and youth who require behavioral health services and their families.

Tawara D. Goode •National Center for Cultural Competence • Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development • University Center for

Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service • Adapted from ***Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity in Early***

***Intervention and Early Childhood Settings***• June 1989. (Revised 2009).

Page 4

## APPENDIX B: Policy Program Checklist

### Pathways to Cultural Competence Programs

#### 4 Underlying Principles

##### 1. Teacher Reflection

- A) Reflect on how the setting of program policies and practices are influenced by the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of program administrators.
- B) Reflect on how program staff's individual values and practices regarding children's learning are influenced by their cultural and linguistic background.

##### 2. Intentional Decision-Making and Practice

- A) Identify shared childrearing goals with families; align your program decision-making and policies with these shared goals.
- B) Plan ahead to address potential language or cultural barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.

##### 3. Strength-Based Perspective

- A) Acknowledge that programs can learn from families.
- B) Recognize that diversity enriches and provides depth to the overall program.
- C) Understand that different does not mean dysfunctional.
- D) Respect and support the preservation of children and families' home languages, cultural backgrounds, and childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices.
- E) Incorporate aspects of children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds in program's curriculum. Highlight strengths that exist across cultures.

##### 4. Open, Ongoing, Two-Way Communication between programs and families.

- A) Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs regarding their policies and practices. Families should not solely be recipients of information.
- B) Plan ahead to address language barriers. Provide translational and interpretation resources for program staff.

Program Checklist<sup>1</sup>

Met	Not Met	Concept 1: "Children are nested in families."
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 1 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Know the primary caregivers for the children in your program and do not assume they are mothers and fathers.
—	—	Encourage two-way communication with families by (a) coordinating informal gatherings at the program, (b) utilizing drop-off and pick-up times as opportunities to communicate, (c) agreeing upon effective modes of communication (e.g., notes, phone, email), (d) developing a family or parent council, or (e) hosting family-themed events (e.g., Carnival Night, Pancake Breakfast).
—	—	Ensure that families have opportunities to give input to programs (i.e., they should not solely be recipients of information). Plan ahead to address language barriers.
—	—	Coordinate with classroom teachers to provide families with information and resources about topics the children are investigating in the program.
—	—	Welcome all interested family members to meetings, program events, and activities regarding the child.
—	—	Give teachers the time and resources necessary to conduct home visits, if families are comfortable. This will allow teachers to learn from families about children's home environments, interests, early language experiences, preferred learning styles and integrate this information into classroom learning activities.

—	—	Greet all families at drop-off and pick-up throughout the year using nonverbal and verbal communication.
—	—	Create space and opportunities for families to visit, spend time, and exchange information about their children.

Met	Not Met	
		<b>Concept 2: "Identify shared goals among families and staff."</b>
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 2 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Communicate to staff and families that the goal of the program is to develop a partnership in which each party can learn from the other.
—	—	Require teachers to identify families' short and long term goals for their children and to align them with classroom objectives and developmentally appropriate practice. Encourage teachers to incorporate families' goals into classroom learning activities where appropriate.
—	—	Discuss with family members differences in childrearing beliefs and identify strategies for negotiating different approaches. Involve classroom teachers in these discussions.
—	—	Include families in making decisions related to their children's well being and education, both at the program and classroom level. Encourage teachers to include families in decisions related to their children's educational experience in the classroom.

—	—	Explore and support meaningful ways in which family members can contribute to the learning in the program.
---	---	--

Met	Not Met	
		<b>Concept 3: “Authentically incorporate cultural traditions and history in the program.”</b>
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 3 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Highlight the presence of all families and children in the program. Example strategies include hanging pictures on the walls of children and families or highlighting their presence in program-wide activities.
—	—	Invite family members to share information about their cultural backgrounds in the program (e.g., history, traditions, and home language).
—	—	Equip the program and classrooms with educational materials (e.g., books, posters, utensils, kitchen & apparel items) that reflect value for diverse languages, ethnicities, and cultures.

—	—	Encourage families to share artifacts, music, stories, or other culturally relevant information with the program and with their children’s teachers. Ensure that teachers are inviting and working with families to incorporate these resources in the classroom.
—	—	Represent relevant historical events and traditions of children, families, and their communities in the program.
—	—	Incorporate into your program’s curriculum nursery rhymes, songs, extended vocabulary, and early literacy skills that originate from and are commonly practiced in the cultures represented in your program and community.
Met	Not Met	Concept 4: “Acknowledge child development as a culturally-driven, ongoing process that should be supported across contexts in a child’s life (e.g., school and home).”
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 4 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Invite families to define their ethnicity or culture; do not assume based upon appearances.
—	—	Equip classrooms with appropriate instructional resources such as books and toys that expose children to role models from their own and other cultural backgrounds.
—	—	Recruit role models from diverse cultural backgrounds to visit or volunteer in the program. Role-models may come from the community or may be family members of children in the program.
—	—	Establish relationships in the community that are mutually beneficial (e.g., programs help community efforts; community leaders participate and serve as role models to children in programs).

Met	Not Met	Concept 5: "Individuals and institutions' practices are embedded in culture."
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 5 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Encourage staff, families, and children to learn about each other's racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds by having a variety of year-round, program-wide activities. Activities could be coordinated with children's teachers and could include developing a program-wide international cookbook or hosting musical and dance performances that represent the diverse backgrounds of families in the program.
—	—	Provide teachers the time and resources necessary to interact with children and families outside of the program setting and in the communities where they live.
—	—	Ask families for input and feedback on program policies and use this information to modify policies as appropriate.

Met	Not Met	Concept 6: "Ensure decisions and policies embrace home languages and dialects."
-----	---------	---



—	—	Review and discuss Concept 6 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Establish a language policy that embraces children’s home language and determines a set of goals for children (e.g., bilingualism for all children, etc).
—	—	Ensure staff and families are familiar with the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting children’s home languages. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.
—	—	Use children’s home language for multiple learning purposes, not just in giving directions or managing behavior.
—	—	Provide translational and interpretation resources to program staff.
—	—	Find ways to communicate with children and families in their home language.
—	—	Encourage children to speak their home language to other children, staff, or parents from the same backgrounds.
—	—	Provide opportunities for children to learn in their home language (e.g., book reading, small groups, and personal stories).
—	—	Correctly pronounce and know how to spell each child’s name.
—	—	Make available in the program books, tapes/CDs, songs, print, and other materials in children’s home languages to staff, children, and families.

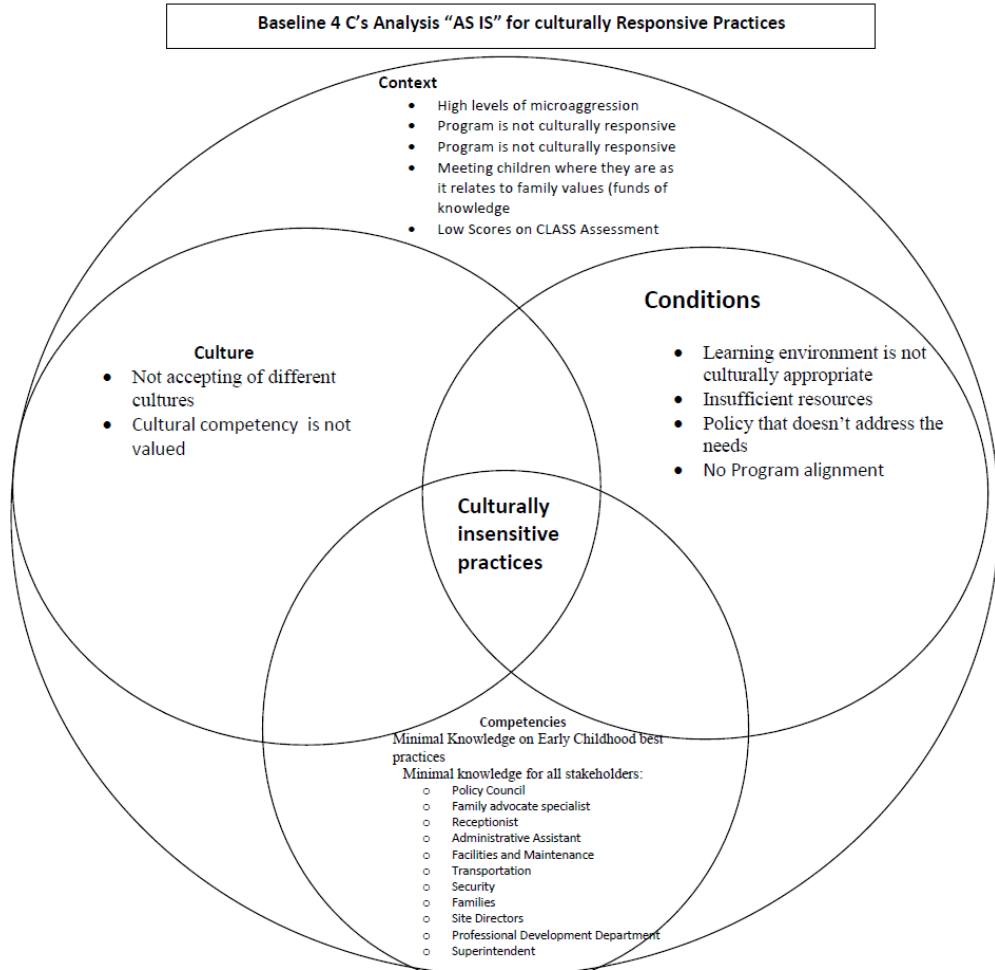
Met	Not Met	
		<b>Concept 7: “Ensure policies and practices embrace and respect families’ cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs toward learning.”</b>
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 7 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Identify families’ short and long term goals for their children in collaboration with teachers. Align families’ goals with curricula and developmentally appropriate practice. Incorporate families’ goals into program curricula where appropriate.
—	—	Make clear to staff and families the policies and resources your program has in place on respecting diversity and addressing bias. Be a resource of knowledge on these policies for staff and families.
—	—	Share strategies and ideas with staff on how the program can support children’s identity, honor home language, and address issues of bias. Use your staff as a resource for ideas on how to address issues of race, language, and culture in the program.
—	—	Work together with staff to create program activities that integrate appreciation and respect for diversity (e.g., songs, stories, finger plays, rhymes).
—	—	Collaborate regularly with staff and families on developing a center environment that reflects an appreciation for diversity. Examples include (a) developing a collage of heroes from cultures represented in the program, (b) display flags of all countries represented in the program, or (c) creating learning settings used by different cultures.

—	—	Review all forms and documents with a group of diverse staff and family members to ensure they are free from bias. For example, the program may develop a committee of family, staff, and community members whose responsibility is to ensure that the program’s environment, forms, policies, and practices are culturally-sensitive and reflect a value for diversity.
—	—	Include the diverse range of families your program serves in the discussion and decision-making of program policies and practices.

Met	Not Met	
		<b>Concept 8: “Equalize balances of power; counter stereotyping and bias through intentional teaching.”</b>
—	—	Review and discuss Concept 8 of <i>Teacher Checklist</i> with teachers in the program.
—	—	Provide professional development opportunities to staff on countering stereotypes and bias through intentional teaching.
—	—	Invite role models across various language, cultural, and racial backgrounds to lead program activities with children. It is important for children not to associate one single language, race, or culture as the most powerful.
—	—	Guide staff in recognizing stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups; correct- if applicable- any misperceptions staff may have toward other groups.

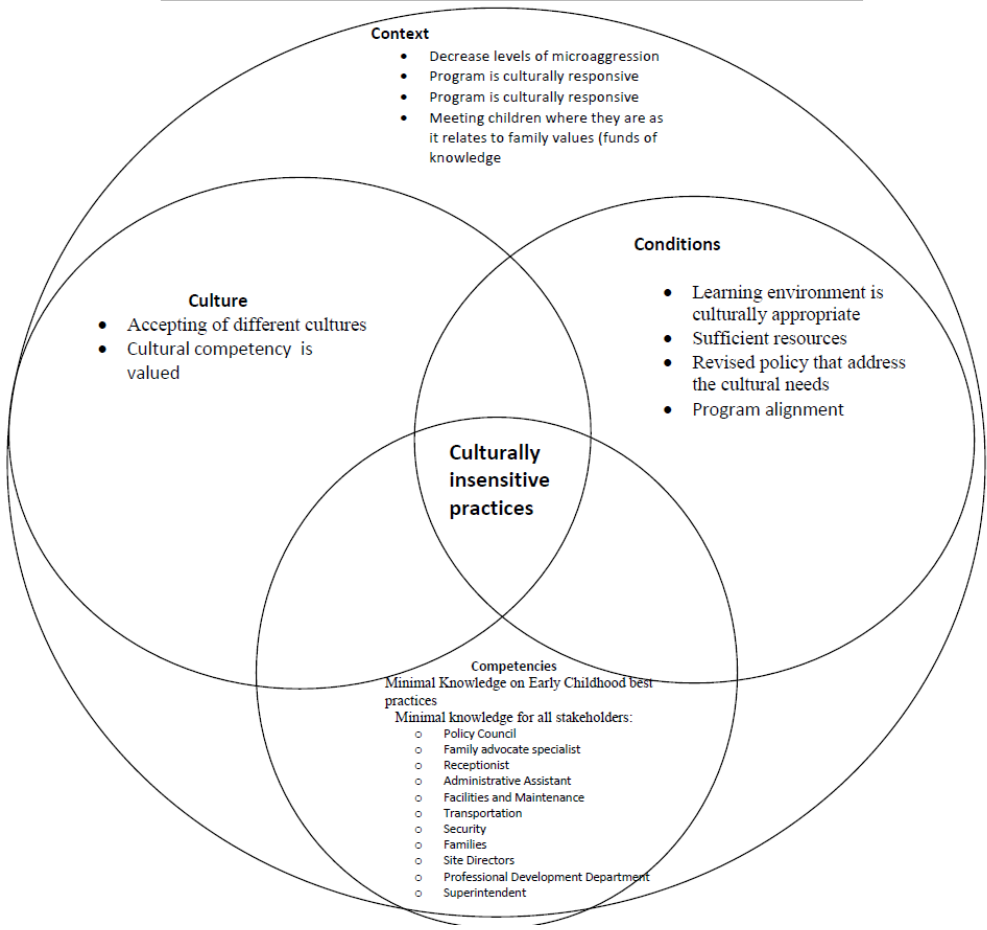
<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>Encourage staff to help children recognize stereotypes, stereotypic images, and bias toward other language, racial, and cultural groups; support staff in helping children dispel- if applicable- any misperceptions they may hold toward other groups.</p>
<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>Intervene if a staff member or child displays a biased response to another staff member or child. Ask staff to intervene if children in their classrooms display a biased response to another child or staff member.</p>
<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>Encourage staff to support each other and themselves in face of bias. Assist staff in teaching children how they can support one another in face of bias.</p>

## APPENDIX C: AS IS Culturally Responsive

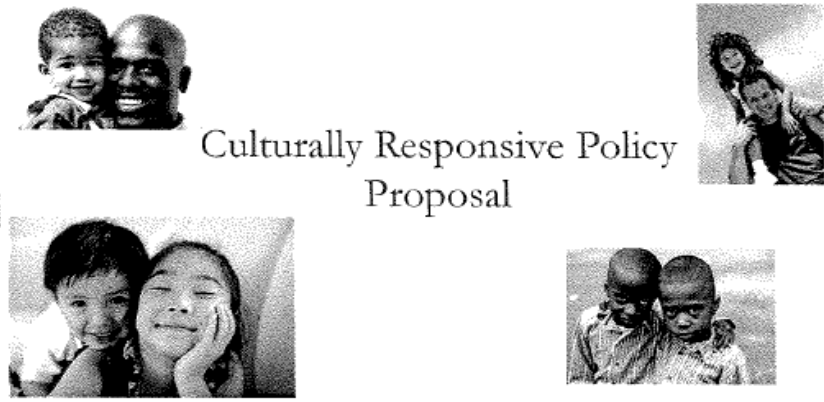


## APPENDIX D: TO Be Cultural Responsive

**Baseline 4 C's Analysis "To Be" for culturally Responsive Practices**



**APPENDIX E: Cultural Policy PowerPoint**



## Culturally Responsive Policy Proposal

## Critical Reflectivity

---

- Does your policy reflect intentionality:
- Do your efforts have an explicit and intentional emphasis on young children who are culturally diverse
- Do you have agreed upon definitions of key terms to use in your work (e.g. cultural competence)
- Do you have guiding principles that underscore your commitment to diversity in all aspects of your work?

(Camille Catlett)

## Critical Reflectivity

- Are your professional development efforts helping your staff to better support children who are culturally, linguistically and ability diverse
- Does your staff have a strong knowledge base about evidence-based practices that support young children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse
- Do you have explicit requirements for your staff in developing their capacity to support young children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse
- (Camille Catlett)

## Current Policy

- **Purpose:** To support and respect the home language, culture, and family composition of each child.
- **Policy:** Children and families are provided acceptance of diversity through the ongoing demonstration of respect for the values and beliefs of each family. Understanding and respecting the cultural and linguistic diversity, social background, religious beliefs and child rearing practices of each family is fundamental to the program.
- **Procedure...** Teachers and staff will model respect and help children demonstrate appreciation of others. Providing books and materials that reflect families' home languages and culture as well as that of others in the community is a priority.



## Research says...

---

Auerbach (2012) describes this as the Neo-institutional theory which suggests that institutional expectations, including policies do not always match the behavior of individuals within the institution. In the Book, School Leadership for Authentic Family and Community Partnership, the author implies, if the program level policies are loosely coupled with the classroom practice, then the policy and practice exists at two separate levels, with little connection and no accountability.

## Research says...

---

To build toward a fully culturally competent staff, programs need to prioritize professional development opportunities and conversations that support difficult discussions about race and culture(Adamu & Hogan, 2015) .

## Recommending/advocating as a solution to address the original policy

### Recommendations:

- focus on the administrative portion of the policy,
- expand the current policy to work toward a strength based approach
- add professional development on cultural competency

## Proposed Culturally Responsive Policy

- **Purpose:** To provide a framework for implementing and enhancing culturally responsiveness. This policy will help staff to understand the impact of being culturally responsive.
- **Policy:** Increase awareness of culturally responsiveness and provide on-going professional development resources, and coaching to ensure staff implements culturally responsive best practices.

Cultural Competency professional development will address cultural/linguistic topics and strategies to ensure cultural proficiency which will enable staff to respond effectively to people who differ from one another.

## Common Language

- **Common Language:** This section will provide a definition for terminology that is relevant to the policy.
- Cultural competency begins with understanding “culture” (Olsen, Bhattacharya & Scharf, 2007)
- Culture – encompasses many things, some of which are more important for teachers to know than others because they have direct implications for teaching and learning. Among these are ethnic groups, cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relationship patterns (Gay, 2002).

## Common Language

- Cultural competence is behavior that aligns with standards that move an organization or an individual toward culturally proficient interactions (Lindsay, Robins, and Terrell 2009). The National Centre for Cultural Competence (NCCC) has identified five key components of cultural competence:
  - A valuing of cultural diversity –integrating respect for diversity into programs, policies, and service and also recognizing that members of certain cultural groups may have cultural as well as individual needs
  - Conducting a cultural self-assessment – develop an awareness of their own cultures and communities, assumptions, and biases and identifying actions to reduce such barriers
  - Managing the dynamics of difference – the dynamics of cultural difference are proactively managed, improving the interactions between different cultures
  - Acquiring and institutionalizing cultural knowledge- a need to exists to integrated an understanding of different cultures into service delivery and practices
  - Adapting to diversity and cultural context- cultural knowledge is embedded throughout the hierarchy of the organization and policy, practices, service delivery and behaviors are adapted to fit the cultural diversity of the community engaged

## Responsibility:

- The agency will develop a professional development plan and model that will differentiate the content to meet the needs of all employees.
- In the revised policy, there will be an explicit explanation of the roles and responsibilities for implementing the Cultural Competency Professional Policy.

## Alignment

---

- According to the Head Start Performance Standards, professional development means high-quality activities that will improve the knowledge and skills of Head Start teachers and staff as relevant to their roles and functions, in program administration and the provision of services and instruction, as appropriate, in a manner that improves services delivery to enrolled children and their families.

## Framework

---

- To embed cultural competence at the organizational and individual level.
- Cultural Competency at the organizational level is key to supporting culturally competent practice (NCCC, 2006).

## Cultural Competency at the organizational level

---

- Philosophy
- Mission Statement
- Policy structures, procedures, practices
- Diverse, knowledgeable and skilled staff
- Dedicated resources
- Community engagement and partnerships
- Advocacy
- Parent training
- Information published and disseminated

## Cultural Competency at the individual level

---

- Culturally aware
- Gaining cultural knowledge
- Cultural skills

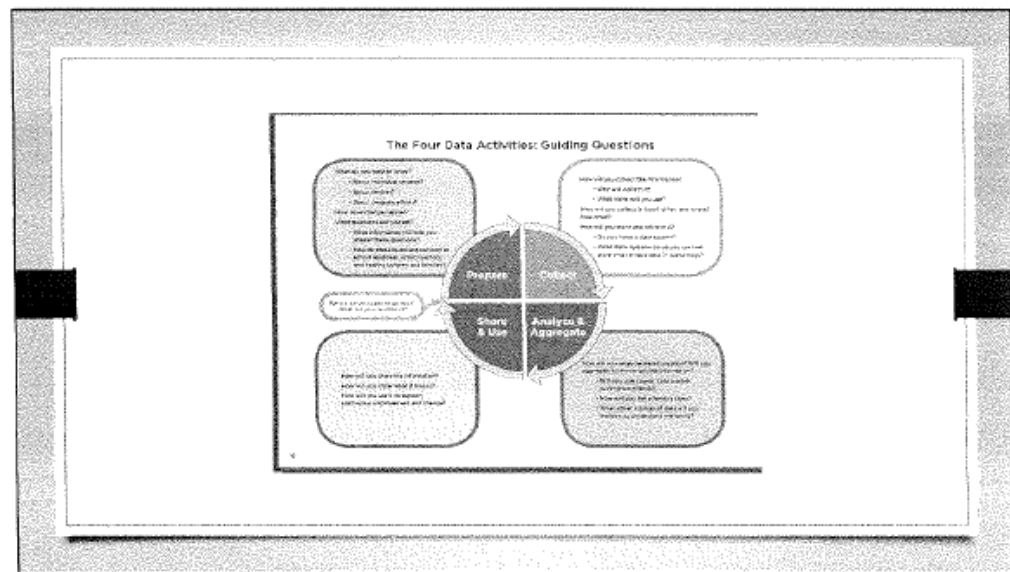
## Policy Implementation Plan

- The implementation plan will be completed using research-based methods.
- One method that will be used to begin the process is Kotter's eight stage change model of organizational change.
- Kotter (1996) advocates this model as the standard for any organization that is undergoing major changes.

## Kotter's Eight Steps

- Stage 1: Establish a sense of urgency
- Stage 2: Create the guiding coalition
- Stage 3: Develop a vision and strategy
- Stage 4: Communicate the change vision
- Stage 5: Empower broad-based action
- Stage 6: Generate short-term wins
- Stage 7: Consolidate gains and produce more change
- Stage 8: Anchor new approaches in the culture

# Policy Assessment





### Research says:

- Behind disparities in school-related performance lie dramatic differences in children's early experiences and access to good programs and school. Often there is also a mismatch between the "school" culture and children's backgrounds. In the Social Policy Report, Positive Developmental of Minority Children, the author stated, promoting optimal development among minority children should strengthen or support what families are already doing well within a cultural context and also address the challenges or barriers many low-income minority families face.

### Research says:

- Quality programming in Head Start and other early childhood programs incorporate knowledge of and respect for families' cultures and implementation of best practices including quality learning, environments, intentional teaching, and family engagement strategies. When these programs pieces are in place, they best support the development and learning of young children. In the family, and in early education settings, children gain cultural information as they form relationships, participate in daily routines, and get involved in learning activities.

## Research says:

---

- \* Mashinot (2008) reported as we think about the significance of diversity in the United States and the fact that early care and education services are often the first point of contact with mainstream culture for immigrants and minority families, it is essential that providers have a deep understanding of background and lived experiences of the families they work with in an ever-changing culture.

## And..

---

Maurice Sykes, notes in his book, Doing the Right Thing for Children, building strong competence at the organizational level is a requirement for any leader in the field of early childhood education.

Organizational competence is one of the most powerful tools available to us when it comes to effecting positive change for children.

