
Working with Families to Support Children's Sense of Self

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the “Tips for Teachers: Dual Language Learners” tip sheet. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Identify how a family’s cultural background is part of family engagement. Reflect on how cultural background connects to a child’s developing sense of self.
- ◆ Plan for effective communication with families from diverse backgrounds to ensure they feel welcome.
- ◆ Explore how working with families as partners is critical to a child’s growing identity and success in class.

Activity

- ◆ Read the tip sheet.
- ◆ Use the reflection questions to think through engaging with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consider how working with families fosters children’s emerging sense of self.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support children’s positive sense of self.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Sense of self is a child's perception of themselves as individuals. In other words, it is how a child views who they are and what's important about them. Sense of self typically begins to develop around 18 months and is heavily influenced by adults and their responses to children.

- ◆ Why do you think that is? How can an adult's reaction to a child influence how they see or value themselves?
- ◆ Now, consider how this extends to the ways you interact with a child's family or culture in your classroom. How could that also influence their development of a positive sense of self?
- ◆ How might a child feel if their classroom **didn't** represent or validate their families, language, or culture?

- ◆ Review the "Creating a Caring Community" section on the tip sheet.
 - Have you engaged with families in your classroom using any of these ideas in the past? What has worked well? If given a chance, what would you do differently in the future?
 - If you haven't engaged with families, why not?
 - How will engaging in these types of practices and getting to know families help develop their child's positive sense of self?
 - What other ideas would you add to this list?

- ◆ Brainstorm ways to connect with children and families. Include ways to integrate materials and cultural practices in everyday activities in the classroom. For example:
 - **Meet with families:** Make a list of questions to ask families to learn more about their child, home, and culture. For example, who lives in their home, and what languages does each member speak to the child? What are their hopes and dreams for their child? How does their child show interest or excitement at home?
 - **Classroom storybooks:** Ask families to share pictures and stories of the ways they celebrate special occasions at home. Compile them into a book that stays in the classroom for all to explore.
 - **Visitors:** Invite elder family members to visit to share fables, stories, or songs from their culture. Invite families to share their unique talents or interests.
 - **Representative materials:** Consider ways to increase representation of all cultures in your current materials. For example, stock your classroom with pretend food and cooking utensils; dolls; books with diversity in the characters, authors, and illustrators; dress-up clothing; art materials; toys from other countries; dual language books; variety of languages in a Writing Center.

- ◆ Choose one or two activities you will start using this week. Set time aside to reflect on what is working or what else you may want to try.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about working with families to support children's sense of self:

- ◆ **Source:** Desired Results Access Project
 - ◆ **Video:** A Parent's Perspective on Inclusion in Early Childhood
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://draccess.org/videolibrary/ParentsPerspectiveOnInclusion>
 - ◆ **Description:** In this video, a parent talks about their experience and perspective on inclusion in early childhood. Teachers can use this resource to learn what families with children with disabilities experience. Understanding this perspective can strengthen teachers' work with families and help them identify the unique abilities of children in their classroom.
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- ◆ **Source:** NPR
 - ◆ **Podcast:** Talking Race with Young Children
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/24/716700866/talking-race-with-young-children>
 - ◆ **Description:** In this podcast, learn how to have conversations about race and diversity. Teachers can use the suggestions for a deeper understanding of the families in their classroom. They can also learn how to engage with families based on their experiences. Teachers and families can also use the ideas to encourage children to talk about the different aspects of their identity.