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Serving Culturally Diverse Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance and Their Families

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Over the coming decades, we can expect that cultural diversity will abound within the U.S. population and the imagery of an American melting pot will long be discarded. One significance of this trend will be the imperative to account for cultural diversity in assessing the needs of children with serious emotional disturbance (SED), to ensure that assessments, diagnoses, and treatments are accurate, fair, and meaningful. To achieve that end, however, will first require that all persons in the fields of education, mental health, social services, and juvenile justice become fully prepared to support children with SED and their families, prepared to bring to the process a sophisticated understanding of the interplay between culture and social behaviors. Nothing less than that level of preparedness will enable practitioners to develop unbiased interventions that competently and sensitively weigh cultural influences and target the needs of diverse students with emotional and behavioral difficulties. In this paper, we present the need for culturally competent practitioners in the area of SED, ways in which service providers can increase their cultural knowledge, and strategies for more effective service with this population.

KEY WORDS: cultural diversity; serious emotional disturbance; cultural competence; disabilities; families.

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By the year 2050, half of the U.S. population is projected to be of Hispanic, African American, Native American, or Asian/Pacific descent. Cultural competency will therefore become an increasingly required way of assessing, diagnosing, and treating children with serious emotional disturbance (SED) or those who are at risk for emotional or behavioral problems. However, to be effective, cultural competency must permeate the mental health agencies, schools, juvenile-justice systems, social services, and institutions that will educate those who will work with children. It means training the next generation of teachers, social workers, physicians, and psychologists to be culturally sensitive and competent. Cultural competence is a willingness to recognize and accept that there are other legitimate ways of doing things, as well as a willingness to meet the needs of those who are different, including those with disabilities. It is a major challenge, but anything short of success can have serious financial and human consequences as adolescents repeatedly pass through the social services or juvenile justice systems, or fail to become productive citizens.

Currently, for example, there is over-representation of minority youths (particularly African American) in programs for children with behavior problems or in the juvenile justice system. Many of these youths have learning disabilities that have not been properly assessed, or have emotional problems that are not being adequately treated. They may be ADHD, depressed, or sexually abused. Many problems could be alleviated if appropriate early intervention strategies were in place, or if there were more emphasis on prevention and providing a healthy environment for these children and adolescents before a problem develops.

Efforts to provide appropriate cost-effective services require accurate assessment and diagnosis, as well as development of an appropriate treatment plan. Without an accurate assessment, the diagnosis and treatment will be of limited value. For example, a foreign-born youth may be labeled mentally retarded when the issue is actually a lack of language capabilities; conversely, the lack of learning may be attributed to the child's inability to understand English when the real issue is a learning disability. Hence, is it a matter of misunderstanding cultural differences? One rule of thumb in providing culturally competent services is neither to make culture account for everything nor to discount its impact altogether. In this paper, we link cultural competence with adequate educational and mental health services for children and their families from diverse backgrounds.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL BEHAVIORS: ASSESSMENT FOR SERIOUS EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

As with adults, children are culture bound, and their culture needs to serve as the basis for interpreting their behavior. Most of the existing measurement standards, research, and formal instruments used to assess children's behaviors

are based on information gathered primarily from European American middle-class children. If children's behaviors are viewed through culturally altered prisms, distortions will occur in the way their behaviors are perceived, in the interventions they receive, and in the way the children view themselves.

Questions that need to be asked in assessing children from culturally different backgrounds for SED are: (a) what is the cultural knowledge base of the examiner? and (b) to what extent did the student's culture enter the assessment process? Although it is important not to overemphasize the differences among children, individuals working with culturally diverse populations need to be aware that the values held by different cultures greatly influence the ways families socialize their children. For example, most of the major minority cultures in this society (i.e., Asian/Pacific Islander, African, Native, and Hispanic/Latino American) come from backgrounds that subscribe more to collectivistic rather than the individualistic styles, which are more characteristic of the European American culture. In many cases this means that children from certain minority groups may be taught to place greater stress on their dependence upon and allegiance to the family rather than to grow in independence, assertiveness, and autonomy as might be the case for members of the dominant U.S. society. Children trained in a collectivistic orientation are likely to present a variety of behaviors that are somewhat at odds with the mainstream. For example, they may place more importance on taking care of family matters than on school attendance and performance, may be reticent to assume leadership roles, may prefer cooperative versus competitive environments, may place greater emphasis on peer relationships, and may be verbally unassertive, particularly with authority figures.

We are all products of our environment, and those experiences greatly determine how we perceive the world and respond to environmental events.With a largely European American female teaching force, cultural discontinuities enter in when the student population consists of racially and ethnically diverse youngsters who are disproportionately impoverished. These conditions can undermine students' learning and frustrate teachers. To illustrate, consider the real-life situation of a young European American teacher; Nicole, in her first teaching assignment located in an inner-city high school with a majority African American population. One day she observed two African American male adolescents outside her classroom engaging in verbal repartee that appeared to her to be aggressive and contentious. Being a dutiful and responsible teacher, she immediately marched them to the principal's office to be reprimanded. The principal, an African American female, surprised the young teacher by criticizing her for misreading the situation and treating the boys prejudicially.

What this teacher did not know—and with her limited experience and training had no way of knowing—was that she was observing a unique communication style of African American youth, particularly males. She encountered what Irvine (1990) refers to as "verbal sparring," also called "ribbing," "capping," "woofing,"

and so forth. Essentially, these interactions are verbal battles characterized by Irvine as African American male rituals that are valued and generally conducted in an atmosphere of sport. As in Nicole's case, Irvine points out that "the verbal communication style of black students baffles school personnel, especially white teachers, who fail to understand black students' expressive language" (p. 27). Furthermore, according to Irvine, in contrast to European Americans, African Americans tend not to view arguments as fighting. Although the principal was well intended, she was guilty of the same behavior of which she accused the teacher. Both the students and the teacher were acting in ways consistent with their culture.

Cultural misunderstandings can have a negative impact on students as well as on teachers. Irvine notes the occurrence of vicious cycles, explaining that when students find that their playful acts are misinterpreted, they become angry and intensify the roughness of their activities; the result is greater fear on the part of whites. Students may feel empowered and rewarded by the effects of their actions on others, particularly their effect on females. This false sense of power may lead students to escalate those behaviors, most likely at the expense of more productive behaviors that relate to school success.

The third author of this paper provides other examples with her nine-year-old son of teacher-pupil cultural dissonance. A bright, but energetic child, Kris was a constant target of his fourth-grade teacher's disciplinary actions in the form of reprimands and in-school suspensions. One major complaint was Kris' failure to honor turn-taking rules, constantly shouting out the answers rather than to give the other children an opportunity to respond. This behavior is also considered to be culturally specific wherein it is common for African Americans to employ a direct style, entering heated arguments/discussions without following the turn-taking rule (Irvine, 1990). The teacher reacted with reprimands, resulting in Kris becoming more angry and ultimately less enthusiastic for learning. Without question, Kris needed to learn how to participate in the group without disturbing the class decorum. With cultural knowledge, however, the teacher would perceive this as a skill that Kris needed to learn rather than simply exacting punishing consequences. Punishment might extinguish shouting out but will not necessarily teach him the appropriate way to join a class discussion.

Another concern was that Kris and a few other African American boys were frequently punished because the teacher viewed the boys' verbal sparring as fighting rather than joking around as they defined it. The teacher was not very explicit in labeling Kris' wrongdoing and felt he was defiant when he did not stop a specific behavior. His mother requested that the teacher give her specifics so that she could offer Kris alternative behaviors but the teacher simply responded that, "He knows what he did." Being visually impaired, the mother pointed out that she did not use facial expressions or general statements with her son but that she was quite explicit in describing what he did and what he needed to do to correct his behavior. Later, when his mother was not present, the teacher told Kris,

"Your mother may buy that you don't understand but I know you do." As noted in the professional literature, cultural discontinuities can lead to an escalation of maladaptive behaviors and school failure (e.g., Cartledge & Milburn, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 1990). Delpit (1995) offers that students are vulnerable for being labeled behaviorally disordered when they fail to understand the veiled requests and social codes of the school. To further illustrate, many times, his teachers would form the directive in a manner that Kris perceived as a choice. For example, "Kris don't you think you need to sit down?" Well, if he thought he needed to sit down, he probably would not have gotten up. Instead, she needed to say, "Kris, I want you to sit down and don't get up." This type of request not only gives him the specific behavior she wanted from him, but also indicates there are no options. Without the direct statements the undesired behavior continues and he gets yelled at and embarrassed in front of his friends. Kris increasingly began to use the phrase "I don't care," as a way to cover up his feelings.

Practitioners who do not share the same background as their learners are in jeopardy of viewing their students' behaviors in rather stereotypical ways. Several factors contribute to cultural misunderstandings that include: (a) teachers' lack of cultural knowledge and understanding of the impact of family beliefs, customs, and traditions on students' behavior; (b) failure to recognize methods of child-rearing and discipline choices in various cultures; (c) lowered expectations for some students of color (Obiakor, 1999); (d) failure to understand the cultural context in which a behavior is exhibited (Neal, McCray & Webb-Johnson, 2001); (e) limited or no interaction with cultural groups outside their own (Kea & Bacon, 1999); (f) little cultural relevance in the school curriculum (Bowman, 2000) and ineffective instruction (Gay, 1997) that does not incorporate research-based best practices; and (g) absence of an ethos of care that supports students' uniqueness. To help practitioners assess their cultural awareness relative to families. Sileo and Prater (1998, p. 339) provide a set of questions that address *family dynamics* (e.g., What are the important family rules?), *misperceptions about student behavior* (e.g., What roles do silence, questions, and responses play in the student's culture?), *student characteristics* (e.g., Do students question or obey authority figures?), and *disciplinary style* (e.g., What are acceptable and unacceptable ways to motivate or change students' behavior based on their perceptions of positive and negative consequences?).

Culturally different behaviors are not equivalent to social-skill deficits or behavior disorders. Standardized or European American based social skill assessments may not adequately reflect the social competence of culturally different students. On the other hand, extremely compliant behaviors are not necessarily indicative of the absence of some abnormality. In one study, for example, Asian American students received more positive teacher and peer ratings than their European and African American peers, but they also indicated they were least likely to question unfair rules or to do anything if treated unfairly (Feng & Cartledge, 1996). This

emphasis on conformity and "saving face" may lead teachers to make erroneous assumptions about the child's well being and result in significant problems being overlooked. The tendency for some children to need more "wait time" or to be verbally unassertive (e.g., Native and Hispanic American) may be interpreted as unmotivated or resistant to instruction, while the quick, high-intensity responses of African Americans may be seen as hostile or rude. The issue of assessment for SED is probably most relevant for African and Asian American students where proportionately they are over- and underrepresented, respectively.

Cultural relevance enters in the foregoing discussion when considering that with minority students there exists a greater tendency for punitive alternatives (Irvine, 1990), higher referral rates to special education, and the increased likelihood to be placed despite equivalent demographics to nonminority peers (Executive Committee of the Council for Children With Behavioral Disorders, 1989). Students who externalize problem behaviors are likely to be punished, especially if the students are minority males.

Particularly salient is the need to view the child's behavior within a cultural context, recognizing that high levels of externalizing or internalizing behaviors may be expressions of troubled states that deserve positive, constructive attention. These children are poorly served if excessively punished or simply ignored. The acting-out child is especially at risk, for this child draws unfavorable reactions from others and the focus is more likely to be on removing the youngster from the environment than on helping the child remain in school and improve academic performance.

Service providers need to heighten their cultural understanding so they can accurately perceive and respond to the needs of their students. Assessments need to be balanced, constructive, and timely, focused on helping students derive maximum benefit from their schooling and interact successfully with peers and others while maintaining their own unique cultural identities. Behavioral differences are not necessarily pathological; however, if they interfere with performance or normal peer interactions, specialized interventions that contribute to social and academic growth are warranted.

DIMENSIONS OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE WITH FAMILIES

Working with families and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can be a challenge for practitioners. It is always risky to over generalize about the values and priorities of people from different cultural backgrounds. No two families, even ones from the same cultural group, are exactly alike. A sound practice for us is to anticipate differences, value them, and try to adopt the family's perspective. So often a mismatch between the home and school culture occurs when working with culturally diverse students with emotional or behavioral difficulties.

Many culturally diverse families and their children are not provided educational services in a culturally sensitive context or by culturally competent practitioners. We can connect with culturally diverse parents and their children with SED if we respect, acknowledge, and become grounded in their family patterns and values. A movement away from a model emphasizing family deficits and toward a model emphasizing family empowerment and strength is the desired outcome; therefore, the intent here is to provide a positive framework for conceptualizing and implementing services to culturally diverse families and students with SED. A culturally sensitive perspective can strengthen programs that serve these individuals. This perspective deserves serious consideration as we build and revise models for connecting *all* educational communities and delivering family services.

The Family

The family gives us the greatest significance. Family structures vary today and may include single, blended, or multigenerational families, as well as nonbiological kin rearing children. A family may be defined as "all members of a household under a roof" who have a common interest and commitment to its children with and without disabilities. There is strength in all family structures. However, non-European American parents of children with disabilities are often viewed as less committed and less skilled at parenting, nurturing, teaching, and motivating their children. Minority parents are seen as different, hence society believes it must treat them and their children with disabilities differently. As a result, culturally diverse students with challenging behaviors reflecting cultural, social, or linguistic characteristics are misunderstood, misdiagnosed, mis-educated, and devalued.

Many service providers continue to be baffled with why culturally diverse parents and families resist efforts to become involved in the educational process. Several possible explanations may exist. First, many of these parents themselves have had negative, discriminatory, and blatant stereotyped school related experiences. Mistrust of the European culture is harbored from a historical perspective or either a recent mishap. Second, family members are cautious about disclosing personal or family matters, which might reflect negatively on themselves and the family. Third, some groups view school achievement, failure, and behavior as a reflection on their parenting skills. Fourth, school personnel and its structure intimidates some diverse parents. Fifth, parents who have had previous negative contacts with the school are unlikely to approach school personnel, or continue to try and assist the school in working with their children. Sixth, discrepancies in home and school language (jargon) can contribute to parents' resistance. Seventh, language differences impose communication barriers for some. Eighth, service providers' view of the "deficient" parent(s) belittles and promotes a level of discomfort and disrespect. A ninth explanation provided by Lindeman (2001) is that some

parents, particularly immigrant families do not understand the U.S. school system and its expectations nor do they have a cultural history of being active collaborative parents who visit the schools regularly. Additionally, other authors suggest that families may view the meaning of disability and the acceptance of certain behaviors differently and culturally different parents have distinctly unique beliefs about schooling (Craig, Hull, Haggart & Perez-Selles, 2000; Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997). Therefore, in working with culturally different families, it is helpful for school personnel to anticipate that there may be significant differences between the culture of the home and the school and proceed to determine the nature of these differences and how to bridge them.

Cultural Competence

How can we create environments that are culturally sensitive and that treat culturally diverse family members and students with SED with respect? This is a complex task that for many people requires a commitment to risking uncharted waters. Understanding the diversity within and between cultures is critical. Multicultural competence might be viewed as "a conceptual model that promotes cultural awareness, cultural knowledge and cultural encounters as a process-oriented approach rather than an endpoint to serving individuals, families, and communities of diverse backgrounds" (Campinha-Bacote, 1991, p. 14). "Families of color often have different family structures, child rearing practices, gender and family roles, and relationships to community" (Hodges, 1993, p. 2). Failure to account for these cultural differences might yield an incomplete assessment of family strengths and might interfere with providing culturally sensitive interventions. Practitioners have become more aware of these family strengths, but are still grappling with how to take them into account. The issues are twofold: a lack of understanding of the dynamics of culturally diverse families, and a lack of preparing service-delivery systems to provide quality educational and therapeutic services to culturally diverse families and students with SED. Cultural awareness and knowledge about the helping traditions among diverse families, their framework of values, help-seeking behaviors, and student outcomes may improve cultural encounters over time.

Helping Traditions

The struggle for survival and advancement from generation to generation by culturally diverse families can be attributed to "helping traditions." Culturally diverse families are known to be adaptable in family roles; to have strong kinship bonds, work ethics, and religious beliefs; and to be achievement oriented. The use of these strengths as a basic framework for interventions rather than research, which

often characterizes these families as dysfunctional, is a must for practitioners. The self-help ability of culturally diverse families comes about through the seamless interconnectedness of extended family, community at large, fictive kinship, and racial and religious consciousness. The following cultural factors may have special relevance to those working with minority families and students:

(1) *Extended family* consists of blood relatives that are multigenerational. The primary role of this kinship system is to ensure that the welfare of all members of the kin network are provided for at all times (i.e., child care, supervision, parenting, material and monetary resources, and emotional support to children and family members).
(2) *Mutual aid* is a common element in extended family life of culturally diverse families. Resources are often pooled together for survival and growth.
(3) *Fictive kinship* among nonblood related individuals exist in diverse communities due to common ancestry, social plight, and history. Fictive kin also provide mutual aid, caregiving, and family support.
(4) *Racial identity* is an awareness of the history of one's own cultural group. Individuals exhibit pride and dignity through the maintenance of customs and traditions.
(5) *Religious consciousness* is the active participation in the cultural group's religious beliefs and practices. Reliance on faith and the church to support family life is an attribute.

Many culturally diverse families practice cooperation, sharing, and caring. They strive to instill in their children these self-help skills to be passed on to future generations. However, interactions within every family are affected by a unique blend of cultural factors that work together to create a distinct cultural milieu.

Framework of Values

From what values is the culturally diverse family operating? How are children with disabilities viewed, parented, disciplined, and integrated into the family? How does the family feel about its racial identity? What is the family's coping philosophy? Whom does the family depend on for support? To what extent is role sharing practiced? Are the church and cultural organizations relied on for important resources? What are the family's cultural beliefs and patterns regarding educational and mental health issues? According to Logan (1996), posing the above questions helps service providers to better understand family dynamics, identify interventions (prevention and treatment), and raise an awareness of the culturally diverse family's strengths and concerns. Ethnographic interviews with the family and individual members can help ascertain an in-depth picture of family patterns and functioning.

Help-Seeking Behaviors

Many culturally diverse families do not seek outside help for their family or children with emotional or behavioral difficulties for various reasons: cultural taboos; language barriers; lack of diverse service professionals to discuss culture-specific issues and concerns; accessibility of service delivery systems; beliefs that services developed and rendered meet the needs of only European American families; and the view that the goal of many service providers is to disrupt the family and remove the child from the family. Equally important is the family's perception of problems, needs, and types of interventions believed to be most effective. Cultural influences play a role in who seeks help. Minority individuals with emotional concerns are less likely to seek professional and informal help. This has a profound impact on the educational and therapeutic services needed by many culturally diverse children and youth exhibiting emotional or behavioral difficulties.

Student Outcomes

A lack of understanding and cultural sensitivity on the part of teachers, administrators, ancillary personnel, and other students toward cultures different from their own may contribute to school misbehavior. What teachers consider "discipline problems" are determined by their own culture, personal values, attitudes, and teaching style. More often than not, disciplinary problems seem centered around interpersonal discourse. Tension and negative consequences seem to intensify among the various communication styles of diverse ethnic groups and when teachers and their students do not share the same cultural backgrounds, ethnic identities, values, social protocols, and relational styles (Au, 1993; Boykin, 1986). Sheets and Gay (1996) reported that males of all ethnic groups were disciplined more frequently, publicly, and severely than females. In addition, they found both African American males and females were disciplined more than other ethnic groups, followed sequentially by Latinos, Filipinos, and Caucasians. Failure to understand the cultural context of any given situation may escalate the behavior. To work effectively with students who are culturally and linguistically different from the majority culture, teachers must know about their cultural backgrounds, examine attitudes toward working with various cultural groups, and examine how school culture affects their values and practices in the classroom.

Reflecting again on the personal experience of the third author, although the school complained regularly about the behavior of her son several of the teachers resisted home-school communications that focused on positive, constructive interventions. The parent recommended, for example, a type of daily or weekly communication to help her become more aware of specific problems occurring at school that could possibly lead to a home-school management system. One teacher

stated that this was unnecessary since Kris should be able to handle himself. This teacher, who could not bring herself to perceive Kris' behavior as anything but deliberate and bad, refused even the most simplistic treatment plan, preferring instead to rely on punishment in the form of in-school suspensions and public reprimands. Kris, as well as some of the other students hated this, leading him to retaliate by not doing his work, which would bring on more reprimands and humiliation.

CULTURALLY SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION

Practitioners who employ a sociocultural theoretical framework when working with culturally diverse families consider: (a) the historical, cultural, social, economic, and political forces endured by cultural groups; (b) the diversity within diverse families; and (c) that cultural groups have carryovers of their culture's origin. Social systems in which culturally diverse families interact often respond rigidly to the needs of culturally diverse families, students, and communities. This promotes limited interchange by the help seeker who fears being misunderstood, rejected, or considered illiterate—all of which could lead to ineffective or inappropriate service interventions for culturally diverse families and students with SED.

An empowered practitioner enters the family system with preconceived ideas about strengths, not pathology. The guiding question concerns what is right with this family rather than what is wrong. The services provided by the practitioner are: (a) sensitive to the diversity of families in terms of culture, race, lifestyle, or structures; (b) committed to understanding and changing the broader sociopolitical context in which these families dwell by eliminating racism; (c) committed to involving the family to the fullest extent possible in defining problems and creating solutions; and (d) accessible, available, and overall effective with cultural groups.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Effective communication begins with relationship building that is trustworthy and fosters family and student confidentiality (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). Second, service providers must understand that families and individuals within culturally diverse groups are diverse themselves. Every family is unique and both the inter- and intra-cultural variations should be celebrated. However, this complex diversity mosaic can often bring about clashes when communicating between the school and home. It is critical that service providers take into account that most parents from diverse backgrounds are willing to be involved in the education for their child with SED if communication is two-way (i.e., information sharing), and an inviting atmosphere is evident. Initial contact with parents may be done in several ways: telephone, home visits, and written communication. Determine the family's

preferred mode of communication. Remember to use full names and/or titles when addressing family members; treating elders with respect. Invite parents to participate and clarify how they can assist in their child's learning program, and create an ongoing relationship with the family.

Meetings

Many culturally diverse parents are intimidated by the number of personnel attending meetings, and by the educational jargon used. Teachers can begin with positive attributes about the student and their family. Acknowledging the family's structure, educational level, and any existing language barriers. Schools and agencies may need to employ translators to facilitate meetings and ensure accurate communication (Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000). And practitioners may need to understand subtle, nonverbal communication that is culture-bound. Parents may be sent meeting agendas and questions prior to conferences or IEP meetings accompanied by follow-up phone calls. Extra time for initial conferences may be needed to promote relationship building and parent participation. Emphasize parent participation during conferences and meetings rather than signatures needed for documents. Avoid or limit the use of professional jargon and make sure parents and family members have a clear understanding of what is being communicated. Treat parents as trainers and collaborators rather than consent-givers and recipients of information.

Language Factors

Service providers will need to employ special strategies for language minority and immigrant parents. This means, for example, more frequent and detailed contacts will be needed to explain behavior management and homework policies. Additionally, letters and notes sent home might be comprised mostly of pictures and fewer words (Lindeman, 2001), and, if possible, written communications should be in English and the family's native language (Boone, Wolfe, & Schaufler, 1999). Furthermore, communication systems should be interactive, providing an opportunity for parents to inform and express concerns as well as receive information. One example is given by Williams and Cartledge (1997) who utilized a daily home/school notebook system to afford parents an opportunity daily to voice their point of view and receive teacher information on the schooling of their children. An additional consideration for linguistically diverse learners is that homework assignments should reinforce previously learned material, not introduce new information that requires parents to deal with unknown material. Some parents may not have the language or teaching ability to help their child with unfamiliar schoolwork. This way misunderstandings resulting from differences in cultural backgrounds can be prevented.

SUMMARY

Service providers can increase positive and collaborative interactions between diverse families and schools if the family is central to all decisions affecting the lives of their children. Authentic family-centered practices will emerge only after service providers have an understanding of the families' experiences within their sociocultural context, recognize the families' strengths and resilience, listen to their voices, and establish meaningful relationships with diverse families.

Practitioners need to display a caring attitude that reflects cultural awareness to prevent misunderstandings that result in student misbehavior. Service providers need to become knowledgeable about the cultures of their students' families and reach beyond the professional doors into the home and community of students served to develop sound partnerships. In these ways, professionals can better meet to the needs of culturally different youngsters with SED and their families.

In sum, all service providers must be well grounded in their knowledge base of cultural groups and the community being served. They might develop models for working with diverse families and students with SED that: embrace and honor the family culture, language, and race; reflect the values and philosophies espoused by cultural groups; respect and acknowledge the value system of cultural groups as viable; communicate with immediate and extended family members regularly; assess the family's strengths and needs before developing interventions and create cultural specific strategies for both families and young people with emotional and/or behavioral challenges.

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