

Cultural Diversity



As Americans, we live in a country that is culturally diverse. FunShine Express® takes a multicultural educational approach by offering samples of different cultures and/or religions. This can help you teach children to be tolerant and accepting. A good way to provide more information is through books, websites, or with supplemental activities. In addition to a natural incorporation of culturally diverse activities into your curriculum, you can teach cultural diversity through the materials displayed on your walls and the materials children encounter in centers.

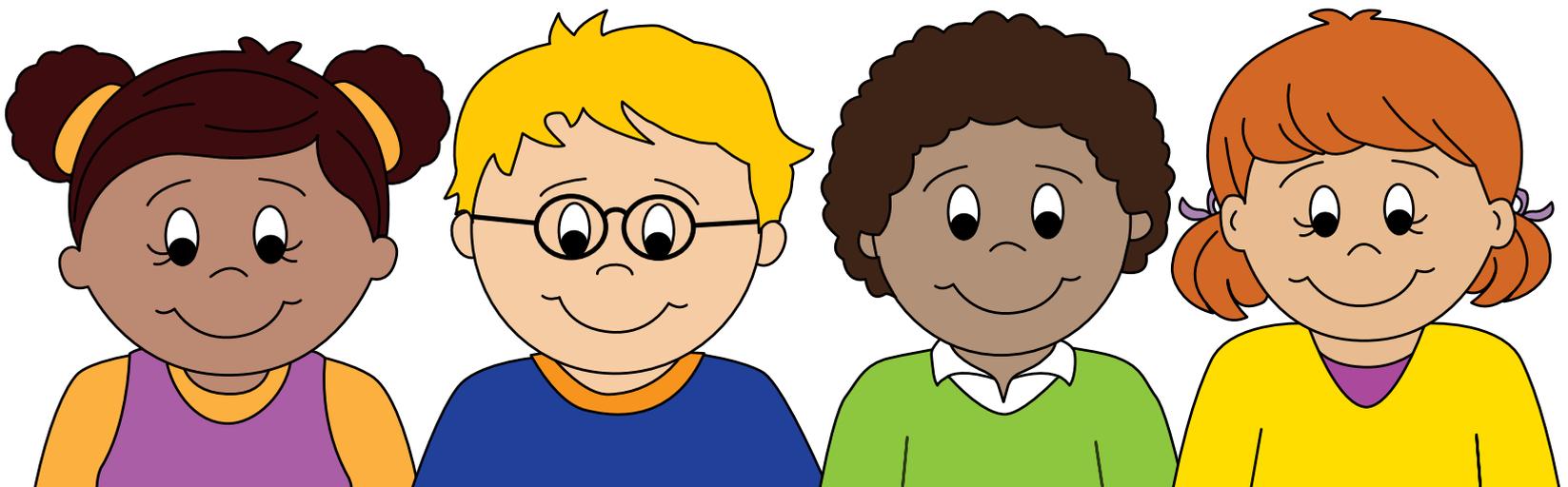
We believe teaching cultural diversity should be authentic and occur naturally, and not through themes that specifically focus on culture or themes that take a “tourist” approach. Providing a variety of multicultural experiences helps children learn to appreciate cultures that may be different from their own. We encourage teachers to incorporate experiences and materials into their lesson plans that reflect the cultures of children in their classrooms and communities.

Ideas for an authentic approach to making your classroom environment more diverse:

- Display posters and educational materials featuring people from all races, ethnicities, and abilities. Avoid stereotypes (Hispanic people dressed in large sombreros, etc.).
- Provide “skin tone” crayons, markers, paints, papers, etc. for children to use in the art center.
- Include multicultural dolls and traditional dress-up clothing from other cultures in your center materials for children to explore.
- Play quiet music from many cultures during center time.
- Include books with pictures of people from multiple races, ethnicities, and abilities in your library.

Activity ideas to incorporate supporting cultural diversity:

- Be accepting of differences in clothes, hair styles, foods eaten, etc. Be on the lookout for “teachable moments” when cultural differences arise. Take the opportunity to celebrate our differences!
- Include snacks/meals from cultures represented in your classroom or community. Enlist the help of parents for recipe ideas.
- Share multicultural books from your classroom library when the opportunity arises.
- Offer picture books written in languages other than English (children’s home languages would be ideal) to demonstrate diversity of language in our world.
- Incorporate music, dances, and games from cultures around the world during music and movement time.
- Invite family or community members who represent different cultures to visit and share information about their cultures when appropriate. Holidays are a natural time to share about foods and traditions!
- Locate and show videos about curriculum content featuring narrators or actors from all over the world. Talk about accents and the different languages used.



Cultural Diversity and Holiday Celebrations



Holidays are included in our programs for a number of reasons:

- Children, families, and providers love them!
- Holidays are part of a child's reality, whether at home or in their communities.
- They are a good way to incorporate multicultural education and teach cultural sensitivity.
- A vast majority of our customers want to observe major US holidays in some manner.

Children love holidays and we encourage you to acknowledge them in some way. However, you need to decide what is appropriate within your setting. Find out how important holidays are to the families in your group. Be sensitive to those who don't celebrate "traditional" holidays. Ask if there are holiday activities that they participate in that they may be willing to share. Involve families as much as possible to make sure you are meeting the needs of all children in your group.

We realize some of our customers may want additional material for the children in their group or that some may choose not to participate in such activities. The choice is yours to make. Additionally, many major holidays are faith-based. We choose to incorporate these as well. By offering a broad cultural and theological approach, we hope to foster a worldly knowledge and tolerance that complements all faiths.

You will find cultural and holiday information included on days when holidays or cultural events occur. You can decide whether or not to share this information based on your program's policies, along with the needs and interests of the children in your group. If your program prefers not to offer certain holiday activities, you can adapt the activities in the guide or offer alternate activities.

Ideas for promoting cultural diversity through holiday celebrations:

- Enlist the help of children and parents to brainstorm and prepare traditional dishes from their home celebrations.
- Invite parents to come and talk about holiday traditions in their homes. Encourage them to bring pictures to share.
- Locate online resources (websites, videos, etc.) that showcase different holiday celebrations from around the world. Choose to include one celebration per month to teach holiday traditions from another culture, especially if you have a culturally diverse group that can share their knowledge.
- Consider including multiple cultures and religions in your activities and celebrations, enlisting families to help if possible.
- Sing the birthday song and then listen to the "Birthday Song" in another language when celebrating a birthday. Take the opportunity to talk about traditional birthday celebrations in the child's home, and compare that to birthday celebrations of other children and birthday traditions around the world.
- Invite families to participate in community cultural events.
- Provide background information about holidays celebrated in America. What culture influenced the holiday? Why do we celebrate? This information is often included in activities within the Fireflies® curriculum.

