

PROJECT SUN

Helping children flourish

Finding Harmony in Cultural Competence

Written by Rev. Ellen Steward, MS, BSN, Project SUN Executive Team

I love harmony! From the vocals and brass of the group Chicago in the 80's to the acapella vocals in Glee, harmony has been a huge part of my life. And, harmony can only exist with diversity – different notes played together in synchrony.

My first job was as an RN in this community 30 years ago. I have always been aware of the beautiful diversity of our community. But, in the same way that achieving the blend of beautiful harmonies requires practice - living and working together in harmony as a diverse community requires practical action to achieve the harmony of cultural competence. According to Cross and associates, individuals and organizations have varying levels of cultural awareness, knowledge, and skill that occur on a continuum with six stages...

- **1.) Cultural Destructiveness** – systems/organizations have attitudes, policies, structures, and practices that are destructive to particular cultural groups.
- **2.) Cultural Incapacity** – systems/organizations lack the capacity to effectively meet the needs, interests, and preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse groups (i.e. lack of interpreters, appropriate signage, and other subtle messages that some cultural groups are neither valued nor welcomed.)
- **3.) Cultural Blindness** – systems/organizations have an expressed philosophy that “we treat all people the same.” There is little diversity in the workforce and few resources are given to improving the situation. We choose to ignore our level of competence rather than truly reflect on how to improve our practice.
- **4.) Cultural Pre-Competence** – systems/organizations have increasing awareness of their strengths and areas for growth with culturally/linguistically diverse populations.
- **5.) Cultural Competency** – systems/organizations activate to demonstrate acceptance and respect by using their increased awareness to take action (i.e. changing mission statements and polices, using evidence-based/promising practices that are culturally/linguistically competent, including consumer and community participation in planning and delivery of services, putting practices in place to recruit and hire a diverse work force.)

- **6.) Cultural Proficiency** – systems/organizations continue the process of self-evaluation and develop continuing plans for improvement.

I think the beauty of harmony is worth the practice. How are you or the organization in which you serve taking steps to create the harmony of cultural competence? Where do you think you sit on the continuum of cultural competence? We'd love to hear from you.

Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume 1. Washington, DC: CASSP Technical Assistance Center, Center for Child Health and Mental Health Policy, Georgetown University Child Development Center.

Calling all teachers, service providers, and others working with families!

Please complete this survey to share your perspective and help us determine how we better promote cultural competency.

[\(CLICK HERE\)](#)

More Than Sad: Suicide Prevention Education for Parents

Project SUN's upcoming Parent Café, set for March 19, will include a presentation of More Than Sad, an American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) program to help parents, caregivers, teachers, and community members recognize signs of mental illness in teens. Please consider, this topic may not be appropriate for young children. Find more details on page 2.



Anne King



Jennifer Arreola

March's guest speakers are certified by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.



Helpful Resources

We challenge you to read at least one of these resources!

Visit projectsunkankakee.wordpress.com/ to comment and share your thoughts or questions. Also, pass along what you find helpful to a friend or family member!

FRIENDLY READ - Less Than 5 Minutes

- [Suicide "Risk Factors and Warning Signs"](#) - Awareness is a key to prevention!
- ["Anxiety and Depression in Children: Get the Facts"](#) - What fears and worries are typical in children and what are signs of anxiety or depression?

REFLECTIVE READ - More than 5 Minutes

- ["Suicide Rates Spike in Spring, Not Winter"](#) - A Q&A session on the seasonal nature of depression and suicide with a Johns Hopkins neuropsychiatrist.
- ["IEP Transition Planning: Preparing for Young Adulthood"](#) - "Under federal law, transition planning must start by the time your child turns 16."

ACADEMIC READ - Longer than 10 Minutes

- ["Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care"](#) - Learn more from the article cited in this edition's cover article on the six levels of cultural competence.

Word of the Month

Culture

...[Culture] includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships, and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations; is dynamic in nature.

nccc.georgetown.edu/

A Follow-Up to Your IEP and 504 Plan Questions

My school district wants to eliminate my child's therapy. What can I do?

"The IEP **team** makes decisions about a child's educational needs. Parents are members of this team. If someone outside the team decides a child's placement or services, that's a violation of the IDEA."

"You can also challenge the school's decision by filing for mediation or due process, which will trigger "stay put" rights. **"Stay put"** rights prevent the removal of services until the challenge is settled." (Ref: www.understood.org/)

Speak up! "...parents must be given 15 days written notice, often as a revision to the IEP. If parents do not take action within 15 days, the proposed change takes effect." (Ref: asah.org)

My child has an IEP - Does my school district have to honor a diagnosis from my doctor?

"The answer is no. To qualify for special education services, a child diagnosed with a medical disability must also be found eligible as a "child with a disability," as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To put it simply, **medical disabilities do not always qualify as educational disabilities under the law.**

Whether a child has a qualifying educational disability under the IDEA is a decision determined by a team of professionals at the child's school, including the child's parents, and only after the school has evaluated the child to determine whether the child's disabilities give rise to educational needs." (REF: mcanrewslaw.com)

My child has a 504 plan - What happens after they graduate high school?

While some school districts provide transition planning to students with 504 plans it is not required for them to do so, as it is with IEPs.

Going into the workforce? Your child's 504 plan will not follow them into the workplace. However, reasonable accommodations are still covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. (Ref: National Education Association, NEA.org)

Going to college? Though some institutions may have accommodations, college or universities are not mandated to accept an IEP and 504 plan.

Still need services? Consider enrolling with PUNS (Prioritization for Urgency of Need for Services) - the state database used to select individuals with developmental disabilities for services as funding is available. To speak with IDHS about PUNS enrollment, call: 1-800-843-6154.

Meet us in the community!



Project SUN Parent Café

March 19 | 5 - 6:30 PM

More Than Sad: Suicide Prevention Education for Parents

Kankakee Public Library, 4th Floor Auditorium
201 E Merchant St, Kankakee, IL 60901

This program is targeted to parents of teenage children, but is open to all.

Please RSVP by March 18 at:
815-304-5933 OR augustina@cfkrv.org

Workshop on IEPs and 504 Plans

April - Date TBA | The Helen Wheeler Center
202 N. Schuyler Ave, Kankakee IL

In response to the questions and turnout for February's Parent Café on IEPs and 504 Plans, Project SUN is sponsoring a workshop put on by Family Matters, an Illinois-based training and information center. To register and gain more information, visit Project SUN on Facebook at Project SUN Kankakee.

April's Café Topic

Exploring the Autism Spectrum - April 23, 5-6:30 PM

