fka CHILDREN'S SERVICES INC

Pedagogy & Practice Resource

Selecting Resources and Materials that Strengthen Social Inclusion

Within early childhood education and care, the materials and resources we provide to young children assume a pivotal role in shaping their cognitive and socio-emotional development.

The pedagogical choices made by early childhood professionals, particularly in the context of environmental design and resource selection, hold significance in fostering a sense of identity and social inclusivity.

Our early years learning environments nurture the innate curiosity of children while facilitating an exploration of their individual identities, those of their peers, and the broader local community. It is vital that early childhood professionals align the environment with the cultural and social fabric of its participants.

Many factors are to be considered when making informed curriculum decisions, particularly when selecting materials and resources made available to children in the learning environment:

- ✅ Do these resources effectively reflect the individual identities of young learners engaging in the environment?

- ✅ Can children connect with their identity, culture and language through these resources?

- ✅ Do these resources support children in their growing understandings of social justice, equity and respect?

These are important questions to ask. The messages our environments send often influence how children interpret how they 'fit' into this world, influencing their sense of belonging. Even the most understated nuances in our learning spaces hold the potential to sculpt young minds and their sense of identity, connection and belonging.

'Learning environments engage and foster a sense of ownership and respect when they are aesthetically pleasing, reflect the identity and culture of children and families, and encourage a connection to place.'

ACECQA, 2018, *National Quality Standard Information Sheet QA3: The Environment as 'The Third Teacher'*

A tool to support critical reflection may be useful in making informed curriculum decisions. Consider asking yourself and your team the questions on the following page when selecting resources and materials to include in your learning spaces.

HOW WE CAN HELP

fka Children's Services (*fka*CS) advocates for children's cultural and linguistic rights and provides support to education and care services in the provision of culturally rich environments that support a civil society.

We offer early childhood education and care services access to skilled and experienced pedagogy and practice consultants. We also offer a range of multilingual resources and professional learning opportunities for services, which are customised according to individual needs.

Contact us to discuss support

03 9428 4471 · culturalinclusion@fka.org.au

More resources available at www.fka.org.au

Reflective questions	Opportunities for growth
Is there representation of children's identities, their families, and communities in the books and resources included within your learning environment? This might encompass occasions of celebration, faith, and the composition of communities.	
Do the characters within the provided books reflect a socially cohesive society, encompassing the identities, ethnicities, languages, genders, cultural attire, abilities, learning approaches, and family structures?	
Do the characters in your books demonstrate agency, possessing influence over their own lives and making significant decisions?	
Are the main characters in narratives and play areas designed to resonate with your local community, and are they visible across various sections of your learning spaces?	
Are there narratives in the available materials that reflect modern life alongside traditional folktales and legends?	
Do the books, resources, and materials within your learning settings support children in understanding different perspectives, encompassing emotions, identities, cultures, and varied life experiences?	
Are essential human attributes like kindness, respect, and empathy highlighted among characters who mirror the identities of your learning community?	
Do illustrations provide clear and lifelike depictions, supporting children who are learning English in interpreting the story?	
Are dolls and other resources for imaginative play portrayed in a stereotypical manner such as 'pretty' and 'cute' for girls and 'strong' for boys, or occupations that demonstrate bias towards gender and/or ethnicity? What potential messages could this convey to children? Addressing such portrayals might serve as an insightful point for critical reflection within your team.	
Do the art supplies facilitate children in exploring their own identities?	