Front Porch Series: Elevating Cultural Responsiveness in Effective Teaching Practices

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the "Front Porch Series." This is the third in a three-part series that focuses on culture and language in preschool. Today, we'll be talking about elevating the role of cultural responsiveness in effective teaching practices, and today, here, I'm Judi Stevenson-Garcia. I'm the senior manager of content development at the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. I'm here with Karen Nemeth. Hi, Karen.

Karen Nemeth: Hello. Happy to be with everyone today, and looking forward to working with you, Judi.

Judi: Fantastic. So, today we're going to be talking about the roles of culturally responsive materials and practices in high-quality instructional interactions. We're going to focus on understanding the role of culturally relevant materials and practices within instructional interactions. We're going to identify some strategies for infusing authentic cultural supports and learning activities, and then, we'll talk about some ways to effectively use culturally relevant materials and books to relate concepts to children's actual lives and to help make connections to children's prior knowledge. So, it's a lot to take on in just one short hour, so we're going to get moving.

This is a place we always like to start first, which is the definition of dual-language learners, and this comes straight from the Head Start Program Performance Standards. So, let's take a minute to read this definition together. A dual-language learner means, "A child who is acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. The term 'dual-language learner' may encompass or overlap substantially with other terms frequently used, such as bilingual, English language learner, Limited English Proficient, English learner, and children who speak a language other than English." So, this definition shows that all children who are growing up with two or more languages are considered dual-language learners, regardless of their proficiency in any other languages. So, this includes children who have started with English and are learning a tribal language or a heritage language, any variation. It's simply all children who have multiple language represented, are exposed to multiple languages, and are growing up with two or more languages in their home. Language is an important part of each child's culture, so, whether the children in your groups speak the same language or many languages, each child has their own culture rooted in their home, their community, and within the traditions of their family.

So, today we're going to discuss the value of infusing aspects of each child's culture to support language and learning for all. So, some of you, I hope, were with us in the first webinar of this year's "Front Porch Series." We talked about the science of developing first and second languages, and we mentioned a few examples. In the second webinar, we built on that background, and we provided more detailed examples and explanations of effective strategies

for supporting language development. So, if you haven't watched the previous webinars, we do have a link to where the webinar series exists on the ECLKC. Currently, the first webinar is available there, so if you go into the "Resources" tab, you can find your way to the ECLKC. The first webinar is there for you, and the second one will be uploaded to the ECLKC very soon. So, those set the foundation, and you can always go back and watch them. They will be very helpful to explain the research behind the strategies that we're going to be talking about today. So, this is what we see in the Head Start Performance Standards. Today, we're going to talk about how important the cultural component of this message is. So, a program must deliver developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, mathematics, social and emotional function, approaches to learning, science, physical skills, and creative arts. And if you know the ELOF, you know that that's what that's referring to. So, in all the learning opportunities that we provide for young children, those culturally and linguistically appropriate learning experiences are there as well, so not just developmentally appropriate. We want to make sure that children have the opportunity to engage in those learning opportunities that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. We know that today, under our current circumstances, programs and staff and families and children are all going through lots of changes and challenges as we adapt to challenging times. So, some of the strategies that we include today, and resources, will hopefully help with some in-person and remote teaching. So, as you're participating in today's webinar, we hope you'll consider ways that you can use and maybe even adapt some of the information and some of the strategies to fit whatever circumstances you are currently in.

OK, so, let's stop and think for a minute. We're talking about culture today. So, what does culture mean to you? When I say, "culture," what does that mean? Moving beyond your first quick answer, what does culture mean to you? This comes up sometimes in conversation in my family. My husband is from the Dominican Republic, and my family has a long history here in the United States. On my father's side, his family came here in the 1600s, and so, sometimes I get a little bit jealous of my husband's kind of rich – the richness of his culture – the music, the food, his language. It feels very salient. Like, I can really feel it, and even when we go to visit his family in New York City, you know, the streets, even, his neighborhood, they're alive. You can feel it pulsing, and so, I don't feel that, necessarily, when I go to my parents' house. And so, I do say to him sometimes, like, I feel like our kids maybe will feel like they understand, or they feel the Dominican culture, or understand what Dominican culture is more than what my family's culture might be. But what he says to me, though, is that I have a connection and an understanding with living at the beach. I grew up at the shore in New Jersey, and we kind of have our own culture there that he's not quite familiar or comfortable with, and so, I think having these conversations and thinking about what culture means has been interesting for us. And so, I think, you know, thinking beyond what might just be salient or immediately right in front of you is important. Sometimes, we take things for granted, and we don't realize what's part of our family traditions or maybe even what's part of a local culture, and so, sometimes it takes thinking to really become aware of what the role of culture is, even in our adult lives and what we're sharing with our families. It's important for me. Every weekend, I grab my kids. We pack up the car, and we head to the beach because that is an important part of what my

experience was as a child growing up, and that's part of my culture that I'm sharing with my kids.

So, the Head Start "Multicultural Principles" Resource, which we're going to talk about in just a minute, it describes culture in terms of four levels – universal, group, family, and individual levels. And this is one way to organize conversations that you might have with children, families, and coworkers. So, speaking of children, another thing we want to think about is what culture means to children. Now, I was just saying, you know, I wonder what my children think about what my culture is or what our culture is as a family, what our blended culture is?" How do children see culture? What do they see and experience in their day-to-day lives at home, in their communities, in their schools? Those authentic connections are going to be the subject of our discussion today. We're asking you to put yourself in the position of individual children rather than assuming things about one particular culture. So, we're going to give you a definition. This is a quote from an article in "Young Children." I'm going to read this to you, and this is a researcher's definition of culture. This is an exact quote, and so, I'm going to read it together with you, and I just want you to think and have a reaction to it, and then we'll talk about it after. So, "Culture influences not only children's personal preferences and behaviors but also how they think, feel, and learn. Instead of seeing culture as an external influence of children, it is viewed as a process in which children use cultural tools or artifacts, values, symbols, objects, technologies, words, norms, traditions, schemas, scripts, and practices to make meaning of their daily experiences. Culture and the development of cognition are therefore inseparable." Now, that emphasis is mine, not the author's, but I want to know, what do you think about that, "Culture and the development of cognition are therefore inseparable"? Think about that. Chew on it for a little bit, and think about what that means as we go through the strategies through the remainder of this webinar, and what does that mean for the strategies that we use when we teach and work with children? Karen, I think this is you.

Karen: Yes, and I'm slipping in here to just remind everybody that Head Start has its own resource that was developed through a very intensive and collaborative process over quite a few years and has been updated, and that is our book on "Multicultural Principles." It's available on the ECLKC, and the link would be in the widget for you. It's available in English and Spanish, and you can download it and use it in sections or in the whole thing. And so, we just wanted to introduce it here by saying that of the 10 multicultural principles, the first principle says, "Every child is rooted in culture," and that's what we're going to use as our theme for our presentation today. We're going to really try to make it practical for you and really talk about ways to use what we know about culture, and one of the tools that we also offer on the ECLKC, that's linked in your widget with your resource list, is the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment. And this is a tool that Head Start developed to address the whole program – or the whole system – and how it supports children who are dual language learners and their families. So, it's not just something you would hand to a teacher or a parent. The DLLPA helps Head Start, child care, pre-K programs to assess their systems and services altogether and integrates culturally and linguistically responsive practices for everybody. So, the components are really useful to help you support the planning for a planned language approach; to help you plan specifically for how culture will be elevated in high-quality teaching and learning. So, for

example, if you look in the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment, section five is a section called "Teaching and the Learning Environment," and there are some questions in that section that really help you focus on the practical implementation of culture, such as a question that says, "Ensure learning experiences such as music, math, and science reflect the cultures and languages of our children," or, "Do you incorporate key words and phrases in the home languages of the children in learning experiences and everyday routines?" or, "Do you promote children's positive self-concept by using the correct pronunciation of your children's names or use materials, visuals, and other items that reflect your families' cultures that teachers and home visitors include as part of their planned teaching strategies?" So, questions like that on the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment help you focus your discussions in your own work and with your programs team and in the broader community that supports your program.

Now, we also wanted to include this in our discussion about elevating the role of culture, about the importance of understanding equity and where it fits in our work. So, this is a frequently used image that shows the meaning of equality versus equity. So, in the first image on the left, you see what equity looks like. All the individuals are being treated equally. I said that wrong. The first image talks about equality, and all individuals are being treated equally. They get the same supports, but it challenges the assumption that everyone benefits from the same supports. As shown, not all start from the same position. Some have a height advantage, and if everyone gets the same support, some people will get more than others. The middle image is what depicts equity. It demonstrates that when different individuals are given different supports, it makes it possible for them all to access equally. But the third image is what we really want you to think about because the third image shows, "What if there was no barrier in the first place? What if we didn't have to bring in those boxes, but what if we set up the teaching and learning environment by getting to know all of the individuals that are going to participate in our program, and we avoided barriers by planning and getting to know each individual, getting to know the whole child and planning intentional supports that will work?" And that would mean supports for a home language, supports for cultural experiences, supports needed for children who might have experienced trauma or potential delays or disabilities, but in all cases, our goal is to remove barriers, not to fix children or have children fit our preconceived ideas.

So, an additional resource that we're adding to our discussion is NAEYC, N-A-E-Y-C, National Association for the Education of Young Children, has an "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education" position statement that includes some really important points that we want to talk about today and emphasize that these recommendations from NAEYC are echoed in the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment, and the Head Start "Multicultural Principles" document. They all go together, but each one gives us a different kind of idea that we could use in our work. So, for example, the Head Start document recommends, "Consider the developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness of the learning environment and your teaching practices for each child. When supporting learning at home, communicate clearly with families about the value of items in their home that reflect their language, culture, and daily activities that are valuable tools for learning, and incorporate them into the guidance you provide. With changes in how we teach and how

families may be able to access early learning for their child, current conditions may put more focus on inequities." And we want to really remove those barriers and celebrate the strengths that families have to offer. So, in our discussion today, we want to offer our understanding to you because we know it's challenging for you. You're participating in this webinar to build your knowledge in a time when there are a lot of other things that you're really concerned about, too, and we really trying to offer these as strategies that can support you in your work and make you feel affirmed. So, we'll give you some more strategies and ... Oh, I forgot that this had animation. "Consider developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness." That's the recommendation on this one. But also, we want to remind you that in the "Multicultural Principles" guide, it's another tool you can use to have that same discussion. In chapter nine or principle nine of "Multicultural Principles" guide, you will see some specific recommendations for equitable teaching practices and how to support diverse programming that examines and challenges institutional and personal biases, and gives you questions you can use for your own reflection as well as for discussions with teammates and families. So, some of the key points that come from our understanding of the recommendations in the NAEYC position statement that link back to the Head Start recommendations we also talked about.

So, we say here, first of all, consider your own biases, the implicit biases, the biases you might know about that we call explicit biases. They might be contributing to your interactions and the messages you're sending to children and families. So, we want to define bias as any attitude, belief, or feeling that results in, and helps to justify, unfair treatment of an individual because of his or her identity. And this definition comes from Louise Derman-Sparks' book from NAEYC called "Anti-Bias Curriculum," and it is helpful in our work to take a moment to reflect on the biases we may have, the assumptions we make, the ways we group people together by certain characteristics. We might also have biases about materials, you know, our behaviors. What's valuable or not? What's acceptable or not? So, for example, in my own story, I once bought a collection of storybooks with pictures and stories about playing in the snow to give to a friend for her grandchildren, and I realized after I had given her this gift that where her grandchildren live was a place that had not seen snow for a couple of years. And I was really in my own bias of how wonderful, how much I enjoy snow in the northern part of the United States. Wouldn't every child? No. It's not relatable for every child, and I didn't put myself in the position of that family, as I could have. So, that's an example of ways that little biases creep in, assumptions that we make, and I could learn from that. I could recognize that disconnect, and it really helped me think in future about ways to consider what's relevant to the actual children that I'm communicating with.

So, we want to try to take a look at the circumstances, when circumstances change and your focus has to shift from classroom teaching or family child care to supporting learning at home or some combination of those things that we want to reflect on the choices of activities and materials that you include in your distance learning opportunities, too, and in the suggestions you make to parents. How might you understand and support what's appropriate for them or what's relevant for them, so we ensure equity rather than trying a one-size-fits-all approach? And the Head Start "Multicultural Principles" resource offers a lot of discussion topics, definitions, and strategies that you can use to reflect on those biases that you might have, or

you might, for more support related to anti-bias teaching practices, you might register for the Office of Head Start "Anti-Bias Teaching and Learning Environments in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs" webinar. That's going to be held on September 10th, and the registration link is in the Resources widget.

OK. Another recommendation that we found in the NAEYC position statement is to involve children, families, and the community in designing and implementing learning activities. Not that you should be an expert and know everything that's relevant to the children, families, and the community, but rather, that you should be an open questioner and an open communicator to get to know what's relevant and what's available to support and implement activities that work. And this is even more important now more than ever, and we want to know how have families been engaged in planning and implementation of virtual learning opportunities. We're scrambling to try to adjust to new circumstances, and it's a good idea to take a step back and think, "OK, but have I asked this family what they need or what they could do?" And when working on hybrid learning, there are a lot of considerations when you're mixing sometime in the program and sometime online and how you can empower families as true partners in their child's learning so you can strengthen their confidence in what they do with their children at home. So, that's what's meant by this recommendation, and we have another one that says, "Use authentic assessments that seek to identify children's strengths and provide a well-rounded picture of development." It's important for children to be assessed in ways that allow them to authentically express what they know and can do, whether you're using virtual or hybrid learning, as this has presented unique challenges to the collection and documentation of authentic ongoing child assessment and developmental screening data. But we've heard anecdotes of using video calls to support families as they conduct the screening or providing families with specific things to observe so they can share with the teacher what they see their child doing. Current class sizes, daily schedules and routines, interactions with families are – all changing all the time now, and the way we collect and document ongoing child assessment will change, too, and this means staff will really need to plan more intentionally to be prepared to capture information as authentically as possible.

And, "Focus on Strengths." This is, you know, an important message about supporting the elevation of the role of culture, is that all families, all children, come with important assets, important benefits from their experiences, and we could make good use of them in the work that we do if we get to know those families and children and make intentional use of supporting those assets and strengths in our plans for supporting learning, and these are the same kinds of recommendations that we see in the Head Start Program Performance Standards. They are evident in the planned language approach strategies, and we're going to cover those next, but next, what we're going to do is – we're going to view a video, and this is a video we've actually shown before. Judi and I have used this video before, so you may have seen it. It is a video that was produced by the team at teachingatthebeginning.org, and they created this video. It shows a teacher reading a story in an unfamiliar language, and then there are adults that are playing the roles of what it would be like for the children if they were in a group listening to a story they did not understand. But the one thing I really wanted to have you look for when you see this video, even if you've seen it before – look again. Because we want to

see what aren't the children getting from the cultural part of this experience? The children may not have access to the content, but also, they do not feel empowered to learn and express themselves. And so, there's nothing in the environment that supports the children to feel welcomed, and there's a bias in this traditional practice of a teacher sitting and reading a picture book to a whole group of children that is not supportive of helping them understand. It's not supporting their actual access – their equitable access – to the information because their cultural strengths were not addressed. But when you look at this video, you can start to think, "OK, well, how will I do this differently if it were me?" So, let's see if we could get this video started.

[Video begins] Woman: [Speaking foreign language]

Narrator: Imagine that it is your first day of school with new surroundings, new people, and a new language.

Woman: [Speaking foreign language] [Video ends]

Karen: OK, so what you could see there was, there were pictures in the book. There were pictures on the wall, but none of that was really intentionally designed to actually help the children access the information, and we have to think about how we use the supports we know about. By supporting the full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners and their families, we promote equity to meet the specific needs of this population. By implementing teaching and learning practices that meet their needs, everyone in the program can benefit from this approach to support program quality for all. Whoops, sorry. OK. So, we have a couple of key messages we want to remind you about. We know children learn by connecting new knowledge to existing knowledge, that each child's existing knowledge is rooted in their home and cultural experiences and using culturally responsive materials and activities actually supports their cognitive connections better than giving them unfamiliar materials. We also remind you that every child has unique home and cultural experiences. Honoring the aspects of each child's culture supports their unique identity and sense of self, and when children learn in environments that recognize and support them as individuals, they're better prepared to learn. And so, we really want to focus on the foundation of knowledge and skills using familiar items and activities. We lay the foundation, which children can build learning of new and unfamiliar content and vocabulary. We want to support infusing authentic cultural content and cultural supports for social and emotional development. When children encounter materials and activities that remind them of home, culture helps children feel safe and welcome, and this recommendation highlights a key component of trauma-informed practices from the "Young Children" research article. Positive imagery can help children relax and suggests a happy space where children can go to engage in positive imagery, as suggested in this research by Goodyear and Brown, that children can engage in positive imagery and a sense of comfort to ease their anxiety and engage their senses in relaxing in positive ways, that teachers can invite children to include things they enjoy to bring them comfort, such as images of the family, items from home, et cetera. And now, I'm handing it back to Judi.

Judi: Thank you, Karen. So, let's think about those key messages and how they connect to children's development and learning, and how they're going to kind of build that foundation for the support. So, when you have children in these learning environments and what it means to provide those cultural connections so that they can access learning. And it might already be some things that you're already doing, and you're going to say, "Oh, I didn't know that this is why it's so important to have these things in my classroom." So, equitable implementation really depends on the why. So, this is the why. First of all, there's components that are related to social-emotional development, and this could be included as a focus area of your planned language approach. So, surrounding children with familiar words, activities, and materials helps them feel safe and at ease, and, as Karen just mentioned, can be part of supporting children or being part of a trauma-informed approach to teaching. Children who feel safe are more prepared to learn, and I would say, especially now, that is a focus, and especially if you are working with children either in a hybrid approach or your classroom, setup is going to be maybe different. Children might be wearing masks, or you might be wearing a mask, and you might feel like you're not having quite the same connection or supporting social-emotional development in the same way as you're used to. Having familiar items or having things from home or familiar words and activities, that provides that level of safety for children so that they can feel like they can relax and approach learning opportunities. There are stories, songs, items, lots of things that you can use not just to have, to be seen in the environment, but that can be used within learning opportunities for counting, building, for art. It's important to provide a scaffold that's meaningful for each child and start with familiar items.

So, this is going to require conversations with families, "What's important to you? Are there things that are interesting to you? Are there things that are important that come from your culture, books that are representative that come from your culture?" Things that will help children feel comfortable, and once they do, then you'll set that stage for them to keep moving and progressing with learning beyond what's familiar to them in the immediate. So, children's cultural backgrounds influence how they learn and then, also how they express their learning. So, as I mentioned, these familiar items are going to support comprehension in languages. So, if you have dual-language learners, it supports their comprehension in both languages, and then, it also helps them connect to their prior learning, and as we've mentioned in the previous webinars in our series, making that connection to their prior learning is really important for their language building. So again, it's really important for that language learning aspect. And children learn best from models that they find relatable. So, it doesn't just have to be related to language. So, for example, if you're working on a mathematical concept like classification, you don't necessarily have to use counting bears, which are not wrong, but, you know, red, yellow, and blue plastic bears may not be as relatable to a child as something – household items – that they are used to, or things that are more common, or things that you might even just find in your environment, such as, like, stones or things that are outside in your community like leaves, or, I don't know, even some cultural artifacts that you've come to collect. Those can be fun and interesting things that come from a child's home or a child's family, something that they've collected or that they have at home. And so, when they know what those things are and what the purposes are, it's much easier to identify what the differences are in the attributes and understand how and why they're going to be sorted, and, you know, when we start talking

about attributes, "What is this thing used for?" or "What does thing do?" If it's something that they already are familiar with, it's going to be a lot easier to talk about the attributes and to talk about how they should be sorted. So, familiar items help a child connect with their existing knowledge to their current vocabulary, and then, give them the foundation to build on new vocabulary, and all of this together is going to build a rich, engaging instructional interaction. So, do you see how that works?

An example might be sorting silverware. So, if they're at home, they have their silverware at home. It's a familiar item. It might be something they can also do at school. It's something familiar. Setting the table for lunch is something that I know and I can do, and we can talk about different attributes or how to organize things to access that kind of information and create a richer learning opportunity. So, another opportunity that we want to take advantage of and to focus on is equitable implementation. It's relating to how children learn to read and communicate. Our dual language learners – our focus is supporting them in reading and communicating in two or more languages, is helping them become global citizens and participating as global citizens – citizens of our own diverse country. In some tribal communities, children are learning to practice and preserve their traditional tribal languages that are so important to their culture, and that is something that we want to embrace and celebrate. So, the ways that you choose to infuse culture into the early learning experience must take all of these roles into consideration with careful planning and intentional implementation. What you choose, and how you use it, is going to vary greatly based on the purpose that you identify. So, Karen, can you tell us about infusing authentic cultural supports?

Karen: Yes, I can because I'm really – I've always been so interested in this notion of culture. We use that word so much, but we have to remember that different cultures may be from different countries, but we also have different cultures within our own country, our own state, our own community. And so, these are all opportunities for us to learn more about other people's cultures and to understand their meaning of culture can follow those four levels that you talked about earlier. So, the considerations about infusing culture and language refer to respecting local cultures, local dialects, including English as well as language usage differences and learning and interaction styles differences, and there's another link about this that you can use to expand your learning at the "Resources" widget. And to talk about the language aspect of our presentation today, we have this image to remind us that research has shown children who are dual language learners need specific, planned, intentional supports for both their home language and English in order to thrive and be ready for school. Some children may even be growing up with three or more languages in their homes and communities. Working with multilingual children can be more successful when we observe their languages and plan supports for each language when possible. So, children need what every child needs, high-quality early childhood learning experiences, but they also need additional adaptations, and so, this is highlighted on this slide where teachers need to plan and provide intentional supports, in the home language and then separately in English, to accomplish the three things in that box at the bottom of the slide: Supports that help children express what they know and can do, supports that are designed to help children comprehend content across all learning domains, and supports that help children think about the things they've learned and remember the

things they've learned. One of the things we know from the research is that small groups and individual interactions provide the most effective opportunities for authentic two-way, high-quality instructional interactions, whether home languages or English. Large groups are more effective when their interaction is not the focus, like whenever you're dancing or at a party or singing together, and small groups work to support the elements that are listed on this slide, and Judi has more to say about examples.

Judi: Yeah. So, we've used the examples on this slide before in our previous webinars, and I think what we wanted to do here is, we've talked about using these strategies in the classroom, and we've gone into greater depth about how these strategies can be used working with individual children in the classroom, but what we want to highlight here is that these strategies are just as important for adults to use with children at home. So, if program staff are supporting virtual learning or home-based learning, they should be supporting adults to engage in these kinds of interactions with children on a daily basis. So, these are the kind of foundational interactions that are – they're laying the foundation for all future learning. So, I think one of the things that's really important is to help parents understand ... I know that I've heard a lot about – from parents like, "I don't know how to teach my child at home." "I don't know how to do math," or "I don't know how to do reading." And I think what can be really helpful is to let parents know that it doesn't require a lot of specialized materials or equipment, right? You can closely observe children and support and encourage their natural curiosity. So, if you go on a walk, or you go to a park, or you're sitting and playing with toys, even if you are watching a television show for the 50th time – that happens a lot in my house – you can still have these conversations with children that encourage curiosity and questioning. "Wow, I wonder how that happened? Did you notice this thing?" Recently, we had a hurricane that came through and knocked over quite a few trees and took the power out in our community, and so, our neighborhood walks were very different for quite a while because we had lots of new things to look at, and we had lots of questions, and I had to look up online what the difference between a hurricane and a tornado is because my kids had lots of questions about what the difference was.

So, I think supporting families in engaging in this kind of interaction can alleviate some of that stress around supporting children's learning at home, and also can help them in building up their confidence as their child's first teacher and can help extend that learning that's going to happen at home. Another way to think about supports for our young learners is to think about language and literacy opportunities. So, just really a broad example about ways that you can think about infusing cultural supports is just kind of breaking it down a little bit, maybe by domain, and so ... Sorry, I have social and emotional development here as a domain. One way that you can do it is to think about using English and then continuing to develop the home language, demonstrating respect for families' cultures, and valuing children's identities. Higher order thinking here: Engaging in many one-on-one conversations with multiple back-and-forth exchanges and using visual supports, and then thinking about the global perspective, invite families to help choose and lead language and literacy activities, such as reading or telling stories. So, you can just break things down kind of in a broad way about the domain, what you want to be supporting – social-emotional development, higher-order thinking, global

perspectives, and then, the strategies that you want to use through these language and literacy opportunities, you can focus on where you can infuse children and families' cultures to support all of these domains. Another opportunity that you can think about is story illustrations, and I think, Karen, you have an example here to help us think about that, infusing culture in this way.

Karen: Yeah. We wanted to have everybody really think through the child's eyes. Think about the images. Sometimes, the images in storybooks are so familiar to me that I feel like, "Oh, everybody understands what that picture is about, but when I put myself in the child's position, I realize, "Hmm. There's a lot of words in this storybook, don't necessarily help ... The pictures don't necessarily help the children understand." So, we know that teachers have a lot of storybooks to choose from. They can be powerful tools to help you embed children's culture and learning, but one way to focus your intentional planning is to take a closer look at the illustrations. Remember, some images make sense to adults because they have so much more life experience than children do, right? So, if you consider the illustrations from the child's point of view, you might notice some books are more relatable than others, and as you're helping children feel welcomed, or you're helping families support learning at home, you can focus on choosing the books that are easier to access, that help really build that understanding and then move to different books later on. So, for example, if you teach in a place with a warm climate, a book with illustrations of a snowy day might not be relatable for those children. They might understand that book better if you first introduce books that include weather they do know about, and then move onto weather in other parts of the country or the world. It's a good idea to think about the characters in the stories you choose. Do they represent the children and their diverse families? Do they seem to have stereotypes? This can be a concern for many teachers, but it's still important to use books with images of real people. There are some books with animals or other kind of characters, and that's fine, but we really want children to see people in their stories, too, in order to make those cultural connections.

So, you might think of this kind of connection as if it's building a learning bridge. When you begin to engage the child in learning about stories with important ideas and words, it's a good idea to make sure the stories and illustrations include these three things: Do they reflect my experience? Do they include people who look like me, and do they help me understand the story? Think of these of cultural connections, not as limits, but as stepping stones leading a child across the bridge that greater learning can happen as they go along. For example, you might not start with that book about snow, but if you start with other books that are familiar, you can build that book of snow into your curriculum later on, and you have built that bridge, and Judi has some examples about how this could take shape. Judi, I'm not hearing you.

Judi: Thank you for letting me know you couldn't hear me, Karen. I muted myself, and now I'm unmuted. So, we've borrowed this idea from our friends at "Teacher Time," and it's just a simple acronym to remember as you look at your books. So, it's this idea of LAB. So, we talk about learning, the learning that happens from the book, the advanced vocabulary, and then going beyond the book. So, one way of thinking about an intentional use of cultural connections here is reading books together that include familiar language and cultural references to help children learn vocabulary and then also to help them understand the world around them. And

so, this past season at "Teacher Time," we explored STEAM, the science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math, and for our Pre-K episodes, we explored how to use books to support learning STEAM concepts. And so, our "Teacher Time" advisor, Gail Joseph, she recommended using this method to look at books to think about STEAM concepts. So, we're going to do that here, but thinking about how we can make cultural connections. So, for each book that you're going to use, look through it before you use it with children, and take some LAB notes. So, the first one is the L. What concept will children be learning? And the A is, what is some advanced vocabulary in the book? Think about how you can connect it to the vocabulary that children might already have, either in English or in their home language, and then the "beyond the book," the B, includes connecting the content to their lived experiences, as well as planning to incorporate concepts from the book in the learning opportunities and the interactions that you're going to plan after reading the book.

So, one example I have for you, this is a collection of books that kind of all follow the same idea. These are beautiful stories of children discovering shapes in their neighborhoods, and there's different variations of the story that celebrate the cultures and languages of the children and their families while also exploring mathematical concepts. So, you can use these books as a starting point for discussing the types of shapes children observe in the neighborhood around your program and in the neighborhoods that they live in. And you take a look inside one of the books I absolutely love, this one is inside the book, "Crescent Moons and Pointed Minarets." Think about the LAB notes. So, what concepts will children be learning? That's the L. I see octagon in there. Is there advanced vocabulary in this book, or are there familiar words that are connected to the vocabulary that they already have in English or in their home language? And then for the B, beyond, how does this book connect to their lived experiences? Are there things in here that children might already be familiar with? And are there learning opportunities that you could plan or interactions that would extend their learning of the concepts that they're exploring here? So, if you take these LAB notes and apply them to the books that you're going to be reading with children, you can find ways to connect children to the concepts that they're learning, that you want them to be exploring and to infuse some of the cultural connections and help them have a richer learning experience. Karen.

Karen: Well, here's the part where we get to those resources that take what we've talked about today and layer additional information for you to make it possible for you to implement what we've talked about in your work with children and families, whether it's in a program, in family child care, supporting learning at home. So, first of all, there are quite a collection of important planned language approach tip sheets, and all of these are mentioned in the widget – in the "Resources" in your widget. And so, there's one on "Including Children's Home Languages and Cultures," one on "Creating Environments That Include Children's Home Languages and Cultures," and they provide tips and practices organized around, what can I do? What are some examples, and why should I do it? So, they're very helpful for personal skill building as an educator but also for staff meetings or professional learning communities. Education staff and home visitors can use these tip sheets, so there are examples that can be implemented in different kinds of settings that will ... But the important part is learning how to create a welcoming environment so children's cultures are represented and they feel like they belong.

Now, another resource is this collection here, where we have some guidance on the ECLKC, the links are in your resource widget, for a resource about "Selecting and Using Culturally Responsive Children's Books," and that actually walks you through the process of how you can look at each book and how to view the contents of the book, how to choose the book, and then, how to use the cultural information that's in the books. And then, going with that, we also show the "Organizing Learning Experiences" resource that gives really specific ideas for planning culturally and linguistically responsive themes and topics for exploration that make sure that each child's lifestyle is connected to the learning experiences and activities that are suggested in your curriculum. So, these are, again, ways to go deeper and get more details beyond what we can do in one hour of webinar.

There also is available cultural background series, "Cultural Backgrounder" they're called, that give staff information they can use to understand different populations from around the world, what's happening in those countries, and what it might mean to the children and their cultural context as they participate in this country as well. And we have the "Making it Work" set of resources that is about implementing cultural experiences in American Indian and Alaskan Native early learning settings for children birth through 5. It has lots of really relevant examples from the lifeways of American Indian, Alaskan Native tribal programs, tribal communities, et cetera. So, again, another way to get specific examples of materials and ways to use them. Then there is this set of resources in cultural perspectives on caregiving, which is a resource from the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement National Center, and the link is also provided. It gives leaders and staff scenarios that they can use to improve their approaches of engaging children and families in culturally responsive ways, and then don't forget we have the free "Ready!DLL" app, in both technology platforms that you can download, that offers access to resources, video examples, words in different languages, and it's just another tool in your toolkit of supporting elevating the role of culture in high-quality teaching and learning experiences. So, we really want to find out what you learned from today's webinar and what activities you will share with your colleagues, and I think Judi wants to talk to you more about that question.

Judi: Nope. You said it. I just hope that the resources that we shared we helpful and the information and strategies were helpful, and we hope you share them with people who couldn't join us today, and we just want to remind you that a great place to share information with colleagues and to learn additional strategies is MyPeers, and the link to join MyPeers is also in the "Resources" widget. If you haven't joined us at MyPeers yet, please do. There are lots of communities there where you can get additional information and talk with colleagues about all of the additional strategies that you need to support you in your work – the very important work that you do. So, thank you for being with us today. We really appreciate it. It's been a pleasure being with you during this series. Karen?

Karen: Thank you, and we'll look forward to engaging with you on MyPeers to talk more about it.