

# Contents

<b>Before you begin</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Topic 1 Reflecting on your own cultural identity and biases</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1A</b> Reflect on your cultural heritage	<b>3</b>
<b>1B</b> Understand cultural competence	<b>7</b>
Summary	<b>12</b>
Learning checkpoint 1: Reflecting on your own cultural identity	<b>13</b>
<b>Topic 2 Identifying and developing cultural competency</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2A</b> Developing cultural competency	<b>17</b>
<b>2B</b> Analysing the service	<b>21</b>
Summary	<b>26</b>
Learning checkpoint 2: Identifying and developing cultural competency	<b>27</b>
<b>Topic 3 Researching Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>3A</b> Indigenous Australian relationships	<b>31</b>
<b>3B</b> Acknowledging impacts	<b>34</b>
Summary	<b>35</b>
Learning checkpoint 3: Researching Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities	<b>36</b>
<b>Topic 4 Supporting individual cultural identities</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4A</b> Identifying cultural groups	<b>41</b>
<b>4B</b> Demonstrating cultural sensitivity	<b>44</b>
<b>4C</b> Extending cultural knowledge	<b>49</b>
Summary	<b>51</b>
Learning checkpoint 4: Supporting individual cultural identities	<b>52</b>
<b>Topic 5 Supporting children’s cross-cultural understanding and relationships</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>5A</b> Planning inclusive experiences	<b>57</b>
<b>5B</b> Supporting cross-cultural relationships	<b>60</b>
Summary	<b>65</b>
Learning checkpoint 5: Supporting children’s cross-cultural understanding and relationships	<b>66</b>
<b>Topic 6 Implementing inclusive learning experiences</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>6A</b> Providing diverse experiences	<b>69</b>
<b>6B</b> Implementing cultural events and celebrations	<b>72</b>
Summary	<b>75</b>
Learning checkpoint 6: Implementing inclusive learning experiences	<b>76</b>

## Definitions

Familiarise yourself with the following key terms used in this learner guide. Definitions are from oxforddictionaries.com unless otherwise specified.

**Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person:** someone who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and who is accepted as such by the Indigenous community in which they live ([www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)).

**Bias:** the inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered unfair.

**Cultural heritage:** something that is passed down from preceding generations; the legacy of physical artefacts (cultural property) and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.

**Cultural identity:** the identity of a group or culture, or of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a group or culture.

**Culture:** the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

**Discrimination:** the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age or sex.

**Diversity:** a range of different things.

**Equity:** the quality of being fair and impartial.

**Identity:** the fact of being who or what a person or thing is.

**Prejudice:** a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

**Racism:** the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities or qualities specific to that race, especially as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races.

**Stereotype:** a widely held, but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular person or thing.

**Traditions:** the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way.

**Values:** principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgment of what is important in life.

# 1A Reflect on your cultural heritage

Before you reflect on your own cultural heritage, you need to understand what the term 'culture' means. For many, culture is about the country they are from, the language they speak and their physical features, such as or the colour of their skin. However, culture includes much more than this. It is influenced by the set of beliefs, values and traditions that have been instilled since birth through socialisation, and is influenced by family and the wider society.



## Culture

Culture involves rituals, practices, stories, customs, beliefs and values. It includes how we live our lives, what we believe in and the values we hold dear. It influences goals in life and beliefs about others, and may change slowly over time through experiences that formulate views and understandings.

You may not realise your own culture until you are removed from it. This may occur when you are exposed to new experiences or new people who live in different ways to you.

Examining your own culture and how it has developed will help you to understand how the culture of others has evolved, and how important beliefs and values change to form new ways of viewing the world.

To become a culturally competent educator, it is important to respect and celebrate diversity.

## Family history

If you research your own family history, you may identify many traits of your ancestors that are evident in your family's behaviours. For example, you may discover that your ancestors have lived through tragedies or triumphed against the odds. You may discover that your own attitudes are linked with this history.

Added to this is your own set of life experiences. Who you are today and the values and beliefs you hold have been shaped by these events, your family and your environment.

Here are some examples of how an individual's family background and environment influence their current values and beliefs.

### Example 1

Phoebe was raised in a family that ran its own business. Phoebe and her siblings all worked in the business, where they learnt early about having a strong work ethic. Phoebe was always on time for her shifts and concentrated on her tasks, completing each one before beginning another. Now, as a mother, she promotes the same values and work ethics with her children, ensuring they are punctual and always focused on the job at hand.

## Example

**Avoiding biased communications**

Someone is telling a story. The person telling the story labels people by personal information, such as their gender, skin colour, age and health status. All of these factors are irrelevant to the issue being discussed:

'Two ladies from the morning shift accused the cleaner of not doing his job. Marilyn, the black educator, and Margaret, the cook, accused Mr Engerrand of not cleaning properly. Mr Engerrand is 42 years old and an epileptic, and he says that he has had no complaints before.'

The same information can be told in an unbiased way:

'Two staff from the morning shift accused the cleaner of not doing his job. Marilyn, an educator, and Margaret, the cook, accused Mr Engerrand of not cleaning properly. Mr Engerrand says that he has had no complaints before.'

## Frameworks and legislation

The National Quality Framework (NQF), including the National Quality Standard (NQS), *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework* (EYLF), *My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia* (MTOF), and your service policies and procedures all support you to work toward developing cultural competence. Your pedagogy (the way you work with children) should demonstrate acceptance of others. This is supported by the principles and practices in the frameworks that emphasise respect for diversity and the need to develop cultural competence. Because they affect your daily work, these NQF components are available to you in every education and care organisation. You can also find them on the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website: <http://aspirelr.link/nationalqualityframework>

In addition, anti-discrimination legislation should be represented in your organisational policies and procedures. This legislation includes the following Commonwealth Acts:

- ▶ *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- ▶ *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- ▶ *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- ▶ *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*

## Practice task 2

1. Read the following table and rate yourself out of 5 for each skill, where 0 means you have not obtained the skill and 5 means you are very skilled.

Rating	Skill
0 1 2 3 4 5	I reflect on my own skills and knowledge often.
0 1 2 3 4 5	I like to learn about different cultures.
0 1 2 3 4 5	I interact with a diverse group of people.
0 1 2 3 4 5	I attend professional development opportunities aimed at developing my cultural competence.
0 1 2 3 4 5	I model interest and respect for all people.

# Learning checkpoint 1

## Reflecting on your own cultural identity

### Part A

1. Write down at least **three** significant events in your family background or history that have influenced your values, beliefs and attitudes.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Explain how at least **three** aspects of your environment have influenced your cultural identity.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What impact might your own background have on interactions and relationships with people from other cultures?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

**2A Developing cultural competency**

**2B Analysing the service**

## Identifying and developing cultural competency

When you are sensitive to children's individual differences and aware of the impact their families and communities have on them, you can create an environment that supports children's identities, wellbeing and engagement in learning.

Each child has the right to their own cultural identity, and they should be supported to develop pride in this. This is a starting point for developing cultural competency. Respectful relationships and environments that support diversity and inclusiveness enable children to gain skills and knowledge that help them to navigate their world in a fair and just way.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

<b>National Quality Standard</b>	
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
	Quality Area 2: Children’s health and safety
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements
✓	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
✓	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership
<b>Early Years Learning Framework</b>	<b>My Time, Our Place</b>
<b>Principles</b>	
✓	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
✓	Partnerships
	High expectations and equity
✓	Respect for diversity
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice
<b>Practice</b>	
	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children
	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching
	Learning environments
✓	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions
	Assessment for learning
<b>Outcomes</b>	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
	Children are confident and involved learners
	Children are effective communicators

# 3A Indigenous Australian relationships

Archaeological evidence suggests that Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for over 60,000 years. Aboriginal culture is one of the oldest cultures in the world. Aboriginal people were traditionally hunter-gathers who lived off the land and had a strong spiritual connection to it. Before the white colonisation of Australia, Aboriginal families lived together in a communal environment with roles and responsibilities shared among the group; for example, men hunted, women were responsible for cooking and child-rearing, and the Elders shared their knowledge.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples inhabited most areas of Australia, speaking more than two hundred languages, and following distinct lifestyles and cultural traditions. Since colonisation, Aboriginal people have been denied their right to live according to their customs and are still experiencing lower health and educational outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians.

## Legislation and policies

The word 'colonisation' means that a new group of people have come and settled an area of land and taken control of the territory or country. This usually involves mass migration of the colonising people, and incorporation of their own culture into the area. Often, colonisation does not take into account any indigenous people already occupying the land.

Following the British colonisation of Australia, the government put in place policies that took away Aboriginal people's rights. Many Aboriginal people were placed in reserves and missions outside towns or in remote areas. They had to cease their normal lives and could not continue to live the way they wanted, or express their values or beliefs. The new expectations forced on them created issues that were dealt with through government control using curfews, alcohol bans, separate education and restricted travel.

The government took automatic guardianship of all Aboriginal children, and between 1910 and 1970, forcibly removed Aboriginal children from their families and placed them into non-Indigenous homes and institutions. In 1937, the Australian government implemented an assimilation policy in which Aboriginal people 'not of full blood' were assimilated into the wider 'white' population.

This event, now referred to as the 'stolen generation', devastated many Indigenous families. Aboriginal people still remember this with fear and sadness. This period of history was documented in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report of 1997, titled, *Bringing them home: National inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*.





## Topic 4

In this topic you will learn about:

**4A Identifying cultural groups**

**4B Demonstrating cultural sensitivity**

**4C Extending cultural knowledge**

## Supporting individual cultural identities

Children's personal, family and cultural histories shape their learning and development. Children have better outcomes when educators respect their backgrounds and provide them with support and opportunities to feel valued.

The EYLF, MTOP and NQS endorse programs that enhance opportunities for learning and development by providing experiences based on children's interests, cultural identities and strengths. They call for educators to recognise the importance of partnerships with families in achieving programs that deliver sound learning outcomes.

A commitment to supporting individual cultural identities is critical to develop strong partnerships with families for the education and care of their children. The best way to gather relevant information about cultural identity is from the families themselves. There are also people and organisations in your community who can assist you in supporting cultural understandings and relevance.

2. For each aspect of the families you identified, explain how you could represent this in an image, book or resource. You might like to present the information in a table like the one below.

Aspect	Family details	Represented in the following
<b>Family 1</b>		
Racial background		
Lifestyle		
Language		
Family structure		
<b>Family 2</b>		
Racial background		
Lifestyle		
Language		
Family structure		

3. If you were collecting this information from families in your role as an educator, what could you say to each family to check their preferences to either authorise that they would like you to maintain their privacy and confidentiality, or incorporate their details into the program?

---



---

# 4C Extending cultural knowledge

When you are aware of each child’s family background, you have information that allows you to make the service environment more like home and an enjoyable place to be. By focusing on specific attributes such as skills, knowledge and values that show the uniqueness of each child, you can create an environment that enables children to learn from each other.



## Involving families

The following strategies may encourage parents to become involved in cultural activities:

- ▶ Encourage families and other community members to volunteer their support by attending service events.
- ▶ Ask family members how they would like to participate as volunteers and respond in a timely manner to those indications.
- ▶ Encourage family and community members to become involved as:
  - participants in meetings
  - presenters of activities
  - assistants with art shows, read-aloud events, workshops, book swaps and other activities
  - volunteers on excursions
  - instructional assistants in specific activities
  - non-instructional assistants in general activities
  - contributors working from home; for example, assembling materials and typing.

There is a range of ways you can provide opportunities for both children and families to enhance their experience of cultural diversity. Use the following checklist to assess whether you are providing these opportunities.

Questions	Yes	No
Are resources available in community languages?		
Do you know any non-English words used by children?		
Do you provide posters and resources that represent people from different backgrounds and abilities?		
Do you collect background information from families?		
Do educators represent a range of cultural backgrounds?		
Does the curriculum include aspects from a variety of cultures?		
Are the cultures of the children incorporated into the program?		
Do you encourage parents to become involved in the program?		
Do you celebrate a range of cultural occasions and celebrations?		
Are you aware of how to access the interpreter service, and is this service available/accessible for parents if needed?		
Are parents informed of your philosophy, policies and planned activities?		

The following table provides some experiences that may be used to help create an inclusive learning environment.

<b>Experience</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Props in the home area</b>	Avoid big cultural displays or specific themes such as disability. Instead, create an inclusive view by adding one item that represents each group to the regular home corner; for example, crutches, a sling, chopsticks, a wheelchair, a walking stick, sari, bamboo steamer or flag.
<b>Treasure hunt</b>	Have children hunt for natural items outside, such as stones, bark and leaves. Talk about how these natural items have similarities and differences just like people.
<b>Polls</b>	Ask children to identify which things they like most and which they do not like, then discuss the similarities and differences in these choices. You might poll children about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ experiences</li> <li>▶ activities</li> <li>▶ celebrations</li> <li>▶ events</li> <li>▶ foods</li> <li>▶ indoor or outdoor play.</li> </ul>
<b>Discussions and group times</b>	Spontaneous or planned discussion can be used to share information and learn about each other.  Talk about family structures, what children do on the weekend, how they celebrate Christmas (or another celebration) at their house and what it is like to live in or visit another country.
<b>Human bingo</b>	Ask questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Who has the same colour hair?</li> <li>▶ Who has the same colour eyes?</li> <li>▶ Who has a baby in their house?</li> <li>▶ Who knows someone who lives in another country?</li> <li>▶ Who celebrates Easter?</li> </ul>
<b>Using mirrors</b>	Encourage children to look at themselves and others, and highlight their similarities and differences.
<b>Disability activities</b>	Choose a disability or impairment and discuss what it means with the children; for example, vision-impaired means that you cannot see very well.  Have children complete tasks or activities simulating this impairment. Support the children to identify the difficulties, but also work out alternative ways to be successful. Point out skills that are not affected by the impairment.

Children use behaviours and attitudes they see adults modelling in their everyday play and social interactions. For this reason, it is important to use oral communication skills to role-model open, inclusive and ethical interactions with all children, families and colleagues.

Children can feel comfortable with diversity and see it as positive if you encourage open exploration and discussion. New or different things are usually interesting to children and prompt them to ask questions.

**Take the following steps to role-model appropriate behaviours:**

- ▶ Use open communication in which each person is treated equally and is provided the information they need. When open communication is occurring, each person communicating will feel safe to share their views and ideas, and participate in decision-making.
- ▶ Use inclusive communication by ensuring you use language that everyone understands; this may mean presenting information in a simple way and avoiding jargon.
- ▶ Engage in ethical interactions that demonstrate your respect for the rights of others and their importance as part of your service and curriculum.

Watch this video about working with others appropriately.

## Challenging stereotypes

You may notice that children's reactions or participation suggests a need for additional cultural support or further understanding of cross-cultural concepts.

To avoid children developing fears and concerns about differences, which may cause them to form stereotypical or biased views, you can:

- ▶ encourage children to ask questions about differences they notice
- ▶ help children feel comfortable about asking questions
- ▶ answer questions honestly
- ▶ avoid criticising children
- ▶ make sure your answers match the children's level of understanding
- ▶ guide children to ask questions in positive ways
- ▶ let children know that biased words are inappropriate and can be hurtful.

Consider the following example.

Michaela: 'Why does Azara always wear that scarf?'

Educator: 'Azara's scarf is important to her. In her family all the girls and women wear a scarf. It is part of their culture.'

## Identifying and addressing prejudice

Some educators believe that if they challenge prejudiced comments or actions of children and others it may create conflict. However, by being open, honest and succinct in your responses, you can successfully manage situations where prejudice occurs and develop confidence in your ability to promote the value of diversity.



2. You are including a celebration of National Aboriginal and Torres Islander children in your plan. A parent comments, 'Why do we need to do that when there are no Aboriginal people in the service?'

How would you respond to this parent's comments in a way that strengthens your relationship and respects the parent's views?

---

---

---

---

## Summary

- ▶ There are many activities and opportunities that allow you to help children develop an understanding of others.
- ▶ Experiences that share similarities and differences are useful for sharing ideas and finding out about others.
- ▶ To develop a trusting and positive relationship with parents, create a setting where individuals can be accepted for who they are and be sensitive to the needs of others.
- ▶ Children can learn desirable behaviours through positive role-modelling.
- ▶ Implement strategies to ensure children reject stereotyping and/or biased views.
- ▶ Part of modelling inclusion is addressing prejudice when it happens.
- ▶ Through role-modelling, you can educate children on how to respect the communication styles of others.

# 6B Implementing cultural events and celebrations

There are many events that are celebrated across the world. The events your service participates in often depend on the cultural mix of families in your service.

Events and celebrations include:

- ▶ birthdays
- ▶ name days
- ▶ festivals
- ▶ celebrations of achievements
- ▶ religious occasions
- ▶ community events
- ▶ the beginning and end of a school term or holiday
- ▶ cultural events
- ▶ graduation.



You can incorporate various types of events and celebrations into the service's routines; for example, singing 'Happy birthday', or learning Christmas carols or about Hanukkah in December. This provides children with a variety of social experiences, while also acknowledging diversity and that it is valued and respected.

Discuss with parents what events and celebrations they participate in and explore how these can be incorporated into your program. Parents can provide information and support you by helping children prepare for and participate in events and celebrations. This can even help to broaden your own view of the world and other cultures, and to gain a better understanding of how to approach your role.

## Cultural and religious events

Religious and cultural calendars alter each year. In Australia, some events always occur on particular dates; for example, Christmas is always on 25 December. However, there are also events that are based on a lunar calendar, such as Easter, which occurs on the first Sunday after the Paschal full moon. In addition, there are days that acknowledge particular celebrations or events, such as Anzac Day, Father's Day and National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week.

There are calendars available online that outline most national events, national weeks of celebration, and cultural and religious dates. These calendars can be found on the Australian Government website: <http://aspirelr.link/special-events-calendar>

Experiences based on these events and celebrations need to be well-planned and appropriate to children's development and learning. They need to be presented in a way that meets children's needs and is relevant to the families and communities who use your service. There is no need to celebrate every event: consult with families, colleagues and children to determine what is relevant. If you work out what the main emphasis of each event is, this will assist you to create sensitive, meaningful experiences and activities for children.



## Topic 7

In this topic you will learn about:

**7A** Creating a sense of belonging

---

**7B** Engaging and collaborating

---

**7C** Supporting specific needs

---

## Supporting personal and cultural identity

There are many ways you can encourage children to be connected to their family, their community and your service. By providing secure environments where relationships with others extend knowledge and develop connections, children will develop an understanding of others and feel a stronger sense of self.



# 7B Engaging and collaborating

Communicating in a culturally sensitive way enables children to develop a strong sense of identity and wellbeing, and helps them form connections with their world. These are fundamental outcomes of the EYLF and MTOP. Educators who engage with children positively help build strong reciprocal relationships that enhance children's understandings about how to interact and exchange ideas in a sensitive way.

Engaging and collaborating with children enables them to develop a sense of belonging and ownership in their environment, as well as agency in their own learning.



When you encourage children to be involved in everyday choices, decision-making and problem-solving become part of normal thinking. These skills assist children as they grow and develop to deal with larger issues when they arise.

Watch this video about engaging with children.

## Supporting interactions

You may support children's interactions by involving them in:

- ▶ recognising problems
- ▶ clarifying goals
- ▶ planning strategies
- ▶ finding solutions
- ▶ answering open-ended questions
- ▶ sharing their ideas with others
- ▶ using open-ended materials
- ▶ using new and stimulating materials
- ▶ using everyday events to explore the world
- ▶ talking about routines and choices
- ▶ consulting children about their ideas.



## Working collaboratively

Collaborative problem-solving involves parties working side by side to solve a problem and find a solution that is acceptable to everyone involved. The group activities you implement need to include children in this process so the solutions reached meet the majority of needs and interests. This process can increase the group's satisfaction with what is agreed to. It also helps to establish positive working relationships as no child should dominate another. When you plan group collaboration tasks, check that the children are interested.

To encourage a collaborative process for solving problems, provide suggestions for consideration rather than being directive, which reduces the amount of thinking or exploring that children can do. The following are examples:

- ▶ Encourage children to interact with each other. Introduce activities that are open-ended and involve children in planning and implementation. This encourages children to feel important and put forward their own ideas.
- ▶ Help children clarify or adapt their shared goals. To successfully make a decision, all participants need to have the same or a similar goal. You can help them talk about what they want to achieve.
- ▶ Involve children who are unlikely to initiate ideas to support their involvement.
- ▶ Avoid constantly demonstrating or solving problems for children. Allow the children to think about their options and consider all outcomes.
- ▶ Ask the children to share their ideas and listen to others. They can be supported to problem-solve by considering the opinions of others.

## Example

### **A collaborative approach to problem-solving**

Ashleigh, an educator, has observed a small group of four-year-olds playing with blocks for long periods. She often needs to go in and solve problems when the children have conflicting ideas about their play. She decides that she wants to teach the children strategies to help them solve problems for themselves.

To encourage a collaborative problem-solving approach to their block play, Ashleigh moves the blocks to the bark area outside. She places posters of farm animals on a divider that she uses to define the area of play. She chooses a farm setting because one of the children's grandparents lives on a farm, which they visit every weekend. She knows this will engage the children and give her an opportunity to model a problem-solving approach during the course of their play.

To ensure the problem-solving approach goes according to plan, Ashleigh does the following:

- ▶ She is present in the block area when the children arrive and she shows them the area, assisting them to talk together and identify what they would like to achieve. The goal they set is to create a farm.
- ▶ When an issue arises about who will be the farmer and who will build the paddocks for the animals, Ashleigh assists by asking the children what the problem is (defining the issue). She restates the goal the children set (identifying the interests) and then facilitates a discussion that enables each child to share a solution they believe will fix the issue (generating options). Ashleigh then states the agreed option (deciding on objective criteria) and obtains agreement from each of the children to implement the solution (evaluating and reaching agreement).
- ▶ She observes the children's reactions to the agreed solution and ensures they participate to implement it.
- ▶ She ensures any required materials are provided, and assists the children to talk about new ideas and how to solve further issues.
- ▶ She discusses the children's progress, takes a photo of their work and encourages others to have a look.
- ▶ She encourages the children to stand back to look at their progress and reflect on how they have all worked together to achieve their goal.