



CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS AND THE ELOF

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five (ELOF) provides language to help teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors understand child development and what children should know and be able to do to succeed in school. The ELOF supports effective program and teaching practices that promote strong outcomes for all children, including children with disabilities or suspected delays and children who are dual language learners or who are learning a tribal language.

One of the ELOF’s guiding principles states:

“Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family’s culture, background, language, and beliefs. Responsive and respectful learning environments welcome children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Effective teaching practices and learning experiences build on the unique backgrounds and prior experiences of each child.” (p. 3)

Culture is a set of traditions, values, and beliefs shared by a group of people. Culture often includes specific artifacts, food, customs, music, and traditions. However, cultural diversity exists across and within cultural groups. Every child and family is unique. The ELOF shares some ways that culture may influence how and when children demonstrate their knowledge and skills. These examples include:

APPROACHES TO LEARNING

The strategies children use to manage their emotions may be related to their culture. For example, some children may use self-soothing strategies and others may seek comfort from adults (p. 12).



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The paths children take toward social and emotional development may be influenced by their cultures. For example, some cultures encourage children to be outgoing, while others encourage children to be more reserved (p. 23). Some cultures encourage children to stand out as individuals, while other cultures emphasize group identity (p. 33).

LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION

Social and conversational rules may differ between cultures. For example, some cultures may encourage or discourage looking directly at adults while speaking (pp. 36, 43).

PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The path of perceptual, motor, and physical development may vary based in part on children’s cultures. For example, in some cultures, older infants and toddlers may begin using forks and spoons while eating. Some preschoolers may be responsible for getting themselves dressed and undressed. Their fine motor coordination may be more advanced than it is for children whose caregivers don’t have the same expectations. Culture may also influence the foods a child likes to eat (p. 67) and how they behave during mealtime.

