7.2: Preventing Conflict

Issues of Social Justice in the Early Childhood Classroom

Summary

Some conflict can be prevented when we build relationships with families based on a willingness to listen and hear about who they are and what they want for their children. Here are some cultural considerations to keep in mind as you work to understand the experiences and values families have and how you can best meet their needs:

- Many families are most comfortable keeping young children at home with a parent, relative, or friend, especially with families from the same cultural background. So, when they do rely on out-of-home child care, they may experience some discomfort and may not be aware of licensing requirements and restrictions.
- Some cultures may expect that the mother’s primary role is taking care of children and the home. However, both parents may need to find work due to financial need and thus depend on out-of-home child care. This can create guilt, shame, fear, and discomfort.
- Families with limited English skills are likely to have difficulty gathering information about the varied early care and education options and may rely on word of mouth or recommendations from others within their ethnic or religious community.
- Families may seek reassurance that early care and education providers understand and respect their family’s religion and will not inadvertently violate the family’s religious practices (e.g., abstaining from pork products).
- Families of a child with a disability may not be aware of the legal educational requirements, learning possibilities, and school options for children with disabilities.
- Hiring staff from the same culture and language as families and providing opportunities for families from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds to connect may encourage family engagement and mutual support.
• Some cultures show respect for teachers by not being intrusive and interfering with their job (e.g., not offering suggestions or sharing negative opinions). By American standards, this can look like lack of interest. Families may not know the expectations for family engagement in school.

We can start conversations that will help us understand where families are coming from and how we can effectively and respectfully engage and communicate with them. Questions to ask might include:

• What are some ways staff can learn more about your perspectives and needs?
• How would you like to communicate and partner with staff?
• Describe what school was like in your country of origin (if the family has immigrated or are refugees). [85]