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CONNECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS:

A LATINO-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

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More than 35 million Latinos live in our 50 states and territories, representing all Latin American countries and a broad range of backgrounds, needs, and expectations. One third of this population are children. By 2020, one in four children will be of Latino origin. With increasing numbers of young Latino children entering our early child care system, it is critical that the early childhood field is prepared to work with this population.

Recruiting and retaining bilingual and bicultural Latino staff is of utmost importance in this endeavor, as they can serve as cultural models, facilitate the language development of Spanish-speaking children, and communicate more effectively with families. Notwithstanding, Latinas are underrepresented in the number of certified child care providers.

To respond to this need, the Center for Children & Families at EDC has established a consortium of institutions to discuss action steps in building a long-term vision to support the career development of entry-level Latinas, while increasing the capacity of early childhood teachers and trainers to respond to the cultural and linguistic needs of Latino children and families in early child care settings.

In the recent past, the field has made important strides in examining its own professional standards. Diversity clauses and bilingual specialization competencies have been added to some accreditation and certification standards, and efforts have been made in various sectors of the early childhood field to support cultural tolerance and integrate anti-bias, humanistic or democratic practices.

Notwithstanding, the issue of diversity must be revisited. Definitions of quality are intrinsically value-based, and values are shaped by culture. Before we can truly take into account diverse beliefs and practices in our early childhood policy and programs, we must first understand and tease apart some of the differences, and recognize that each cultural group has distinct beliefs and practices that are valued over others.

As a result of the priorities identified in the consortium, we developed this document to provide guidance to early childhood trainers and training institutions interested in building their capacity to respond to the Latino population. This Framework is based on cultural values, principles, and best practices identified in successful programs and training materials, standards documents, a broad review of research and position papers, and the input of the consortium. The Framework also integrates the

viewpoints and priorities of approximately 260 Latina family child care and center-based teachers, bilingual instructors, and others who participated in forums at the National Association for the Education of Young Children's 2001 annual meeting in California and the Spanish American Union's third annual conference in Massachusetts.

The cultural and linguistic values¹, principles, and practices outlined here are aligned with the four pillars of knowledge identified by UNESCO's Task Force for the Twenty-first Century as the key to life-long learning². They are also consonant with best practices and are often included in existing standards for quality early childhood education.

Our Framework identifies those values, principles, and practices that we believe are essential for increasing the capacity of early childhood programs and training institutions to be responsive to the particular needs and preferences of many people of Latino background in the U.S. Specifically, we address:

Familia/Family: Forming alliances with the family network

Here we will discuss redefining partnership with parents as teacher involvement with the whole community surrounding the child.

Pertenencia/Belonging: Creating a sense of family

This section is about building an early childhood environment that echoes the positive relationships and bonds within families, where children form identity, feel part of something greater than themselves, and feel supported.

Educación/Education: Learning together

The concepts discussed here generate life-long skills that go beyond building knowledge to building capacity to act and solve problems collectively.

Compromiso/Commitment: Reaching beyond boundaries

The role of the responsive teacher³ and program extends to action and initiative within the program, within the field, and within the community in order to serve the children and families.

¹ In this document, *values* are the cultural belief that underlie action and behavior, while *principles* are how these values are applied to early childhood education practice.

² The four pillars are: learning to be, learning to live together, learning to know, and learning to do. Each pillar speaks of an individual's development within a social context, as a member of a global community that cooperates in order for all to advance and prosper. Education, according to these pillars, is not simply a means of human development, but more pragmatically for the future of our children, a means to combat inequalities, oppression, and violence between people and between nations.

³ In this document, we have chosen to use *teacher* to encompass all those who care for a child in a structured setting, such as family child care providers, para-professionals, and kith and kin caregivers.

We have chosen this organizational framework to present a continuum covering family, child care community, learning and teaching, and teachers' roles. The four major values we highlight in this document—familia, pertenencia, educación, and compromiso— are intertwined, and also incorporate other values which are well defined and practiced among Latinos, such as respect, courtesy, trust, responsibility to others, duty to family, loyalty to friends, and respect for hierarchy and authority. Some of these values reoccur in different ways throughout the continuum.

For each principle, we present the cultural context, then discuss some implications on teachers' practice, program design, and professional development.

A matrix at the end of this document shows how the principles correspond to the Child Development Associate performance standards and the National Association of Family Child Care's self-assessment. This matrix can serve as a useful tool, helping early childhood educators evaluate how cultural principles and practices can be integrated into certification programs and materials.

The underlying theme throughout this document is solidarity: solidarity between programs and children's families and communities; among children and adults around social and learning goals; and in the commitment of practitioners and programs to go beyond the boundaries that often limit their capacity to advocate for the families they serve. Solidarity—connecting with others and committing to a unified cause or goal—is not only harmonious with many Latinos' cultural and historical heritage, but also a major goal of global reforms to combat inequities and exclusion.

We recognize that Latino culture is varied and continues to evolve in disparate directions in response to circumstances and preferences. Furthermore, many Latinos, both life-long residents and newcomers, face changes in their family structures, economic supports, and other factors that impact their ability to practice the values they espouse. We therefore do not assume to present principles that are representative of all Latino cultures. Rather, our goal is to provide a platform for a dialogue on principles and practices shared across many Latino cultures and to stimulate a thoughtful review of the ways early childhood education programs and practices can be shaped to reflect Latino cultures and language in a meaningful way.

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VALUES, PRINCIPLES, AND PRACTICES

Familia/Family: Forming Alliances with the Family Network

“La familia” is central to Latinos’ quality of life. Family interdependence—typical in Latino cultures in the U.S. and in Spanish-speaking countries—ensures each individual is supported and a responsible family member. A sense of permanence and interdependence bonds the extended family. Often grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and friends of all ages are a constant presence in the family nucleus and are intimately involved in each other’s well being. Instead of going off to live on their own, grown children may remain in the family’s home and contribute to the household until they form their own family units. In a Latino community, loyalties and responsibilities extend beyond the family circle to the surrounding community, from friends and co-workers to church brethren, shopkeepers, and neighbors, all of whom may have a say in how the children are brought up. For Latinos, the family and its networks are key in prospering, providing resources and information on citizenship, child care, access to services and other necessities of every day life. In addition, the family circle is a source of inspiration, as family and community members serve as mentors and models for future endeavors. In an extended family network, all have a stake and obligation in the well being of each child. Since childrearing is viewed as a shared responsibility, a child’s accomplishments or downfalls reflect on the whole community.

Therefore collaboration with and inclusion of the extended family network is vital in serving Latinos. The ultimate goal—the well being of the children—is served by forming alliances with the adults who touch the lives of the children.

Implications on the teacher’s practice

The responsive teacher understands that in order to support a Latino child, she must know the child’s extended family network. She establishes ongoing ties with the child’s community, from family and friends, to neighborhood leaders, inviting them to participate actively in the child care environment. She extends her work to reach the child’s community, going into the homes, the neighborhoods, and the churches to get a full picture of the child’s life within the community.

Inviting the family to participate goes beyond the usual definitions of parent involvement. The teacher welcomes members of the child’s community as co-teachers, co-planners, and initiators of activities. Elder and teen members of the extended family can also be valuable partners in the education of young Latino

children, and should be included within the program. Families can be resources for the teacher and the program, providing their expertise and support in efforts to include the culture and language of the children, recruiting caregivers and families, and identifying needs and priorities in their communities.

The culturally and linguistically responsive teacher understands that language and culture are intertwined, and that the family's language can present obstacles as well as opportunities for connections. Many teachers may not be able to speak the home language of their students, but should understand how to access and use interpreters, coordinate with bilingual service providers, and reach out to family members and community leaders who can act as liaisons. In this way, the teacher can communicate in the manner most comfortable and respectful to the family network.

Understanding the family also means being aware that some parents'—especially newcomers'—situation or beliefs may impact their participation in the program. They may have lost the support of the extended family they left behind, and they may lack social networks of friends they can count on as “comadres” and “compadres” to share the responsibilities and joys of childrearing. Finding ways to connect with and meaningfully include all parents and extended families can be a challenge. In some cases, special outreach efforts targeting fathers may be effective; in others, going to the community to co-design shared experiences for adults and children together may be most productive. Many successful models can serve as inspiration for teachers and programs, including the Bay Area Male Involvement Network (BAMIN) project, a cross-agency partnership to support male involvement in early childhood, and the Pájaro Valley home literacy project.

Implications on program design

A responsive program fosters mutually supportive relationships between the family network and the teachers by supporting staff in their outreach efforts, and by creating mutual learning opportunities where teachers and families reflect and learn together. Programs and leaders encourage staff to participate in existing networks—from church and neighborhood groups to clinics—in order to listen to the emerging themes and work of the community that surrounds the children. The program staff may identify, along with parents, complementary responsibilities that will enable them to collaborate on the questions and priorities discussed in these forums. Staff counts on resources that enable them to connect with community leaders who can offer a bridge into the community. The program is designed to engage families in sharing their goals and hopes for the children, integrating these into the curriculum and the learning goals for children and adults in the program.

Culturally and linguistically responsive teachers across the country and in various initiatives in Latin American have joined grassroots development projects aimed at involving the parents and para-professionals in marginalized communities to define the education their children will receive. One such effort brings teachers, community leaders, and parents together to design multicultural, culturally sensitive, bilingual preschool material that reflects the values, careers, relationships, and environment they live in.

A Participatory Learning and Action Program

In reform projects throughout the world, a key component of early childhood initiatives is the active collaboration of teachers and families. For instance, a global effort extending into rural communities in the developing world involves educators in “mapping” the community. One activity enlists parents in creating cards with names and symbols that represent their families and what they hold as important to their well being. Families and teachers then sort through the cards, comparing differences and similarities, and creating a blueprint for schooling based on the community’s values and symbols. In another participatory learning and action program, families visually represent their own conceptions of a life span and the markers that define important life transitions. In some cultures, for example, the life span is not seen as linear, but rather as a circle, where development—what people can do and be—comes back to a kind of beginning, implying children and elders may have some parallel needs for support and possibilities. From these representations of life cycles, teachers ask parents to define what children need to know at each point, and who teaches them and how.

The culturally and linguistically responsive program connects the themes and issues teachers have discovered through their participation in the kin network into the curriculum. Supporting the transition of the child into an early childhood environment is most effective when the program accommodates the needs of the whole family, not simply assimilating the child into an existing structure. The responsive program also encourages teachers to involve children in activities that extend into their homes and neighborhood, such as weekly visits to a senior center or aiding neighbors in a community garden. Such program activities model a commitment to the children’s communities.

Implications on professional development

Preparing the teacher to join in mutually supportive partnerships with families calls for an inquiry approach, one that focuses on listening to and learning from the

child's community. Including families in the program's professional development also offers possibilities for staff to interact with families and talk about the beliefs and practices in the homes. For example, programs can provide literacy and enrichment experiences for the extended families alongside the program staff.

Working closely with other adults requires continuous development and reflection. Professional development needs to work in concert with the teachings of the child's first and lifetime teacher—the family. If teachers internalize, unquestioning, universal views on developmentally appropriate practice, they may trivialize and undermine some family practices that do not conform to what they are learning. Training needs to develop skills in working collaboratively with other adults to promote children's learning and in negotiating between conflicting views on discipline, health, gender expectation, and the difference between play and learning. With a trusting and respectful relationship between families and teachers as a base, arriving at solutions to conflicting practices becomes a more equitable and natural process. Culturally responsive professional development opens dialogue, does not prescribe one-sided approaches, and includes the family-teacher partnership as a regular topic for reflection and action.

Pertenencia/Belonging: Creating a Sense of Family

Within Latino and other collectivist cultures, being part of a society implies developing a sense of belonging as well as a sense of commitment and obligation to others (*compromiso*). Since these two aspects are essential elements in most Latinos' extended family networks, a primary goal is to promote a child's sense of belonging to the group and to understand how to best live with others (*convivir*). Developing a sense of belonging helps children leaving a home environment transition more smoothly into a new, supportive learning "family." Developing a commitment to the group builds upon and refines the interpersonal skills and ways of learning which are so vital in the functioning of the family network.

A sense of belonging is key in forming a group identity. "Pertenencia"—belonging—is especially important in a culture where social contacts are the key means of access, support, and information. Latinos' identity is closely linked to their sense of belonging—to their country, to their culture, to their families and communities. The best way to welcome a new Latino member into the early childhood community is to recreate a sense of family and foster a sense of belonging to a group that will nurture and protect the child, echoing the solidarity and commitment of a family. A cohesive learning environment that creates a sense of belonging is reflected in children's and adults interactions: they care for each other, learn from each other, teach each other, and play together. This climate prioritizes respect and loyalty, obedience to elders

and understanding limits, and fosters responsiveness to each other's needs. The idea is to convey that the children are not alone, that they are cared for, but also that they are not just accountable to themselves, but also to others. The cohesiveness in the learning environment that responds to this cultural principle emanates from interdependence.

Without the support of the group, a family or a child who feels isolated from others and has not established ties in the new community can become more vulnerable to risks and have a hard time finding a footing in the new culture.

Implications on the teacher's practice

The primary purpose of a teacher who is culturally and linguistically responsive is to build solidarity so each individual child feels the support and investment an ideal family environment offers. Creating an optimum learning environment translates to creating a social context where children and adults feel invested in each other. To foster such an environment, the teacher provides many opportunities from the beginning for children to identify with the group, develop proactive group skills, and form relationships with peers and adults in the program.

Symbolizing how individual identity is intertwined with group identity and values, a person's name in many Latino cultures is often a complex combination of maternal, paternal, and baptism names. When introducing a child to the group, the teacher acknowledges that the child is already a member of a group, and includes family information in the introduction. The responsive teacher creates activities that elicit information about the people that surround the child, as well as the child herself, so children will get to know the groups and circles the other children belong to. She also values and encourages each child's caretaking role, one of the family duties that generates responsibility and awareness of others in even the youngest children. Even individual projects and activities can engage children in reflecting how their connections to the group and their peers empower them. For example, children can be asked to tell or draw how they helped a friend or how a friend helped them.

Since a sense of belonging to a group is cemented by caring (*cariño*), the culturally responsive teacher is comfortable with the appropriate and frequent use of physical contact and use of certain "generic" and group terms of endearment and respect such as "papito," "missy," "tesoro," and "amiguitos." Greeting routines are also important for establishing a sense of courtesy, respect, and belonging. The teacher and children acknowledge and greet any newly arrived child or adult who enters the environment.

The culturally and linguistically responsive teacher understands that language is an anchoring tool in the building of relationships. Native language is essential in building a sense of belonging and solidarity, as well as providing continuity with the home. In Spanish, the term “mother tongue”—*lengua materna*—is the most used translation of “native language”. However, in contrast to “native language,” which implies the language acquired at birth, “mother tongue” insinuates the relationship between mother and child, the language the mother speaks. In the case of many immigrant extended families, losing the native language creates a generational divide, dismantling family relationships based on respect for elders and the oral transmission of their wisdom, stories, and heritage, since elders may have less opportunity to develop the second language. Children and adults in the child care environment need to be able to use the language they are most familiar with in order to fully express their needs and wishes and in order to better understand others. Making efforts to pair Spanish-speaking adults and children together will facilitate this process. In the same vein, pairing siblings in groupings or activities will allow young children to build on their familiar modes of communicating and relating.

Implications on program design

Daily routines can be infused with structured and unstructured group activities that foster group identity and a sense of belonging, as well as informal opportunities for building friendships. Mealtimes, for instance, are key routines in the socio-personal, as well as language development of young children. These periods provide rich opportunities for the center community to bond and share meals as a group, as well as enable participation of even the youngest in informal dialogue with others.

Echoing the extended family network model, the multi-age model and other mixed groupings and family-based models provide multiple opportunities for deeper interactions across levels. Although oftentimes not encouraged in early childhood programs, including siblings and teachers’ offspring in groupings is a powerful strategy in programs responsive to the needs of both family-centered Latinos and others coming from homes with a different language and cultural base. The family connection helps young children extend the comfort and intimacy of the family relationship into the child care environment, and helps them establish a sense of security as they become part of the group.

Identifying resources that support group development can be a shared responsibility among para-educators, teachers, and families. A rich store of ideas can emerge from some family practices. For instance, one family reserves dinnertime to touch base on the days’ successes and issues, going around the table to even the youngest member to share their daily experiences. Early childhood programs based on models like

Reggio Emilia and Open Circle have a social meeting time where young children take an active part in sharing their personal issues and experiences, as well as making decisions together.

Even the organization and arrangements in the learning environment can be consciously adapted to favor group-centered instruction. For instance, when setting up an activity table, placing materials in the center of the table instead of parceling them out in individual portions will encourage negotiating and sharing skills. Learning centers can be designed, for instance, to replicate the familiar neighborhood environment and the way it functions as a center for interactions as people go through their daily activities. A “placita” (town square) can be created with the centers depicting home, market, school, bank, etc., all surrounding a common play area.

Implications on professional development

Providing a supportive learning environment for the adults in the program involves building relationships and connections. A simple orientation routine, for instance, can involve teachers and para-educators serving as mentors to introduce the program, its staff, and its work to the new recruit. In this way, new staff begins by establishing a connection with someone who can serve as “cultural broker,” as well as a supportive advisor.

Culturally responsive professional development includes opportunities for on-going, evolving dialogue across classrooms, as well as more structured planning and training venues from within and from outside the program. Culturally and linguistically responsive professional development that builds group identity and ownership includes informal and formal channels for shared decision-making, sharing ideas and information, negotiating roles and responsibilities, resolving conflict, problem-posing, team building, and especially, socializing. Program staff whose native language is not English or whose upbringing may discourage initiating dialogue with superiors may feel more comfortable developing bonds and sharing their views in informal, social exchanges.

Making accommodations for a broad range of literacy levels, learning styles and cultural practices in workshops and material is crucial. There should be opportunities for trainees to participate, respond, and do assignments in their language and method of choice, whether verbal or written, in conversations with peers, through one-on-one mentoring, or any other form that allows participants to feel most comfortable and supported. In this way, participants will be free to express themselves, reflect, and share their relevant experiences. Trainers can conduct training with a bilingual peer, a colleague, or an expert from the community to model mutual respect and

team work. A responsive trainer pays attention to creating a safe space for emotionally charged dialogue, as, for example, may arise when there are conflicting and strongly held beliefs on discipline and reward practices. By serving as a model, the trainer can set the stage for others to make their beliefs explicit, and share the personal and work experiences that ground their beliefs and practices.

Most importantly, respect for all cultures and languages has to be nurtured. As values and practices vary, it is important to include variations and multicultural interpretations as well as anti-bias approaches to insure that each culture, whether Latino or other ethnicities, and each child's mother tongue is valued in the same way and integrated into the program.

Educación/Education: Learning Together

The fundamental premise behind development in many Latino cultures is not individual development, but rather the holistic development of the child as a member of a community. Educational achievement and career advancement is not an end in itself, but rather a path to achieving a fuller potential as a human being, enabling each to contribute to society. "Learning to Be," one of the pillars of learning established by the UNESCO, clearly expresses this concept of development: "...The aim of development is the complete fulfillment of man (sic), in all the richness of his (sic) personality, the complexity of his (sic) forms of expression and his (sic) various commitments—as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer." (Delors, 1996, <http://www.unesco.org/delors/utopia.htm>)

The goals and process for learning need to reflect both the holistic development of the individual, and the collective orientation that is intrinsic to Latino culture. The word "educación" captures succinctly this cultural perspective on learning and development. In contrast to the English word "education," the Spanish connotation of the same root word provides a larger framework than the knowledge acquisition that occurs within institutions. "Educación" refers to a process of guiding the spiritual as well as intellectual path of a child. Being "bien educado" is one of the highest forms of compliments, defining the person as one who knows how to behave with others and who serves as a model for others. A well-educated child is a direct reflection of her or his upbringing. In other words, "success" is not an individual attainment, and is directly and publicly attributed to the influences of others. Success, for Latinos, also goes beyond achievement, which measures what you have done, and is tied to what you have become, that is, reaching full potential as a human being: "realizarse."

Success also needs to be redefined as a collective endeavor. According to international stakeholders, collective competition, rather than individual competition, is the most equitable path to success and economic prosperity of a whole country. In Latino cultures, collectivity and mutuality are clearly visible in the everyday language. “Comadre,” “compadre,” “comensal,” “compatriota,” and “compromise” denote shared acts that are highly valued: sharing parenting, sharing a home or a meal, sharing a country, and sharing a promise.

Implications on the teacher’s practice

Learning, especially from this cultural perspective, is socially mediated as well as socially motivated. The culturally responsive teacher aware of this dynamic will integrate teaching methods and interactions that enable the child to learn in a social context and also mark personal achievements by referring to the family and group influence on the individual child’s attainment. A responsive teacher, for instance, will praise a child’s milestones by mentioning how proud she makes her teacher and her family.

The responsive teacher will offer children many opportunities to learn using a mentor/apprentice model, which reflects the natural learning environment of daily life, and relies on imitation and observation of a more skilled peer or model. In child-centered approaches, the importance of imitation as a learning tool is often neglected. Certainly children must internalize skills, modifying and making their own what they have absorbed from others, as well as initiating their own learning through discovery and interaction. Becoming part of a learning community implies an awareness of others that goes beyond child-centeredness. Balancing the benefits of both approaches is important for cultural and linguistic responsiveness. The responsive teacher understands that the enrichment of the child rests on relationships. In other words, the people we care about and who care about us are those who hold the key to our growth.

The culturally and linguistically responsive teacher is aware of the developmental and socio-personal benefits of the mentor/apprentice model, especially salient in multi-age groupings. Having access to a group of children who speak a different language and are at different stages of development offers second language learners various models to choose from to advance in their language pattern recognition. This is how the child develops within the extended family context, where siblings and cousins play and learn together, and so feels familiar and safe.

Developing a sense of self in the framework we propose includes moving fluidly between the role of a learner and that of an expert, that is, serving as both apprentice and mentor. In so doing, the child develops empathy, tolerance, and refined

communication skills. When playing with younger children, older children will adjust their language and play to enable the younger children to more fully participate and understand. In this way, the older children are making language choices that put in play a higher order of thinking, including rephrasing, re-organizing, and summarizing ideas.

The responsive teacher also approaches teaching holistically, encouraging learning relationships and helping children make connections with the experiences and skills they bring from their families and culture. Intergenerational activities are a culturally relevant medium for engaging children in interactive, group-centered learning. Both social and academic activities can include family and community members of all ages (including elders and teenagers) as participants, co-planners, or initiators.

In collective learning and in the mentor/apprentice model, language plays a vital role both in the processing of information, and in developing individual and group identity. The linguistically responsive teacher is aware of the power and function of language as a learning and social tool. Language holds a group together, as well as provides a means to understand, to share information, skills, and negotiate survival: “Language tells us who we are, where we belong, and where we’re bound.” (Clear Blue Sky, 2001).

Teachers need to understand that children who enter a new learning environment with a different language and culture benefit from maintaining the anchor that their first language provides. Bilingual and bicultural development frees children to become part of the mainstream as well as build on the foundation they bring.

The teacher also questions the role of language as a learning goal. The emphasis on text-based knowledge in our school system leaves some assuming that home environments without a rich store of books and writing experiences are deficient as compared to those where text is a valued commodity. And yet language is learned in the home in many and varied ways that expose the child to complex discourse as well as language patterns through conversations, dialogues, and storytelling. Two thirds of the language in use across the world consists in social conversation (Clear Blue Sky, 2001). Moving from the oral, interactive language of everyday home experiences to the particular learning structures in early childhood programs requires an approach that is consistent with and mindful of building on the children’s experiences in the home and in the neighborhood. Parents at times may prefer their young children be immersed in English and believe Spanish will hinder their learning. The use of first and second language should be discussed openly and information shared about best literacy practices to help families reach an informed decision.

Therefore, the culturally and linguistically responsive teacher encourages and understands the natural and fluid means of developing language and learning that is particularly prevalent in a socially centered culture. For instance, the responsive teacher considers carefully when to interrupt and intervene in an activity where children are enjoying each other and focused on the activity. She uses oral and interactive methods broadly to enable group learning.

The teacher is informed about the role of native language in the development of the second language and consciously uses the child's native language as much as possible in the daily routines, including in praise and discipline statements, which can provide social markers across cultures. Most importantly, the responsive teacher makes explicit her views and methods without imposing them, and invites colleagues and families to engage in dialogue about their own beliefs and practices so as to fully understand the families' expectations for the children and teachers.

The key to cultural and linguistic responsiveness is to know the families and their wishes and needs for the children. An educator, no matter how culturally aware, cannot assume to fully understand, even with the guidance of standards and diversity resources, the values of a particular family. In fact, more than likely, there will even be distinct beliefs within a family. Values can be explicitly taught, as they are so often in families, using fables, rules, tasks, rituals, and celebrations. The best way to understand and to integrate diverse values is to ask and listen.

Implications on program design

A culturally and linguistically responsive program includes structures and practices that promote socially-mediated learning, such as heterogeneous groupings, multi-age, and other configurations, where adults and children of different ages and abilities can learn and teach together. In early childhood education especially, where the child leaves the home for the first time for extended periods of time, a multi-age, mixed grouping or family model provides learning opportunities that parallel the home environment. Since fluidity, not imposed structure, is emphasized in this type of collaborative learning, maintaining strict schedules and adhering to planned programming may interfere with optimum learning for some Latino children. Much of the "schooling" children experience in our programs and our institutions is organized and bound by activity or content areas, age-segregation, and scheduling. Therefore, the task of the responsive program is to balance organized and spontaneous activities that provide a wide variety of experiences and opportunities.

Finally, program and teacher assessment needs to be restructured to portray the richness of social language and development. An assessment that values and measures the kind of learning that we are emphasizing here would have to look very

different from the current measures used, even individual authentic assessments. For example, upon entering the preschool classroom, a child's vocabulary may be assessed by a series of visual stimuli presented by the teacher. Imagine an assessment that places the teacher in the background, as a listener who has provided a project-based, collaborative activity that engages children in dialogue and problem solving. This would enable the teacher to record the vocabulary being used during interactions around a particular task, and also provide a real life context on which teachers could base their language development curriculum.

Implications on professional development

Since no early childhood training program can prepare teachers to understand the myriad of cultural factors that impact how a child develops and learns, the most open and responsive professional development bases training on an inquiry approach, using child observation, classroom and program documentation, and question-posing as the basis for curriculum development and teaching practice.

Responsive professional development goes beyond presenting standards of developmentally appropriate practices. Training programs and materials represent growth and development in multiple ways in order to capture each child's particular patterns, family's expectations and priorities, and cultural influences. Despite a renewed awareness of different ways of learning and the development of multiple intelligences, little attention is being paid to how cultural factors can play an important role in the formation of a child's way of learning. For instance, the major focus in the U.S. is on individual achievement of specific academic skills and developing independence, whereas in Latino cultures, group progress and interdependence are prioritized. Since advancing learning within this framework does not depend primarily on a set of constructed activities in scope and sequence, but on a naturalistic learning situation where interaction and process goals are valued as outcomes, there may be potential conflict with some views on developmentally appropriate practice. The challenge for teachers is to value and support various goals and methods of development.

Compromiso/Commitment: Reaching Beyond Boundaries

In communities that are tightly knit, and in cultures that are group-centered, everyone rolls up their sleeves to pitch in where needed. The members of a community rally together when action and decisions are vital to the welfare of children. They seek each other's advice, summon each other's help, debate opinions, and join forces to act and reach consensus. Problem solving is not an individual activity. Expectations are that individuals will go beyond the boundaries of their roles

when the need calls for it. Essentially, this expectation arises from having an interdependent, respectful, and personal relationship with the community, the family, and the child.

Teachers, as authority figures to whom the family entrusts its children, extend their commitment beyond the classroom. They act as models, mentors, and advocates within the classroom, within the program, within the community, and in the early childhood field to serve all children and families.

Professionalism grows from a sense of mutual commitment (*compromiso*) to a shared focus: the well being of the children, the hope for the future. In the Latino cultural sense of commitment, “*obligación*” and “*compromiso*” are intertwined: an individual has a duty and a commitment towards the group. This commitment is not limited by institutional boundaries. Rather, it extends across all areas, from partnering with family and community networks, to creating a sense of belonging and a context for learning in the classroom, and to the professional roles of teachers.

More than ever, our institutions and services are pressed to substitute the role of the extended family, the church and the community that previously were the mainstay of a child’s upbringing. Understanding and addressing the social context that impacts children and their families is elemental in culturally responsive practice. In the current climate in the education system, from early childhood through secondary education, there is an urgent need to ensure that all children have equal access and opportunity to learn and thrive. This task requires a mutual commitment between learning institutions and families, and yet the challenges each face have to be considered in all aspects of a child care system, from schedules to resource development. The structure of the family of many Latinos and other newcomers has been disrupted, leaving families more isolated, and without the supports that the family traditionally supplied. In many Latino families living in poverty, the pressures of navigating the economic and social support systems may leave them prey to consequences that deeply affect their children’s education and their own economic survival. Homelessness, inadequate English language skills, lack of transportation, large family size, and young age and educational background of parents are factors that may impinge on a family’s ability to involve themselves effectively in their child’s education. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of Latino children and their families, child care programs must extend their services beyond the individual children, and take an active role in improving the quality of life of the family. Child care teachers also face increased demands on their personal and professional lives, and need to be supported in order to best serve families. Despite the long hours and specialized skills needed to support working parents and provide a comprehensive, quality learning experience for children, child care providers are among the lowest

paid in the work force. Teachers, especially Spanish-dominant paraprofessionals and family child care providers, may have limited opportunities for furthering their training outside of the child care setting. The commitment to serve the children therefore has to extend to a system-wide commitment to support and recompense teachers. Training materials and programs, standards, licensing protocols, and other influencing factors, such as teacher salaries and allocation of research and development funds, need to be aligned and responsive.

Implications on the teacher's practice

The culturally responsive teacher serves as an advocate for the rights and interests of her students and their families. In Latino cultures, teachers are highly respected members of the community, and their influence is far-reaching. Especially in the case of newcomers, families may view the teacher as a model of acculturation and the facilitator of their children's entrance into an American world. An admired teacher is visionary, spiritual, proactive, and connected with the world of the children as well as other private and public spheres.

Within the program, teachers' roles include participating as team members, working together with the adults inside and outside the program to extend their responsibilities as teachers and learners. This may mean, for example, formulating shared and flexible teaching roles that allow team members to collaborate, problem-solve, and learn and plan together. In a center, for instance, team members may take responsibility for a colleague's group of children so the para-professional and lead teachers can attend a conference together.

The culturally and linguistically responsive teacher is a skilled communicator. She searches for tools and liaisons to communicate in a variety of ways and in the home language of children and families, and she understands how home language impacts learning a second language. Monolingual teachers seek out bilingual coordinators and mentors to offer guidance and encouragement to new teachers and para-professionals.

Implications on program design

Programs that are culturally and linguistically responsive create structures and processes that facilitate role-sharing, dialogue, and decision-making across professional boundaries. This may take the form of multiple job responsibilities and roles, as in the case of a program where a teacher team divides administrative and directing responsibilities within each day's schedule, or where the director and community board provide financial incentives for teachers to take on fund-raising or other responsibilities traditionally left to the director. New avenues are continuously

sought to extend the commitment of the program to its teachers and its work with children and families.

Responding to the needs of families may require innovation and program restructuring. Flexibility in scheduling and attendance, for example, will aid parents' work and family obligations. At the same time, the program reaches beyond boundaries by developing its role as community liaison. In this role, the program can coordinate efforts with community leaders, agencies, and interests in order to provide appropriate and relevant services and resources in Spanish and English for the whole family.

The importance of involving teachers, families, and community agencies cannot be underestimated. In fact, studies of school performance of immigrant and multiethnic children indicate that collaboration was an important contributing factor to the overall performance of students in the district. Shared power, parent groups that are culturally and linguistically diverse, commitment to adapting services to language minority groups, and frequent interaction among various community groups were key elements in the districts that were most successful.

Implications on professional development

Culturally responsive training has multiple points of access, such as using dialogue, experience, audiovisual aides, small group work with mixed literacy levels, portfolios, and observation. Teacher assessment processes can involve peer collaboration and should be based on self-defined goals and monitoring developed from knowledge of the community and family expectations. This allows teachers to use their own ways of learning and to build expertise in various forms of communicating and reflecting.

Most importantly, quality professional development views the bilingual and Spanish-speaking teacher, volunteer, grandparent, child, and family as a resource in increasing the program's capacity to support its Latino children. This entails extending opportunities for them to participate using their native language—whether that be English, Spanish, or another language, since the critical and creative thinking that generates ideas and reflection requires a high level of comfort with language. Programs should provide links with Spanish-language workshops, coursework, and supports that facilitate access and learning for Latino teachers and parents. Trainers can co-teach with a bilingual peer, or recruit a Spanish-speaking parent or volunteer to participate. Latino social workers, psychologists, entrepreneurs, interpreters, and religious leaders can also be enlisted to contribute their expertise in different child-related and family-related topics, as well as in career and program management. Not only can they serve as cultural experts for the non-Latino staff, but also as models and mentors for Latino staff.

Innovative communication channels need to be sought to reach those marginalized or separated from other learning and teaching communities, such as family child care providers and kith and kin caregivers. Examples of unconventional yet valuable professional development avenues include newsletters distributed among neighborhood agencies and centers, focus groups, videos, and gatherings in homes. Another example involves college programs partnering with resource and referral agencies to provide workshops and internet chat groups that connect family child care providers so they can share information, best practices, and advocacy efforts. Especially for family child care providers, who have limited access to training opportunities, making available materials and training in Spanish is key. Quality professional development requires reflection and analysis, skills that are best mastered when language is not an obstacle. English as a second language taught with a content-based approach, that is, with early childhood concepts, allows learners to transfer the knowledge gained in Spanish training.

Responsive teachers and para-educators also initiate dialogue and sharing of best practices beyond the program. Trainers and supervisors encourage and provide resources for staff to engage in activities outside the program and the community. Teachers proudly invite visitors to see their program and participate in and initiate activities. A responsive professional development plan may include outreach to the Latino family early childhood community to serve as a resource and join center-based workshops.

Partnerships with other service agencies and community groups can be vehicles for preparing the teacher's work outside the program. Partnerships can help teachers provide information, coordinated support, and advocacy for the entire family.

CONCLUSION AND NEW BEGINNINGS

Many individuals and groups involved in early childhood education have worked to outline recommendations for the early education system and practice. Organizations across the country are actively looking for solutions and blueprints to better reach and serve families and children of Latino backgrounds. Efforts at all schooling levels have been undertaken to infuse home culture into the curriculum via celebrations, songs, books, games, and other aspects of culture. More and more, training resources are being produced or translated to support the development of Latina paraprofessionals. These are important steps. Latino children, families, and staff need to see themselves and their experiences represented within the mainstream culture. A major challenge, however, is to portray and understand the less palpable aspects of culture, such as those we have attempted to touch on here, that have a lasting impact on how Latinos contribute to and become part of American society.

The principles and practices laid out in this document are not meant to represent the blueprint for culturally and linguistically responsive practice. Rather, they suggest some shadings of a complex, evolving, and rich system of beliefs and practices that many Latinos bring to the tapestry of their bicultural development in the United States. Latinos, like other long-time or new immigrant populations, are constantly grappling with integrating their strongest held beliefs with what they need and wish to absorb of the cultures in this country. In the spirit of collaboration and equity, our social institutions also need to consider how to reform to best understand and reflect the values and priorities that propel Latinos' choices of child care, schooling, and professions.

Lastly, we acknowledge that the vision presented here would need to be accompanied by advocacy and policy that support a strong focus on cultural and linguistic responsiveness, since the level of commitment implied in this vision may be out of reach for many early childhood programs and teachers. However, this agenda should be advanced through an open dialogue, not simply as add-ons to an existing structure.

Learning to become more responsive to such a quickly evolving population cannot be easily summarized in a checklist or guidelines of appropriate practices to use with Latinos. The principles and practices laid out here can, however, be used as a springboard for discussion. At the same time, they provide a backdrop from which to formulate new questions in a way that increases our understanding and our capacity to provide the best possible environment for all children. Shaping programs and practices to respond to a diverse community is a continuous process of inquiry that should include many voices.

Matrix:
Relationship of Framework to CDA Competency Goals

Latino-based Values	Latino-based Principles	Examples in Practices	CDA Competency Goals
I. Familia/ Family	<i>The caregiver and program form alliances with the entire family and community surrounding the child.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involving the extended family and community in the program ▪ Communicating with the extended family in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways ▪ Participating in family and community events and forums ▪ Collaborating with families to define goals and program ▪ Referring to and showing extended families in daily routines, environments, and activities 	IV. To establish positive and productive relationships with families
II. Pertenencia/ Belonging	<i>Programs for young Latino children reflect a powerful sense of group cohesiveness and group identity that give each child a sense of belonging.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating a sense of belonging through daily rituals and routines ▪ Fostering relationships and connections ▪ Setting up the learning environment with places where groups can gather ▪ Providing informal and formal channels for shared decision-making ▪ Using verbal and non-verbal expressions of caring ▪ Building proactive skills such as respect and responsibility for others 	III. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance
III. Educación/ Education	<i>Learning and teaching promote the holistic development of individual children, as well as build capacity through collective learning.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing the whole child by integrating intellectual, social, creative, and ethical development ▪ Providing informal and formal opportunities for group learning, products, and assessments ▪ Encouraging adults and children of different ages to participate as both mentors and learners ▪ Drawing on everyday experiences of the child, including home language and traditions ▪ Engaging children and adults in many social and verbal ways of learning 	II. To advance physical and intellectual competence
IV. Compromiso/ Commitment	<i>Teachers extend their commitment beyond the classroom. They act as models, mentors, and advocates within the classroom, within the program, within the community, and in the child care field to serve all children and families.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Honoring and supporting the roles of teachers as professionals, advocates, models, and members of their families and communities ▪ Training and teacher team building activities are based on on-going relationships and common focus, such as mentoring ▪ Including native language and cultural communication styles in professional activities ▪ Linking families and program with community services ▪ Advocating for and contributing to changing the child care system to improve responsiveness to diversity 	V. To ensure a well-run purposeful program responsive to participants needs VI. To maintain a commitment to professionalism

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