SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE PRESCHOOLS

by

KEIKO TANAKA

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ABSTRACT

It has become a global trend for large numbers of people including young children to migrate from one country to another country. These young immigrant children are entering childcare facilities, with the result that these preschool programs are increasingly culturally and linguistically-diverse. There is, therefore, a need for early childhood educators to understand and respond to the unique needs of young immigrant children in order to provide them with appropriate supports. In this paper, I draw on current research and literature to examine the roles of parents, families, and communities, as well as educators in supporting young immigrant children’s needs in Early Childhood Education and Care settings. I also investigate approaches that early childhood educators are using in the culturally and linguistically-diverse preschools to support immigrant children’s holistic development. I suggest strategies that early childhood educators could utilize in their classrooms to support immigrant children’s development and learning.
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... ii
Table of Contents ......................................................................................................................... iii
Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................... v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1
Rationale ........................................................................................................................................... 1
Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................................. 2
Purpose and Significance .............................................................................................................. 5
Summary ......................................................................................................................................... 6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................................................... 8
Holistic Education Theory .......................................................................................................... 8
Social Ecological Systems Theory .............................................................................................. 9
Immigration and Immigrant Children ...................................................................................... 11
The Role of Parents, Families, and Communities ................................................................. 14
The Role of Educators ............................................................................................................... 17
Approach to Supporting Immigrant Children ....................................................................... 20
   Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach ...................................................................... 20
   Multimodality ....................................................................................................................... 22
   Connecting Home and School ............................................................................................ 24
Summary ....................................................................................................................................... 26
CHAPTER 3: CONNECTIONS TO PRACTICE .................................................................... 27
Approaches to Supporting Immigrant Preschool Children .................................................... 28
   Understand Each Child and Build a Close Relationship .................................................. 28
   Establish a Culturally Responsive Approach and Supportive Classroom Environment .. 30
   Build and Embrace Family and Community Partnerships ............................................. 33
Professional Development Workshop ..................................................................................... 37
Summary ....................................................................................................................................... 38
CHAPTER 4: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .......................................................... 39
Reflections and Recommendations for Policy and ECE Training Programs ....................... 40
Areas for Future Research .......................................................................................................... 42
Conclusions ................................................................................................................................. 43
References .................................................................................................................................... 45
Appendices .................................................................................................................................. 55
   Appendix A .............................................................................................................................. 55
   Appendix B .............................................................................................................................. 82
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Vancouver is one of the most culturally and linguistically-diverse cities in the world. According to Statistics Canada (2014), the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) revealed that first generation individuals (i.e., those who were born outside of Canada) and second generation individuals (i.e., those who have at least one foreign-born parent) collectively represent 52.4% of British Columbia’s provincial population. In Vancouver, 40% of the population speaks a foreign language as a first language, and the immigrant population represents over 200 countries (Statistics Canada, 2014). Furthermore, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013) revealed that 17,515 immigrant children between the age of 0 and 4 arrived in Canada in 2012, 1,890 of which immigrated to British Columbia. These young, immigrant children are entering childcare facilities, and as a result, preschool programs need to consider the ways they can transform their learning programs to respond to the unique needs of children from socially, culturally, and linguistically-diverse backgrounds (Government of British Columbia, 2008). This diversity in British Columbia also challenges educators to identify, understand, and support the needs of immigrant children, and to provide them with rich early learning opportunities.

According to Shields and Behrman (2004), and Turney and Kao (2009), early childhood educators who work with culturally and linguistically-diverse children need to consider the different ways immigrant children may develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively in comparison to non-immigrant children. For example, the challenges immigrant children may encounter include: cultural differences; language barriers; and less parental involvement in their education (Shields & Behrman, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009). Despite immigrant parents’ wishes to participate in their children’s education, their lack of access to formal education due to their socioeconomic and sociodemographic aspects, limited English skills, or work commitments may
make it difficult for them to provide adequate support for their children’s educational endeavors (Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011; Muller, 1995; Turney & Kao, 2009). Moreover, Takanishi (2004) and Hernandez (2004) revealed that immigrant children’s learning experiences may differ from non-immigrant children’s experiences due to having limited access to resources, such as quality early childhood education programs or health care services due to their families’ limited language skills and income, and their lack of familiarity with new social customs and practices. Takanishi (2004), Hernandez (2004), and Karoly and Gonzalez (2011) also indicated that young, immigrant children tend to be negatively affected by limited access to resources, and as a result become at risk for developmental delay or low academic performance and achievement in schools. Early learning experiences in preschool programs could therefore be particularly important and beneficial for immigrant children because preschool programs have the potential to provide short and long-term benefits for children’s learning and development, which include English-language learning, and the development of pro-social skills, which could impact later school success (Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011; Takanishi, 2004).

In this capstone project, I investigate the literature that addresses how early childhood educators are supporting immigrant children’s development in preschool settings, as well as the roles of educators, families, and communities in regards to supporting immigrant children in preschool classrooms. I wish to acquire an understanding of young immigrant children’s development and to provide effective holistic approaches to support their learning and development in urban, culturally and linguistically-diverse preschools.

**Rationale**

My prior teaching experiences with immigrant preschool children have inspired me to examine the literature on how early childhood educators can support young immigrant children
in urban, culturally-diverse preschools. During my undergraduate studies at Washington State University, I interned at the Washington State University Child Development Laboratory in the half-day preschool program: a supervising teacher and four student teachers facilitated this preschool program. Throughout the semester, student teachers observed and recorded stages of children’s development, and assisted with planning and implementing curricula. The class had 16 three and four-year-old children, and each student teacher was assigned a group of four children. One of the three-year old students in my group was a girl who just moved from China with her family due to her father’s work at the university.

On the first day of school, I approached this child, who was hiding behind her mother. As her mother and I spoke, she mentioned that her daughter was unable to speak or understand English. It was apparent, that everything in her new world was different in comparison to what she was familiar with in China. For the first few weeks of school, she refused to stay in the classroom without her mother, and cried when it was time for the parents to leave. During that time, I began to develop a relationship with her by greeting her every morning, making sure she was comfortable during the transition times in the classroom, talking to her slowly with simple English, and inviting her to participate in different learning activities whenever she was alone in the classroom. Over time, I noticed her observing the other children’s play, participating in their small group activities, and engaging with children during circle time. She appeared to be carefully listening to the teachers and her classmates, and she began imitating what other people were saying or doing. Over the course of my internship program, I observed her begin to play with her classmates, and verbally respond to teachers during learning activities. My teaching and learning journey with this student increased my curiosity with regards to how to effectively work
with immigrant children, and my experiences with this child have provided the inspiration for this capstone project.

My experiences with this child also enabled me to reflect on the relevance of early childhood educators developing an understanding of immigrant children’s development and the challenges they may encounter, and to reflect on potential strategies to help immigrant children learn and grow.

**Theoretical Framework**

This capstone project is framed by two theoretical perspectives: holistic education theory (Miller, 1992) and social ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). These two frameworks will enable me to situate a child in the center of his or her learning, and address the interconnectedness between a child and his or her surroundings. In addition, these theories will guide my review of the literature on how preschool programs are meeting the needs of immigrant children’s holistic development, as well as immigrant children’s relationships with others within multiple environments.

Holistic education theory highlights the notion that all aspects of human life, including children’s development and learning, are interconnected (Miller, 1992). This theory acknowledges that children’s intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual development are connected and influence each other. The purpose of holistic education is to foster the development of these potentials (Miller, 2005). Miller (2005) identified three basic principles of holistic education: connectedness, inclusion, and balance. Connectedness indicates an approach that facilitates connections between learning. Inclusion in holistic education rejects segregation and exclusion of students and integrates all students with different levels of abilities and diverse backgrounds in learning and communities. Inclusion also refers to offering a variety
of learning and teaching approaches to reach and respond to diverse students. Balance, in terms of education, means recognizing the complementary forces and energies (e.g., individual competition and collaborative learning) in the classroom. Moreover, this theory also focuses on the importance of relationships, such as the relationship between mind and body, and between the individual and the community (Miller, 1996). Children develop and learn within multiple communities; therefore, the development of the child cannot be isolated from his or her environment (Forbes, 2003).

Social ecological systems theory acknowledges the significant relationship and interconnectedness between a child’s development and his or her environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that a child’s development does not occur in isolation; a child’s development occurs within contexts, and is influenced by the child’s social relationships and interactions with their surrounding environment. The theory asserts that people encounter different environments throughout life and enables us to analyze the effects of environmental systems on children’s development. It also helps educators and researchers understand how everything in a child and the child’s surrounding environment influences the child’s growth and development. This theory is divided into five ecological systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The theory explains that each ecological system directly and indirectly impacts a child’s development.

**Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this capstone is to examine the literature on the ways in which educators are supporting immigrant children’s holistic development in preschools, as well as the roles of educators, families, and communities in immigrant children’s learning and development. More precisely, the aim of this project is to reveal the developmental trajectories and challenges of
young immigrant children, including the importance of providing immigrant children with a supportive environment, which can enhance immigrant children’s development and well-being. Due to the increase of immigrant children in Canada, and particularly, Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2014), it is imperative that early childhood educators understand immigrant children’s developmental needs, and become aware that immigrant children may have different needs in their learning environment. My hope is that this project will inform early childhood educators who work with immigrant children about the particular needs and challenges of their students. In addition, this project will expose educators to different ways they can support immigrant children’s holistic development in preschools. It is my hope that by understanding immigrant children’s needs, early childhood educators can create a welcoming, comfortable, and supportive preschool learning environment so that immigrant children can develop a range of skills and a healthy sense of self.

The following question will guide this capstone: How can early childhood educators support young immigrant children’s holistic development in preschool settings?

Summary

In this chapter, I shared my position as an early childhood educator who has observed immigrant preschool children’s learning and development in early childhood settings. I also highlighted my teaching and learning journey with an immigrant preschool child and my interest in acquiring an understanding of immigrant children’s development, including the roles of educators in providing support that promotes immigrant children’s holistic development and well-being in preschools. In the following chapter, I present a review of the research on how educators are supporting immigrant children’s holistic development in preschool settings, and the important role of educators, families, and communities in immigrant preschool children’s
development and learning. In chapter three, I suggest holistic approaches that teachers can utilize in culturally and linguistically-diverse preschools based on the review of literature. This chapter also includes a PowerPoint presentation and brochure that outline instructional approaches early childhood educators can utilize in their preschool classrooms. In chapter four, I reflect on what I have learned through this project, I address the implications of teaching in urban, culturally and linguistically-diverse preschools, and I provide suggestions for future research on the topic of supporting young immigrant children in preschool settings.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As outlined in chapter one, holistic education theory (Miller, 1992) and social ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) provide a conceptual framework for this capstone project. It is through these lenses, that I explore and examine existing literature on how preschool programs are supporting immigrant children’s holistic development in preschool settings. Additionally, as these lenses place children at the center of learning and recognize the importance of relationships and interconnectedness between children and their environment, I examine the roles of educators, as well as families and communities in immigrant children’s development and learning. Subsequently, I organize the findings into certain key themes as follows: i) immigration and immigrant children; ii) roles of parents, families, and communities; iii) roles of educators; and iv) approaches to support immigrant children’s holistic development.

**Holistic Education Theory**

Holistic education, as Miller (1992) describes, attempts to nurture the whole person and acknowledges the deep interconnectedness of all aspects of human life. This includes children’s development of intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, creative and spiritual dimensions (Miller, 2005). These developmental domains are all interconnected; therefore, development of one area also influences development of other domains. The premise and purposes of holistic education are that educators help develop these children’s potentials and that each child finds his or her identity, meaning, and purpose in life through various connections (Miller, 1997). Miller (1992) also argues that holistic education should attempt to meet students’ needs rather than focusing solely on students’ intellectual development, academic learning, or test scores. A holistic approach encourages student’s active engagement in learning and it needs to be meaningful and relevant to the students (Miller, 2008).
Holistic perspective asserts that everything that exists is related and interconnected (Miller, 1992). One of the important factors of holistic education is that it places a great emphasis on personal relationships: relationships between mind and body, between the individual and the community, or among various skills and knowledge (Miller, 1996). Miller (1992) describes that children learn not only through their minds but also their feelings, bodies, and imaginations. Holistic education allows students to examine these relationships and make deep connections between themselves, as well as their surrounding environment. Another important aspect of holistic education is building a trust and providing emotionally supportive learning environment (Miller, 1992). The learning environment needs to foster a sense of caring, respect, belonging, and community in order to support children’s learning and development (Miller, 2008). Moreover, holistic education emphasizes connections beyond the classroom; it values connections between the school and neighborhood community (Miller, 2010). The school needs to be a place where students feel at home and the neighborhood community needs to be integrated into the schools by inviting community members or joining community activities so that students can make connections.

**Social Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) social ecological systems theory focuses on the relationships between children and their environments as previously mentioned in chapter one. This theory helps educators understand how things in children’s life influence one another and how children develop and grow. Bronfenbrenner (1998) suggested that children cannot develop in isolation, but instead children’s development takes place within a complex system of dynamic interrelationships. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) belief was that everything in a child’s surrounding
environment and the child’s interactions with the environment influence how the child grows and develops.

The theory locates children’s development within the nest of social contexts and identifies five different levels of environment that affect children’s development directly and indirectly, including microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem is children’s immediate environment that they have direct social interactions and relationships, including their immediate families, caregivers, friends, teachers, or community members. Bronfenbrenner (1979) specifically called this system bi-directional because the relationships have impacts in both directions at this level. Children’s experiences or behaviors can directly affect their families and vice versa. The second immediate system is mesosystem that focuses on the interconnections between children’s microsystems such as relationships among children’s parents and teachers, and the interconnection affects children directly. The exosystem refers to the larger social system that children do not interact directly but nevertheless affects their experiences indirectly. Examples can be parents’ workplace, health and welfare services in the community where the families live, or parents’ social networks. The fourth level of the systems is the macrosystem comprised of cultural values, beliefs, customs, and the economy. The last system, chronosystem refers to the dimension of time that includes life transitions and environmental or historical events such as moving and residing in Canada. Since children’s development is closely tied to their interaction with surrounding environments, understanding the context of immigrant children’s environments and how it might affect them allows educators to create different approaches to enhance young immigrant children’s development. Moreover, this theory helps us to learn how we can improve children’s surrounding environment to better support their development.
Taken together, both holistic education theory and social ecological systems theory emphasize the importance of the connections and interrelationships between children and their surrounding environments. Because everything is interconnected and interwoven, one can affect another. Therefore, these theoretical frameworks allow me to look at dynamic interrelationships and interconnectedness between immigrant children and multiple surrounding environments and examine how each system impacts immigrant children’s development and learning.

**Immigration and Immigrant Children**

According to the United Nations (2013), the number of international migrants made up approximately 3.2% of the world population in 2013. The United Nations (2013) indicated that 232 million people in the world migrated and this was a 33% increase compared to the turn of the century -- 2000. Of these international migrants, 59% resided in the developed countries in 2013. Moreover, 53 million people migrated in North America and 9% of those migrants (4.77 million) were children and youth aged from 0 to 19. This record reflects global trends that a large number of people in the world including young children have been moving from one place to another and living outside of their countries of origin. Canada is a country that welcomes immigrants. In 2013, a total of 7,938,100 moved to Canada and approximately 10% of these migrants were children and youth aged from 0 to 19 (United Nations, 2013). Statistic Canada (2014) also revealed that over 1.1 million people who were born in foreign countries immigrated to Canada during five years from 2006 to 2011. Moreover, over 20% of the total population of Canada in 2011 was born in foreign countries, and a large number of immigrants were from Asian as well as the Middle East, and European countries. Over 200 languages, in addition to Canada’s official languages English or French, are spoken as mother tongues in Canada. These
statistics indicate that one out of five people in Canada was born outside of Canada. This also implies that Canada is an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse country.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, British Columbia is one of the popular destinations in Canada among many immigrants to come and reside temporarily or permanently. Of the large number of immigrants moving into British Columbia, 1,890 were young children age from 0 to 4 and 4,051 children were between the age of 5 and 14 in 2012 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013). Metropolitan areas in Canada and Metro Vancouver became home to over 88% of new immigrant children and their families between 2005 and 2009 (2013). Most children arrive as dependents of their families who immigrated to Canada as workers under the Economic immigration class while other children arrive under the Family class or Refugee class.

During the early years, children’s sense of identity begins to develop and children become aware of their bodies and who they are during their childhood and throughout life (Erikson, 1968). Many factors such as philosophy of life, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity influence one’s identity formation (1968). As children are exposed to more than one culture, especially when moving to a new country, ethnic identity development, apart from the development of sense of self, also emerges and becomes important to immigrant children’s development (Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000; Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity refers to a complex construct of one’s perceptions, feelings, behaviors, heritage, or sense of belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group within the larger society and it also evolves over time (Phinney, 1990; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). Phinney (2012) asserts that development of a healthy, positive sense of ethnic identity is crucial for immigrant children to cope with negative environmental forces that they may encounter in a new cultural setting.
It is important that young immigrant children develop a healthy ethnic identity and establish a connection to their home cultures in a new cultural setting. Guo and Dalli (2012) investigated Chinese immigrant children’s early learning experiences at predominantly English-speaking early childhood centers in New Zealand. The children who participated in the case study were between the age of 3 and 5 and their parents had immigrated from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan within the 10 years prior to the study. Using direct observation of each child for five days and semi-structured interview with the child, the parents, and their teachers for data collection, Guo and Dalli (2012) found that immigrant children’s use of family cultural tools, such as immigrant children’s mother tongue, played a crucial role in increasing their involvement in their learning experiences and intercultural practices, and became a bridge for relations with others in the English-speaking classrooms. For example, some Chinese children who were new to the center approached other Chinese children who had been in the center for a while by using the Chinese language to seek help so that they could understand what was happening in the center and join the activities. This study shows that connections to immigrant children’s home cultures and abilities to use their cultural tools in the classroom have strong effects on immigrant children’s learning experiences at preschools.

‘Culture’ can be fluid at best and defined by many different elements such as race, ethnicity, social economic factors, geography, geopolitics, religions, behaviors, and perceptions among others (Lynch, 1998; Ramsey, Williams, & Vold, 2003). When working with immigrant children in a complex, culturally diverse environment like Canada, there is a need for educators to be increasingly sensitive and respectful to immigrant children’s cultures (Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005; Gay, 2000; Landon-Billings, 1994). However, this may not be an easy task in reality because culture is a dynamic concept and cannot be easily defined and it is thus
fraught with social justice issues. When educators’ assumptions and stereotypes about cultures (e.g., educators’ assumptions of Latino parents being passive and less involved in their children’s education, as suggested by Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005) as well as gaps in cultural values or norms of educators and families towards children’s learning and development (e.g., what teachers expect their students to learn vs. what parents want their children to learn) come into play in addition to the complexity of cultures, it becomes more complicated and challenging tasks for educators (Bernhard, 2002; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud, & Lange, 1998).

The Role of Parents, Families, and Communities

Parents and families also play a crucial role in supporting immigrant children’s learning and development. Studies have found that immigrant families are less likely to enroll their children in childcare facilities, including preschools, compared to other native families (Brandon, 2004; Takanishi, 2004). Enrolling immigrant children in preschool has a positive impact on children’s development, and therefore, Magnuson, Lahaie, and Waldfogel (2006) advise that immigrant parents enroll their children in preschools. Magnuson et al. analyzed the data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey-Kindergarten Cohort of 1998-1999 (ECLS-K) to find the associations between immigrant children’s preschool attendance and their school readiness skills in the U.S. The nationally representative sample from ECLS-K used in this study was 12,626 children and 17% of this sample were immigrant children mostly from Hispanic or Asian countries. The scholars looked at immigrant children’s performance measured during the fall of kindergarten in order to find the associations and to investigate the effects of preschool attendance on immigrant children. The study found that attending preschool had a positive impact on immigrant children in relation to increasing reading and math skills as well as English-language proficiencies.
Leyendecker, Jakel, Kademoglu, and Yagmurlu (2010) examined the relationships between parent involvement at home and preschool children’s cognitive development among 52 Turkish immigrant and 65 German non-immigrant families in Western Germany. They found that preschool children’s early cognitive development was strongly linked to home literacy environment, positive parent involvement, and daily parent-child interactions and activities (Leyendecker et al., 2010). The mothers completed questionnaires on parenting behaviors such as involvement in their children’s daily life (e.g., asking a child about his or her day), positive parenting (e.g., praising), inconsistent parenting (e.g., threatening a child with a punishment but not executing it), or rigid discipline (e.g., spanking or yelling at a child). The bilingual interviewers visited participants’ homes to observe the home literacy environments and provided questionnaires on literacy practices at home. The parents were asked to keep their children’s daily activities and social experiences on time-diaries of 24-hour periods for a weekday and one day during the weekend along with a follow-up interview. Preschool children’s cognitive development such as memory, strategies, categories, and body knowledge was also examined. The study found Turkish immigrant preschool children scored lower on the cognitive assessment when compared to native Germany preschoolers; these results were associated with lower parental involvement. This study shows that how parents interact with their children and the kind of environment they create at home matters as it influences children’s development.

Communities and neighborhood have indirect influences on young children, yet they may play a vital role in supporting healthy development of young children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Connor & Brink, 1999). For instance, research shows that community contexts have an impact on children’s development and well-being as well as their school achievement (Boyle & Lipman, 1998; Georgiades, Boyle, & Duku, 2007; Kohen, Hertzman, & Brooks-Gunn, 1998). The
analysis of the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) revealed that living in disadvantaged neighborhoods and lower socio-economic status households was associated with behavioral problems such as hyperactivity among children aged 4-11 years (Boyle & Lipman, 1998). A later study, using NLSCY data, discovered that living in a neighborhood populated with other immigrant families had a positive impact on immigrant children’s emotional-behavioral problems (Georgiades, Boyle, & Duku, 2007). Kohen, Hertzman, and Brooks-Gunn (1998) also used NLSCY to investigate neighborhood influences on developmental competences of toddlers and preschool age children. They found that neighborhood safety and cohesion had an impact on preschoolers’ behavioral problems. When the neighborhood was rated unsafe, children tend to show higher behavioral problems. While neighborhood safety level was associated with children’s behavior problems, the study also revealed that neighborhood cohesion mediated the effects on the behavior problems. Having people willing to help in the neighborhood (i.e., neighborhood cohesion) seemed to lower the effects of unsafe neighborhood on children’s behavioral problems.

In Victoria, Australia, there is an initiative called “Best Start Project” under the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with the purpose of strengthening collaborative work between parents, families, schools, and communities while supporting young children’s development, well-being, and learning (Ollerenshaw, 2012). Local government, as well as non-government organizations, and agencies such as community agencies or local council has partnered with the Best Start Project. Ollerenshaw (2012) evaluated and examined the impact of one of the activities in this project, the Literacy Trails, which aimed to promote literacy and numeracy awareness among children and parents through this community-based program. The Literacy Trails annually offers two half-day events in the main shopping
area in the community and children from schools including preschools in the region participate in activities such as games, performances, and storytelling, focusing on literacy and numeracy. The community members from local business, agencies, and local senior citizen clubs come together and provide literacy and numeracy activities to the children. Using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, Ollerenshaw (2012) found that the Literacy Trails had positive impact on children’s literacy and numeracy awareness. The project seemed to have increased children’s interest in reading, writing, and counting. The study indicates that activities such as the Literacy Trails can bring children, parents, families, schools, and communities together to support children’s learning and development.

**The Role of Educators**

Educators interact directly with preschool children at the early learning setting; therefore, they play an important role when helping immigrant children learn and develop. Thus, it is imperative for teachers to develop a good understanding of immigrant students’ unique needs and challenges. One of the important roles of educators is to create a warm, supportive classroom environment for children to feel safe and comfortable (Boorn, Page, & Hopkins Dunn, 2010; Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009). Building and maintaining close, affective relationships with immigrant children is one of the most important aspects of fostering a supportive classroom environment (Baker, 2006; Goldstein, 1999; Jennings & Greenberg; 2009; Mortensen & Barnett, 2015; Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2015). Studies have indicated that close, strong relationships and interactions between teachers and children can enhance healthy development of young children - promoting their cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social development (Baker, 2006; Goldstein, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hamre et al., 2008; Jennings & Greenberg; 2009; Mortensen & Barnett, 2015; Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2015). Leyva, Weiland, Barata,
Yoshikawa, Snow, Treviño, and Rolla (2015) indicated in their quantitative study that teacher-student relationships, including providing emotional and instructional support had positive impact on Chilean prekindergarten students’ language, early writing, numeracy, and general cognitive development. A longitudinal study in Australia also suggested that close teacher-student relationships improved not only kindergarten children’s language skills but also their receptive language skills over time (Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2015). Another recent study in the U.S. revealed that consistency in prekindergarten teachers’ emotional support to their students was associated with positive teacher-student relationship and the consistency in emotionally supportive interactions had influences on students’ social competence and problem behaviors (Brock & Curby, 2014).

While close, strong, positive teacher-child relationships have positive effects on young children’s development, studies suggest that educators who teach culturally and ethnically diverse students may not be finding it easy to create such relationship with immigrant students due to cultural differences and language barriers (Gibbons, 2003; Sullivan, Hegde, Ballard, & Ticknor; 2014; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). A recent study by Sullivan and colleagues (2014) was conducted at selected public, full-day kindergartens where at least one non-English speaking student was enrolled in school across three rural counties in the eastern part of North Carolina in the US. In order to examine teachers’ relationships with English Language Learners (ELLs) and non-ELL students, 19 kindergarten lead teachers from 9 selected schools across the counties participated and completed the survey on student-teacher relationship as well as characteristic of teachers and classroom environment. After collecting data on 408 students, the researchers observed interactions and relationships between teachers and students in five classrooms. The
study revealed that teachers had closer relationships and more interactions with non-ELL students compared to ELL students.

Another essential role of educators is to become culturally sensitive and responsive to students with diverse backgrounds. There is a great need for educators to try to understand, value, and gain the knowledge of cultures that immigrant children originally came from and grew up with, and that they bring into the classroom (Akiba, 2007; Monzo & Rueda, 2001). Monzo and Rueda (2001) suggested that teachers’ knowledge of students’ cultures, primary languages, experiences, and communities could support and enhance immigrant students’ learning. The two-year study was conducted at two public elementary schools in Southern California serving over 90% of low-income, Latino students whose primary language was Spanish. Twenty-four Latino para-educators working with a specific class (and other classes if needed) as well as eight new Latino teachers were selected for this qualitative study. All participants’ primary language was Spanish and they learned English while attending U.S. schools. The research assistants observed and collected data of eight participants for approximately 45 minutes on 10 different occasions in the classroom when the para-educators or teachers were directly working with the students. The field notes on informal interactions during recess or break, primarily between para-educators and students, were also part of the data collection. Each participant was also interviewed, either at home or school, to explore their beliefs of teaching, learning, and the role of cultures and languages. The study revealed that all of the participants believed that knowledge and familiarity with cultures could help them relate to students, meet their needs, and interact with them in meaningful ways. In addition, the study indicated that getting to know more about students informally (e.g., spending recess time with students) fostered more interactions and connections to the students in school. Understanding
and valuing immigrant children’s cultures would be in fact a great way for teachers to develop close relationships with their students.

**Approaches to Supporting Immigrant Children**

Immigrant children bring rich, cultural diversity to the preschool classroom and educators have the responsibility to develop effective approaches to meet immigrant children’s needs by supporting their holistic development. This section elucidates some of the ways in which early childhood educators could support immigrant children’s learning and development in culturally, linguistically diverse preschool settings. Similar to Canadian contexts, New Zealand is also one of the diverse countries that welcome immigrant families, and early childhood educators in New Zealand have been making an effort to meet the needs of children and families including those from different cultural backgrounds. The national early childhood curriculum in New Zealand, *Te Whariki*, embraces cultural diversities as following:

The early childhood curriculum supports the cultural identity of all children, affirms and celebrates cultural differences, and aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures. Each early childhood education service should ensure that their programmes and resources are sensitive and responsive to the different cultures and heritages among the families of the children attending that service. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, p.18)

The curriculum supports the cultural and ethnic diversity, promotes culturally responsive teaching to include all children and families, and encourages teachers to interact with children in a responsive and reciprocal manner (1996).

*Culturally responsive teaching approach*. Culturally responsive teaching approach has similar concepts as the ones included in *Te Whariki*. This approach could be one of strategies to
support learning and development of diverse students. Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges and honors the diversity of children, connects students’ learning and experiences to their cultural knowledge and experiences, and empowers students holistically (Gay, 2000; Groulx & Silva, 2010; Landon-Billings, 1994). Durden, Escalante, and Blitch (2014) studied tools and resources that teachers working in two preschool classrooms composed of ethnically diverse children used to facilitate culturally responsive teaching practices. Teacher participants commented that child-centered interactions allowed students to explore the world based on their curiosity and this helped teachers learn who the child was through this practice. The researchers observed that teachers intentionally provided learning opportunities and materials (e.g., books, dramatic play, outdoor play) based on the students’ interests. Teachers also invited parents to join preschool activities such as nature walk. However, the researchers noted that none of the instructions and educational materials used for the activities was culturally relevant to the internationally diverse group of children. Durden and colleagues therefore suggested that teachers expand the activities, instructions, and materials to reflect the international diversity of their students’ languages and geography so that the activities become more culturally relevant to the students. However, in terms of classroom environment, the researchers positively noted that the teachers attempted to provide rich culturally and linguistically diverse classroom environment by putting a world map to show where everyone was from. The classroom also displayed pictures of children and their families with messages written in their native languages. Children were also encouraged to bring books from home to share in the classroom. The teachers consistently attempted to connect with the children and families to deepen their cultural knowledge and understanding.
In another study by Perlman, Kankesan, and Zhang (2008), preschool teachers in Toronto were found to be providing diversity-positive environments by providing toys and creating displays that were relevant to different cultures in order to promote awareness and positive attitudes towards diversity among students in the classrooms. This is beneficial for all children in the classroom since it promotes and increases children’s cultural and global awareness as well as their sense of belongings and being cared for (Perman et al., 2008). Furthermore, Durden and colleagues (2014) suggest that teachers need to be aware of not only children’s cultural identities but also their own, and constantly reflect upon how their identity can influence their teaching practice, in terms of how they see the children, and how they can use the cultural lenses of the children instead of their own in order to practice cultural sensitivity and connection.

**Multimodality.** Educators often express that it is not always easy to connect with the immigrant children because of language and cultural barriers (Baghban, 2007; Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009). Multimodality is a theory of communication that proposes that meaning is made and represented not only through spoken or written languages but also through different communicative modes such as visual forms, movement, gestures, or gaze (Kress, 2000; Kress; Jewitt, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Multimodality can become a useful approach for supporting young immigrant children because it can aid in getting to know students with limited English language ability by providing immigrant children with alternative tools to communicate their thoughts and ideas to educators. Some of the multimodal tools that can support immigrant children in expressing their voice include paintings, drawings, children’s books, storytelling, pretend play, and photography (Baghban, 2007; Keat et al., 2009; Kendrick & McKay, 2004). This approach also allows educators to see the point of views of the children and realize that the children are an important source of knowledge. In the qualitative study of Keat, Strickland, and
Marinak (2009), 15 immigrant preschool children were provided with a disposable camera to take pictures of what mattered to them in their life, and each child was provided an opportunity to talk about the pictures with the teacher for 5 minutes while a digital record taped the conversation for data analysis. The study indicated that photo-narration gave immigrant children a control to lead the conversation about the pictures in English, and the children shared their families, pets, or life outside of schools through their photographs. The immigrant children became the experts on the countries, cultures, and languages that teachers only knew little about. At the same time, the teachers developed understandings of who the children were through children’s lenses and voices. The study suggests that tools, such as a camera and storytelling, can be used to enhance communication between immigrant students and educators.

Some researchers focus on children’s drawings and illustrated stories as a means of communication for immigrant children with limited English language skills. As visual images that children produce are deeply tied to and convey their experiences, identities, and values into ways that verbal language may not be able to provide, researchers have been using children’s drawings, stories, and play narratives as an alternative medium to listen to young children’s voices (Hopperstad, 2010; Kendrick, 2005; Kendrick & McKay, 2004; Moskal, 2010). It would allow not only researchers but also educators to grasp insights of immigrant children’s knowledge, experiences, and their understandings of the world and to engage the children into a dialogue if appropriate. In the study of Moskal (2010), for example, the researcher provided an empirical example of the value of visual methods as a way for immigrant children to express their experiences. The researcher used drawings and mental maps along with interview as a research strategy to elicit experiences and a sense of belonging among 41 Polish migrant children in Scotland age 5 to 17. The children were asked to draw a map of places where they spend time
and a tree with roots connecting to things and/or people. The study found that there were many variations in the images that children produced including home, school, friends, Polish and Scottish flags, or playground. Interviewing children about their images helped the children to open up and talk about their stories. In addition, it allowed the researcher to become more perceptive and learn about children’s experiences and values through their images and stories. In another study, Ghiso and Low (2012) asked young immigrant children attending to the English learning summer program in the US to create comics as an alternative way to articulate their experiences of immigration. With immigrant children age 7 and 8, the researchers and the children read and discussed about picture books regarding immigration before creating comics. The study indicated that creating comics as an alternative way provided an opportunity with immigrant children to represent their journeys to the US as well as their feelings and social and cultural contexts through illustrated stories accompanied with some written texts. For instance, an eight-year-old Indian girl created a story of her uncle’s death across distances and flying back home to attend the funeral in six sequence panels. It showed a cultural event such as cremation in India and her feelings such as grief of losing her uncle and excitement at flying home.

**Connecting home and school.** Furthermore, culturally responsive teaching encourages educators to create a bridge between home and school and provides children with meaningful learning and experiences (Gay, 2000). Allowing immigrant children to use their family cultural tools in the classroom, for example, by using their native languages at school, is one of the approaches that educators can use in the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom settings (Guo & Dalli, 2012). Research has indicated that healthy development and well-being of children from culturally diverse backgrounds is related to their first language development (Nemeth, 2009). Children’s first language is closely tied to their identity; therefore, educators
should be encouraged to invite children to use their first language in the classroom. If children’s English is limited, teachers can use alternative communication tools as used in the study of Keat et al. (2009) to communicate with immigrant children, learn simple words in the children’s home languages, and to make connections with the children and their cultures.

As holistic education theory and social ecological systems theory that acknowledge interpersonal relationship and connectedness among children, educators, parents, and community is vital for supporting children’s learning and development. Not only educators, but also families and communities, play significant roles in children’s development; therefore, another important approach is involving families and communities in children’s learning and establishing partnerships with families and communities (Buchori & Dobinson, 2015). Teachers can invite parents, families, and community members to school activities. For example, teachers who participated in the study of Durden, Escalante, and Blitch (2014) planned a family night to invite families to a nature walk with the children. In addition, the teacher invited a Chinese teacher from the local institute once a week to the school to teach children the language and culture and to observe children’s interests in learning different cultures. Moreover, kindergarten teachers in New Zealand created each child’s portfolio and made it available to the parents as a tool for sharing knowledge and understanding what was happening in schools (Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005). In the Tri-Cities region of British Columbia many immigrant mothers who participated in a study indicated that language was a major barrier, they suggested that having a bilingual teacher or someone who could translate in their mother tongue could increase their understanding and participations (Poureslami et al., 2013). Mothers also indicated that they hoped that teachers could create a space for sharing cultural heritage with the students. Teachers can find volunteers in the community who share the same culture and language and ask them to
interpret the conversation or translate materials into different languages. Furthermore, teachers can invite community members to school to share the cultural stories with preschool children in order to raise the awareness of cultures in the community.

Summary

In this chapter, I examined studies to identify the roles and the impact of parents, families, communities, and educators on immigrant preschool children’s development and learning. Additionally, I presented a review of international studies on how educators who are working with preschool children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are supporting those children’s development and learning in their classrooms. The studies presented in this chapter made it clear how important and influential children’s surrounding environments can be for immigrant children’s development. Moreover, the review of literature emphasized the importance of relationships among children, educators, parents, and communities for enhancing immigrant children’s healthy development and well-being. In chapter three, I connect research findings to classroom practices and I develop strategies, based on the findings, to support immigrant children’s learning and development that teachers can utilize in their diverse settings.
CHAPTER THREE: CONNECTIONS TO PRACTICE

In this chapter, I connect the reviewed literature addressing role of children’s social contexts; including their home, school, and communities, and approaches for supporting immigrant children, to teacher’s classroom practices. Based on theories and the review of literature in the previous chapter, interrelationships and interconnectedness between immigrant children and their social contexts play a significant role in children’s development and learning. However, studies have revealed that educators may find it difficult to connect with students from diverse cultural background due to cultural and language barriers, and therefore they may struggle to identify and meet the needs of immigrant students (Gibbons, 2003; Sullivan, Hegde, Ballard, & Ticknor; 2014; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). It is important that educators who are working with immigrant students become culturally responsive, and develop their knowledge and understanding on how to connect and build close relationships with diverse students. Below, I propose strategies that educators could apply in their classroom in order to support immigrant preschool children’s holistic development and learning. This chapter provides suggestions and approaches informed by the literature reviewed with the purpose of supporting educators in building strong, positive relationships with immigrant preschool students in culturally and linguistically-diverse preschool settings.

Moreover, this chapter also includes a description of a professional development workshop (Appendix A) for teachers who work with preschool students from culturally and linguistically-diverse background in urban preschool settings. The proposed workshop aims to increase early childhood educators’ awareness of how children’s social contexts and surrounding environment affects their holistic development and learning in preschools.
Approaches to Supporting Immigrant Preschool Children

Based on the review of literature, I propose three main strategies to support educators in understanding the needs and in connecting meaningfully with immigrant children. Understanding the needs of immigrant children, including recognizing their needs are unique and that they need emotional support, is the first important approach for educators seeking to build a close relationship with immigrant children. I also provide suggestions on how to create a culturally responsive classroom environment, and on how to enhance family and school partnerships in order to support the holistic development of immigrant preschool children.

Understand Each Child and Build a Close Relationship

Research has identified that positive interactions and close relationships between teachers and immigrant students can significantly affect children’s learning, development, and well-being. Therefore, it is necessary for educators to be able to connect with immigrant preschool children and understand who the child is in order to recognize and respond to immigrant children’s unique needs (Baker, 2006; Goldstein, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hamre et al., 2008; Jennings & Greenberg; 2009; Leyva et al., 2015; Mortensen & Barnett, 2015; Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2015). Knowing a student is one of the important roles of educators and it helps educators connect with their students (Hargreaves, 1998). Knowing and understanding an individual child through continuous close observation and interactions enables educators to learn the cultural uniqueness of the child instead of stereotyping immigrant children into presumed cultural boxes (Learning and Teaching Resources Branch, 2005). It is important to emphasize that knowing a student is an on-going process rather than a one-time survey such as asking the child’s name and the county the child is from at the beginning of a school year. Getting to know
and understand a child is a lot more complex and challenging process for educators, and it requires time and ongoing effort (Bennet, Rowe, & DeLuca, 1996).

From the literature review, multimodality has emerged as an approach that can aid the educator in getting to know a child. Despite language barriers, teachers can provide different modalities for expression (e.g., photography, drawings, or illustrated storytelling) through which immigrant children can explore and express their worlds, as well as their thoughts and feelings, by using communication tools other than by using the oral or written language of the dominant culture. Similar to the approach taken in the study of Keat et al. (2009), teachers can send digital cameras home with the children and ask them to take pictures of their families and favorite places, food, or things they do at home. By providing children with tools to document their home lives, teachers could learn more about the child’s family and culture, as well as the meaning making process from the immigrant children’s perspectives by closely listening to children’s stories about their pictures. Keat et al. (2009) also suggest that sharing photos provides immigrant children a space to use English meaningfully and develop their English language skill when they describe the photos. At the same time, the images in the photos act as a visual communication tool that supports the conversation.

After children bring the cameras back to the classroom, teachers can invite an individual student and ask the child to share the stories about the pictures while looking at them together or uploading them on the computer. Creating a ‘genuine encounter’, or giving a focused attention with intense interest, may enhance children’s willingness to be open and talk with teachers (Keat et al., 2009). The activity helps immigrant children feel that their teachers are interested in their life and in what they have to say. The conversation between immigrant children and teachers not only helps teachers understand the immigrant child but also promotes immigrant children’s
English language learning and a closer relationship with teachers (Keat et al., 2009). However, the study authors cautioned against the ‘tsunami of words’. Some teachers with good intentions of helping and inviting the students to the conversation offered too many words to the children and asked too many questions. This, in turn, caused, immigrant children to become quieter (Keat et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important that teachers provide enough time and space for children to describe and explain their photos. It was also suggested that children lead conversation at their own pace while teachers act as attentive listeners.

In addition, educators could incorporate and promote other multimodal tools such as drawing and illustrated stories more regularly into their classroom. Educators could ask immigrant children to draw things, people, or places that are important to them or carefully observe and approach children with questions while they are engage in drawing (Moskal, 2010). In addition, educators could create books with the students (Ghiso & Low, 2012). Children’s drawings and stories can become tools for educators to gain an access to immigrant children’s experiences, knowledge, and understanding of the world. It is important for educators to become active listeners while children are creating meanings so that immigrant children’s voices can be heard.

Establish a Culturally Responsive Approach and Supportive Classroom Environment

A culturally responsive teaching approach acknowledges and honors the cultural diversity of all children, emphasizes the importance of including children’s cultural references in learning, and uses the child’s cultural knowledge to make learning and experiences more appropriate and meaningful to children particularly those from different cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Cultural responsiveness refers to the ability to learn from cultures and includes our own culture as well as the culture of others and includes the ability to develop an
open mind and attitude toward our differences and uniqueness, and honoring and relating to cultures including our own and others (Dean, 1996). Therefore, becoming a culturally responsive teacher first requires educators to increase their self-awareness and to critically reflect on their own cultures, perceptions, and biases so that they can see how their own cultural beliefs, identities, and biases are influencing their behavior and interactions with children (Barrera & Corso, 2003; Chen, Nimmo, & Heather, 2009; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sanchez, 1995). For example, educators can consistently ask themselves if they are aware of their own cultural identity or history and reflect on how that may affect their teaching practices (Chen et al., 2009). In order to become familiar with children’s cultures and to meaningfully develop a culturally responsive classroom, educators should also reach out to their children’s families to learn more about the children’s “cultural funds of knowledge,” which allows educators to see children’s accumulated experiences and knowledge gained outside of school as well as different ways of being, knowing, and communicating that are unique to different cultures and families (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). It is however important to note that becoming culturally responsive may not be an easy task for educators due to the dynamics and complexity of cultures.

It is also important that teachers increase cultural awareness among preschool students in the classrooms so that they can support young children’s cultural identities and help them develop a positive cultural awareness towards their own and others (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). The knowledge of immigrant children and their cultures that teachers gain through conversations with the children and families can be shared in many different ways with other children in the classroom. For example, in order to share the knowledge and raise cultural awareness and understanding, teachers can use circle time to have each student introduce the
pictures that they have taken at home or their drawings, and share the stories with other students in the class. Through such sharing students can learn about each other’s culture and life outside of school (Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009; Moskal, 2010). Some immigrant children may not feel comfortable talking in front of other children and using English. To support these children, teachers should assist by helping with the description of the pictures (modeling language). In addition, teachers can display the children’s drawings or pictures on bulletin boards or make a photo gallery so that the students in the classroom can look at the photographs and/or drawings and talk about each other’s representations (Durden, Escalante, & Blitch, 2014).

A culturally responsive teaching approach can be used in culturally and linguistically-diverse classroom settings in order to include all children and support each child’s cultural identity (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). A culturally responsive approach uses child-centered learning, which is effective for understanding who the child is and knowing how teachers can best support the child in the classroom (Durden et al., 2014). Teachers observe and identify children’s interests, and incorporate the topics that children are interested in exploring into the classroom activities. A culturally responsive approach also builds upon children’s knowledge about cultures. When planning activities, it is important that teachers intentionally create and situate the activities within students’ cultural context (Durden et al., 2014). Teachers can prepare materials and resources that are not only relevant to the topics but also to cultures (Durden et al., 2014; Perlman, Kankesan, & Zhang, 2008). For example, if children are interested in weather patterns, teachers could do some research on local and global weather patterns including the children and their families’ countries of origin prior to implementing the activities.
As stated in *Te Whariki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), the early childhood education programs need to be sensitive and relevant to the cultures and heritages of children. In order to value the cultural diversity and create a supportive classroom environment, teachers can make classroom materials and resources inclusive of cultural and linguistic diversity so that children have opportunities to be exposed to different cultures and deepen their cultural understanding. For instance, teachers can offer a classroom library that includes books that are culturally and linguistically-diverse or that children bring from home to share with classmates (Durden et al., 2014). One of the teachers in Durden’s study commented on children’s excitement of looking at books in different languages despite the fact that they were not able to read the books (Durden et al., 2014). In addition, teachers could display a world map to show children’s original birthplace. Teachers can also display family photos of each child and ask parents to write names and messages in English and their native languages to promote children’s sense of belonging and increasing their cultural awareness (Durden et al., 2014).

Instead of having an “English only” rule in the classroom, the classroom can become a place that supports children’s cultural identities by inviting the use of diverse languages. It is also recommended that teachers try learning simple greetings words in different languages from immigrant children in order to show that they are interested in who the children are and what languages they use.

**Build and Embrace Family and Community Partnerships**

As research has identified, immigrant families are less likely to enroll their children in childcare facilities; although enrolling immigrant children in childcare facilities has positive impact on their development and learning (Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006). The reasons behind immigrant children’s lower enrollment and lower parental involvement in school have
been identified by numerous studies, and the language barrier and communication challenges are the major obstacles (Brandon, 2004; Poureslami et al., 2013; Takanishi, 2004). Many immigrant parents who participated in the study in the Tri-Cities region of British Columbia suggested advertising strategies in different languages other than English (Poureslami et al., 2013). Thus, teachers could promote and increase the enrollment and parental participations by providing school information translated in different languages or having volunteers and parents from different cultural backgrounds who have already enrolled in school help new immigrant parents during open school or school activities (Poureslami et al., 2013). Further, teachers should ensure that all school/pre-school-based information is available to immigrant parents in the parents’ first languages to establish and ensure open communication with them.

*Te Whariki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) acknowledges the significance of social contexts for child’s well being, therefore, it emphasizes the partnerships between teachers, families, and communities. *Te Whariki* is consisted of four core principles: empowerment, holistic development, family and community, relationships; and five strands: well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration. Principles and strands are interwoven to provide a curriculum framework for early childhood educators to support diverse young children’s learning and development. In order to help educators assess and capture children’s learning as proposed in *Te Whaariki*, Learning Stories, linked with five learning dispositions connected to the strands of the curriculum, was created (Carr, 2001). Learning Stories are widely used in New Zealand as an assessment strategy to observe and document children’s learning and development, and to analyze and write narrative ‘stories’ of children along with images and artifacts in early childhood education settings (Carr & Lee, 2012). Utilizing Learning Stories as portfolios can become another useful tool for educators as a way to connect and communicate
particularly with immigrant families as Learning Stories are shared with the families and invite them to participate in the process of assessment and planning for further learning experiences. Learning Stories can engage parents and families in their children’s learning at school and encourage them to share what their children are learning at home. Involving parents and families in assessment process and reflections also enables educators to gain family’s input about their children’s interests and strengths, as well as cultural background and beliefs (Education Review Office, 2008).

Teacher-parent/family communication can be achieved by talking with the parents during drop-off and after school or offering a gathering event where teachers and parents can casually socialize and get to know each other. In addition, teachers can offer informal information sessions for immigrant parents where teachers can share Canadian cultures or parenting styles and tips in a less intimidating manner (Leyendecker, Jakel, Kademoglu, & Yagmurlu, 2010). Bilingual teachers, school staff, volunteers, and parents can also help with translating or explaining the information in different languages to help immigrant parents understanding. Additionally, teachers can invite immigrant parents to participate in school activities so that the parents can see how and what their children are doing in class. When planning activities that children learn about Canadian cultures or their communities, teachers can encourage immigrant parents to be involved so that they can also learn about cultures, the communities and community resources together with their children. Furthermore, teachers can ask immigrant parents and their families to come to the class to talk about their cultures and stories if they feel comfortable in order to share the cultural heritage with other children and raise cultural awareness (Poureslami et al., 2013).
Studies suggest that community contexts affect immigrant children’s learning and development; teachers can become actively involved in community development to support community well-being (Boyle & Lipman, 1998; Kohen, Georgiades, Boyle, & Duku, 2007; Hertzman, & Brooks-Gunn, 1998). For example, teachers could address the safety issues in the neighborhood and educate community members how it could affect children’s behavioral problems and well-being (Kohen, Hertzman, & Brooks-Gunn, 1998). By doing so, teachers and the community can work together and improve safety levels in the community. In addition, teachers can invite community members, for example, local police and firefighters to talk about their jobs and safety with the class.

A strong connection with the local community enables teachers to learn and collect information about community resources such as a community center, library, or healthcare facilities so that teachers can share the information with immigrant parents. In addition, teachers can use the resources for the curriculum. For instance, teachers can plan a fieldtrip with preschool students to visit facilities in the community such as a public library for story time or a community park for a picnic or activities. It would be a great opportunity to encourage immigrant parents to take part in so that they can also learn about the community resources together and how they can use them with their children. For example, teachers can find a library where they have books available in many different languages, take their students and parents to the library to explore, and demonstrate how they can use the community facility (e.g., making a library card, borrowing books) (Durden et al., 2014).

Thus, through closely working together with the local community, teachers, students and families can participate in community events to become a part of the community and develop children’s sense of belonging to the community (Ollerenshaw, 2012).
**Professional Development Workshop**

*“Supporting Immigrant Preschool Children: Effective Approaches”*

The purpose of this capstone project is to assist preschool teachers who currently work with children from diverse backgrounds in supporting immigrant children’s holistic development and learning. Thus, I have designed a professional development workshop (Appendix A) that shares important theories and research findings with early childhood educators, suggests effective approaches for the educators to support their immigrant preschool children, and encourages them to foster a culturally relevant teaching and create a supportive environment. I have also created a brochure (Appendix B) that summarizes information from the workshop and works as an educator’s guide. The goal of the proposed workshop and brochures is to assist early childhood educators to be able to develop their own effective approaches for supporting immigrant preschool children in their culturally and linguistically-diverse classroom settings.

In part one of the workshop, I provide an opportunity for educators to share their prior or current experiences working with immigrant preschool children, and I share my own experiences and purposes of my capstone project and the workshop. Next, current global and Canadian immigration trends are provided. In part two of the workshop, I start with introducing important theories that shaped and guided my project. Next, the term ethnic identity is defined. Then, the current research on the roles of parents and families, communities, and educators is presented. In part three of the workshop, I will describe the strategies which early childhood educators used to support immigrant children in research studies. In addition, I will suggest effective approaches that educators could utilize in their classrooms. At the end of the workshop, I will provide time for the participants to share their thoughts and discuss new ways, which they might use in order to support their immigrant preschool students.
Summary

In this chapter, I connected the reviewed literature to ideas and approaches that educators could utilize in their culturally and linguistically-diverse preschool settings in order to support immigrant preschool children’s holistic development and learning. I provided some examples that would help educators connect with a child, families, and communities. This chapter also described a professional development workshop and brochures that address the important roles of educators, parents and families, and communities, and suggest approaches that educators could use to create a supportive environment for immigrant preschool children. In the following chapter, I reflect on what I learned through this project and suggest recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Current literature on the role of educators, parents, families, and communities in supporting young immigrant children’s learning has provided me with new understandings of the importance of the interrelationships between immigrant children and their surrounding social environment. As well, I learned how these interrelationships could make a significant impact on immigrant preschool children’s holistic development. Moreover, the literature addressing the ways in which early childhood educators support immigrant children in culturally and linguistically-diverse settings has underscored how important it is to embrace and support each child’s cultural identity in the classroom by creating teaching approaches and resources that are responsive to diversity and difference (Gay, 2000; Groulx & Silva, 2010; Landon-Billings, 1994; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996).

More importantly, holistic education theory (Miller, 1992) and social ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) have enabled me to recognize how everything in a child’s life is interconnected. Therefore, I would claim that there is urgency for educators, families, and communities to work as a whole for the benefit of children from multicultural/multilingual backgrounds. This project has challenged me to develop implications from the literature with the purpose of offering early childhood educators practical suggestions on how to create culturally responsive pedagogy in culturally and linguistically-diverse classrooms. In this final chapter, I reflect on what I have learned throughout this capstone project, and conclude this project with recommendations for the education policy and ECE training programs and suggestions for future research.
Reflections and Recommendations for Policy and ECE Training Programs

Having experienced being an international student myself and working with immigrant preschool children inspired me to explore the current literature on young immigrant children’s preschool experiences. I was particularly intrigued by my practicum experience with the Chinese immigrant student discussed earlier and I was determined to investigate and identify approaches that support young immigrant preschool children in early childhood settings. My primary goal in this project was to create an opportunity for early childhood educators working with immigrant children to reflect on their own teaching experiences and to suggest strategies based on research so that educators can use them as a reference to design their own teaching approaches. In order to reach out to educators and make an impact on the ways to support immigrant children, I would contact each school district or post flyers at local facilities (e.g., library, coffee shop) to invite educators and school administrators who may be interested in attending the workshop. Additionally, I would use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to spread the word and get more educators involved. Working with immigrant children is not easy especially when we do not share the same cultural backgrounds. My hope is that this project initiates conversations among education policy makers, communities, and educators by raising the awareness of the responsibilities that early childhood education holds to support not only Canadian born students but also students from other countries. I argue that early childhood educators need to be given the tools to support immigrant children in the classroom and work with immigrant parents, families, and local communities in order to embrace the multiculturalism that makes Canada such a successful society. Immigrants compose a minimum of fifty percent of the Canadian social patchwork; current immigrants come from very different places and social religious backgrounds than those who immigrated to Canada in the past. Thus, dramatic improvements in
understanding the composition of the cultural and ethnical diversity of the contemporary classroom are necessary. To ensure that curriculum does not produce a marginalized group of children, I propose that a culturally responsive approach needs to start at preschool with educators, families, and communities because immigrant children have unique challenges and needs that may hinder their development if not responded to.

It is my concern that early childhood educators in culturally diverse countries may be working with immigrant children without acknowledging the cultural diversity and without knowing how to support immigrant children’s development. I argue that early childhood educators working in culturally and linguistically-diverse countries, such as Canada, must be educated and provided with opportunities to learn more about immigrant children’s unique needs, including knowledge of the ways to create a supportive, diversity-positive environment for young immigrant children where they feel safe and comfortable. It is imperative that early childhood education educational programs prepare educators to become sensitive and responsive to the cultures of children and to be able to intentionally provide meaningful learning opportunities as well as culturally relevant materials and resources with immigrant children.

Through the review of the literature, it became apparent that educators needed to become more conscious of their own cultural identity at first so that they are better positioned to see and understand the cultural lenses of children. However, it is also important for educators to be aware that becoming culturally responsive may be challenging as culture is changing, dynamic and complex and may not be easily defined (Bernhard, 2002; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud, & Lange, 1998). This suggests that on-going professional development workshops and training to discuss the multiple meanings of culture and to have educators examine and reflect on their assumptions and biases about cultures.
I propose that education policy and ECE training programs ensure that educators are given learning opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge to support immigrant children and to team up with immigrant families and communities. I also suggest that education policy and ECE training programs guide educators to make programs and resources sensitive and relevant to the cultures of their students. Moreover, I highly recommend that policy makers, ECE training programs, school administrators, and educators gather periodically to learn about classroom ethnic composition at preschools and to develop tools and strategies that are appropriate to the cultures of students in order to support immigrant preschool children’s development.

**Areas for Further Research**

Although the review of literature has provided me with a growing understanding of how an immigrant child’s surrounding environment affects the child’s development and how early childhood educators may be able to support immigrant children, the ECE field still lacks studies regarding young immigrant children. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013) and Statistics Canada (2014), Canada is one multi-cultural diverse country where immigrant population represents more than 200 countries; however, the numbers of Canadian studies with a focus on immigrant children from many different cultural backgrounds is still small (Beiser, Armstrong, Ogilvie, Oxman-Martinez, & Rummens, 2005; Crowe, 2006; Li, 2007).

For example, while searching for studies on immigrant children during this project, I came across many studies from the U.S. The majority of studies on immigrant children in the U.S. have focused on Hispanic and Asian children and low income immigrant families. However, immigrant children in Canada are not only from Hispanic and Asian origins, but also from European, African, and other origins (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013). Additionally, socioeconomic status (SES) might be different between immigrants in the U.S. and
Canada because immigrants to Canada arrive under many different circumstances and with different SES backgrounds. This suggests a need for additional research on young immigrant children from different cultural backgrounds within the Canadian context.

Moreover, studies tend to focus on school-age immigrant children, while there is less research with a focus on preschool and kindergarten-age immigrant children. Therefore, more research on preschool and kindergarten-age immigrant children is required if appropriate teaching approaches to support young immigrant children is to be identified. Additionally, since children’s family and communities play a significant role of children’s development and learning, future research might examine how early childhood educators can effectively work together with immigrant families and the local community to support immigrant children’s development and learning.

Conclusions

Everything in a child’s life matters and affects the child. This study allowed me to explore the literature on strategies that early childhood educators could use in order to assist immigrant children’s development and learning in culturally diverse preschools. One-size-fits-all education does not appear to work, especially for immigrant children who have unique needs. Researching and reflecting on my experiences, it became evident that early childhood educators need to be educated to become sensitive and responsive to the cultures of children as well as their own.

Through this capstone project, I found strategies, such as utilizing culturally responsive approaches and multimodal communication tools to understand immigrant children. I also discovered the importance of inviting both immigrant families and community members to be
involved in children’s learning. Additionally, I discovered the importance of building strong relationships with immigrant children, families, and communities.

I encourage educators, including myself, to continue exploring and developing a variety of strategies to support immigrant children by reviewing current studies or exchanging experiences with other educators. It is my hope that this capstone project helps early childhood educators develop their own approaches in providing a diversity-positive classroom environment where immigrant children feel safe, welcomed, and encouraged to explore the world around them to reach their potential.
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Appendix A
Professional Development Workshop

SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Keiko Tanaka
Today’s Agenda

① Purpose of the Workshop & Your Experiences
② Immigration in the World & Canada
③ Important Theories/Concepts
④ Findings from Literature Review
⑤ Strategies to Supporting Immigrant Children
⑥ Comments, Questions

Go over “Today’s Agenda” with educators
1. **My Experiences & Purpose of the Workshop**
   - Share my experience working with a Chinese student at Washington State University.
     - How she was doing at the beginning of school and how she grew throughout the semester
     - My journey and struggles
   - Research question
   - Explain the purpose of the capstone and the workshop
Share Your Experiences

◆ Introduce yourself & learn about others 😊
  - name, your nationality, how long you have been teaching etc

◆ Share your experiences working with immigrant students
  • How are you supporting immigrant students and their families?
  • Struggles?

Activity
- Assign educators in small groups.
- Educators introduce themselves to others and share their teaching stories in a small group.
- Ask a few educators to share their stories with a whole group.
Global Trends

- In 2013, the number of international migrants made up approximately **3.2% of the world population**
- **232 million** people in the world migrated
- **53 million** people migrated in **North America**
  - **4.77 million** were children age from 0 to 19

2. Immigration in the World & Canada
   - Have educators guess how many people migrated in the world in 2013
   - Review the global trends
   - More people are moving from one place to the other
   - The United Nations (2013) indicated that 232 million people in the world migrated and this was a 33% increase compared to the year of 2000
   - Moreover, 53 million people migrated in North America and 9% of those migrants (4.77 million) were children age from 0 to 19
Review the immigration statistics in Canada

- A large number of immigrants were from Asian, including the Middle East, and European countries
- Over 200 languages are spoken as mother tongue in Canada
- British Columbia in 2012: Metro Vancouver became home to over **88% of new immigrant children and their families** between 2005 & 2009
3. Important Theories/Concepts

- These two theories have important concepts; areas of child development are interconnected and everything in a child’s surrounding environment is interrelated.
- One can affect the other.
- Great emphasis on personal relationships: relationships between mind and body, between the individual and the community, or among various skills and knowledge (Miller, 1996).
- Holistic education emphasizes connections beyond the classroom; it values connections between the school and neighborhood community (Miller, 2010).
- Children cannot develop in isolation - children’s development takes place within a complex system of dynamic interrelationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1998).
Review the concept of ethnic identity
- As children are exposed to more than one culture, especially when moving to a new country, ethnic identity development, apart from the development of sense of self, also emerges and becomes important to immigrant children’s development (Phinney, 1990; Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000)

**Ethnic Identity**

- A complex construct of one’s perceptions, feelings, behaviors, heritage, or sense of belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group within the larger society.

- Evolves over time

- Developing a healthy, positive sense of ethnic identity is crucial for immigrant children to cope with negative environmental forces that they may encounter in a new cultural setting.

(Phinney, 1990; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001)
Roles of Parents, Families, & Communities:

◆ How parents and families affect immigrant children’s development?
  ◆ Enrolling their children in preschool instead of keeping them at home
  ◆ How parents interact with their children and create an environment at home matters
    (Leyendecker, Jakel, Kademoglu, & Yagmurlu, 2010; Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006)

◆ How communities affect immigrant children’s development?
  ◆ Community contexts (e.g., neighborhood safety and cohesion)
  ◆ Community events & involvement

4. Research Findings
Roles of Parents and Families
- Immigrant families are less likely to enroll their children in childcare facilities, compared to other native families (Brandon, 2004; Crosnoe, 2004; Takanishi, 2004)
- Enrolling immigrant children in preschool has a positive impact on children’s development (Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006): reading, math skills, English proficiencies.
- Early cognitive development was linked to home literacy environment, positive parent involvement, daily parent-child interactions and activities (Leyendecker et al., 2010)

Roles of Communities
- Community contexts have an impact on children’s development and well-being as well as their school achievement (Boyle & Lipman, 1998; Kohen et al., 1998).
- Living in disadvantaged neighborhoods and lower socio-economic status households was associated with behavioral problems such as hyper activity (Boyle & Lipman, 1998)
- Living in a neighborhood populated with other immigrant families had a positive impact on immigrant children’s emotional-behavioral problems (Georgiades, Boyle, & Duku, 2007)
- Neighborhood safety and cohesion had an impact on preschoolers’ behavioral problems (Kohen, Hertzman, & Brooks-Gunn, 1998)
- Ollerenshaw (2012) found that the Literacy Trails (community events) had positive impact on children’s literacy and numeracy awareness ➔ The event will be discussed in detail later.
Roles of Educators

- Understanding immigrant students’ unique needs and challenges
- Creating a warm, supportive classroom environment for their students to feel safe and comfortable
- Building and maintaining close, affective relationships with immigrant children
- Being culturally sensitive and responsive to the students with diverse backgrounds
  - Teachers’ knowledge of students’ cultures, primary languages, experiences, and communities could support and enhance immigrant students’ learning

(Baker, 2006; Boorn, Dunn, & Page, 2010; Brock & Curby, 2014; Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009; Goldstein, 1999; Jennings & Greenberg; 2009; Leyva, Weiland, Barata, Yoshikawa, Snow, Treviño, & Rolla, 2015; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Mortensen & Barnett, 2015; Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2015)

Roles of Educators

- Close, strong relationships and interactions between teachers and children
  - Enhance healthy development of young children; promoting their cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social development (Baker, 2006; Goldstein, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hamre et al., 2008; Jennings & Greenberg; 2009; Mortensen & Barnett, 2015; Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2015).
  - Providing emotional and instructional support had positive impact on Chilean prekindergarten students’ language, early writing, numeracy, and general cognitive development (Leyva, Weiland, Barata, Yoshikawa, Snow, Treviño, & Rolla, 2015)
  - Improved not only kindergarten children’s language skills but also their receptive language skills over time (Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2015)
  - Consistency in emotionally supportive interactions had influences on students’ social competence and problem behaviors (Brock & Curby, 2014).

*Research found that building a close relationship with immigrant students is not easy (Gibbons, 2003; Sullivan, Hegde, Ballard, & Ticknor; 2014; Youngs & Youngs, 2001)

- Become culturally sensitive and responsive to students with diverse backgrounds
  - Teachers’ knowledge of students’ cultures, primary languages, experiences, and communities could support and enhance immigrant students’ learning. (Monzo & Rueda, 2001)
How can we support our immigrant preschoolers?

5. Strategies to Supporting Immigrant Preschool Children
“The early childhood curriculum supports the cultural identity of all children, affirms and celebrates cultural differences, and aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures. Each early childhood education service should ensure that their programmes and resources are sensitive and responsive to the different cultures and heritages among the families of the children attending that service.”
1. Understand Each Child AND Build a Close Relationship

• “Knowing” a student helps educators connect with the student.
  
  (Hargreaves, 1998)
  
  ➢ What does it mean “knowing” a student?
  ➢ How can we get to “know” our students?

• Research has identified...
  “Educators often express that it is not always easy to connect with the immigrant children because of language and cultural barriers”
  (Baghban, 2007; Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009)

Strategy 1 – understanding each child and building a close relationship

- Have educators discuss two questions (i.e., what does it mean knowing a student, how can we get to know our students)
- Knowing a student requires time and ongoing effort
- NOT one-time survey at the beginning of a school year
- Through continuous close observation and interactions
**Multimodality**

Meanings are made and represented not only through spoken or written languages but also different communicative modes such as visual forms, movement, gestures, or gaze (Kress, 2000; Kress & Jewitt, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001)

Provide alternative communication tools with immigrant children to explore and express their worlds, thoughts and feelings

**Examples**
- Photography
- Drawings
- Illustrated Stories
- Yours??

(Ghiso & Low, 2012; Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009; Moskal, 2010)

Review the concept of Multimodality
- Theory of communication that proposes that meaning is made and represented not only through spoken or written languages but also through different communicative modes such as visual forms, movement, gestures, or gaze (Kress, 2000; Kress; Jewitt, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001)
- Examples: photography, drawings, illustrated stories
Example: Photography

• A camera is a multimodal communication tool
• Provide children with disposal/digital cameras
• Children will bring it home and take pictures of things that matters to them (e.g., favorite places, people, food, things to do outside of school)
• Helps immigrant children to express their thoughts and world without using English
• A great tool for educators to explore immigrant children’s world, their cultures
  (Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009)

Example: Photography (Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009)

- Children were provided with a disposal camera to take pictures of what mattered to them and each child was given time to talk about the pictures with the teacher.
- The study indicated that photo-narration gave immigrant children a control to lead the conversation about the pictures in English, and the children shared their families, pets, or life outside of schools through their photographs
- The teachers developed understandings of who the children were through children’s lenses and voices.
- Sharing photos provides immigrant children a space to use English meaningfully and develop their English language skill when they describe the photos.
- The images in the photos act as a visual communication tool that supports the conversation.
2. Establish a Culturally Responsive Approach and Supportive Classroom Environment

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**
- Acknowledges and honors the diversity,
- Connects students’ learning and experiences to their cultural knowledge and experiences
- Empowers students holistically
- Provides diversity-positive environments

(Gay, 2000; Groulx & Silva, 2010; Landon-Billings, 1994; Perlman, Kankesan, & Zhang, 2008)

**Strategy 2 – establishing a culturally responsive approach and supportive classroom environment**

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**
- Culturally responsive teaching approach has similar concepts as the ones included in *Te Whariki*: honoring and celebrating the diversity, increasing a positive cultural awareness
- Acknowledge and honors the cultural diversity of all children, emphasizes the importance of including children’s cultural references in learning, and uses the cultural knowledge to make learning and experiences more appropriate and meaningful to the children from different cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994)
Cultural Responsiveness

The ability to learn from cultures of our own and others, develop an open mind and attitude towards the differences and uniqueness, and honor and relate with cultures of our own and others

(Dean, 1996)

HOW?
• Increase our self-awareness
• Critically keep reflecting on our own cultures, perceptions, and biases

WHY?
To apply children’s cultural knowledge and experiences to learning contexts without any biases or stereotypes

Discussion: What is cultural responsiveness?
- Ask educators what they think cultural responsiveness is.
- Have them discuss how their own biases and stereotypes may affect their teaching and interaction with immigrant children.
Activity: What is Culture?

- Ask educators what they think ‘culture’ is (whole group)
- ‘Culture’ can be defined by many different factors such as race, ethnicity, social economic factors, geography, geopolitics, religions, behaviors, and perceptions among others (Lynch, 1998; Ramsey, Williams, & Vold, 2003)
- Remind educators that culture can be defined by many factors. Thus, culture cannot be easily defined.
Culturally Responsive Approach

- Child-centered learning

- Observe and identify children’s interests & incorporate the topics in the activities

- Build upon children’s knowledge about cultures

- Prepare materials and resources that are not only relevant to the topics but also to cultures

- Be sensitive and relevant to the cultures and heritages of children

- Encourage immigrant children to use their families’ cultural tools (e.g., native language) in the classroom

(Durden, Escalante, & Blitch, 2014; Gay, 2000)

Culturally Responsive Approach

- Child-centered interactions allow students to explore the world based on their curiosity and this helped teachers learn who the child was through this practice (Durden, Escalante, & Blitch, 2014)
  - Teachers intentionally provide learning opportunities and materials (e.g., books, dramatic play, outdoor play) based on the students’ interests
  - When planning activities, it is important that teachers intentionally create and situate the activities within students’ cultural context (Durden et al., 2014)
  - Prepare materials and resources that are not only relevant to the topics but also to cultures (Durden et al., 2014; Perlman, Kankesan, & Zhang, 2008). Example: if children are interested in weather patterns, teachers can incorporate local and global weather patterns including the countries that children and their families are coming from prior to implementing the activities
Supportive Classroom Environment

- Increase Cultural Awareness among Preschool Students
  - To support young children’s cultural identities
  - To help them develop a positive cultural awareness towards their own and others  
    (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996)

  How?
  - Use circle time to share children’s knowledge
  - Display children’s drawings or pictures/make a photo gallery  
    (Durden, Escalante, & Blitch, 2014)
  - Create books for students to make their own illustrated storybooks and share with other students

- Create culturally and linguistically diverse classroom environment
  - Display a world map to show where everyone is from
  - Display pictures of children and their families with messages written in their native languages
  - Encourage children to bring books from home
  - Provide toys and create displays that are relevant to different cultures

Supportive Classroom Environment
- Increase cultural awareness among preschool students
- Create culturally and linguistically diverse classroom
- Teachers want to consistently attempt to connect with the children and families to deepen their cultural knowledge and understanding.
**Discussion**

share your approaches

- How do you understand an immigrant student and build a close relationship in your classroom?
- How do you support cultures of children in the classroom?
- Examples??

Discussion:

- Provide opportunities with educators to share how they understand an immigrant student and support cultures of children in their classrooms.
3. Build and Embrace
Family & Community Partnerships

Partnerships with Immigrant Parents and Families

- Provide school information translated in different languages
  - To promote and increase the enrollment and parental participations
    - Advertising schools, sending newsletters
- Have volunteers and parents from different cultural backgrounds who have already enrolled in school available to new immigrants
  - To help new immigrant parents and families during open school or school activities
    - Suggested by immigrant parents who participate in the study in BC: (Poureslami et al., 2013).
- Make information available particularly to immigrant parents
  - To increase their understandings and establish open communication with the parents
- Get to know immigrant parents
  - To provide supports and meet the needs of immigrant preschool children
    - Casual talk, gathering events, informal information sessions
- Invite families to school activities

Strategy 3 – building and embracing family and community partnerships

Partnerships with Immigrant Parents and Families
- Provide school information translated in different languages
- In order to promote and increase the enrollment and parental participations
- Suggested by immigrant parents who participate in the study in BC:
  - Have volunteers and parents from different cultural backgrounds who have already enrolled in school help new immigrant parents during open school or school activities (Poureslami et al., 2013).
  - Make information available particularly to immigrant parents
    - To increase their understandings and establish open communication with the parents.
- Get to know immigrant parents
  - To provide supports and meet the needs of immigrant preschool children
Help educators become familiar with Learning Stories
Learning Stories: Examples

Show examples of Learning Stories
Partnerships with Community

- **Take active involvements and roles in the community (e.g., attending community meetings or events)**
  - Community development to support community well-being
  - Address the safety issues in the neighborhood
  - Educate community members how it could affect children’s behavioral problems and well-being

- **Use the community resources for the curriculum**
  (e.g., fieldtrip to a public library)

- **Invite community members to the class**
  (e.g., local police & firefighters)

- **Participate in the community events**
  - To become a part of the community
  - To develop children’s sense of belongings to the community
  
  Example: the Literacy Trails (Ollerenshaw, 2012)

Partnerships with Community
- Take active involvements and roles in the community (e.g., attending community meetings or events)
- Use the community resources for the curriculum
- Invite community members to the class
- Participate in the community events
  - Example: the Literacy Trails in Australia (Ollerenshaw, 2012)
  - “Best Start Project” under the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with the purpose of strengthening collaborative work between parents, families, schools, and communities while supporting young children’s development, well-being, and learning (Ollerenshaw, 2012).
  - Community members gathered for a community-based event and interacted with children from schools in the district by providing activities (e.g., games, storytelling)
  - Result: positive impact on children’s literacy and numeracy awareness;
    - activities like this can bring children, parents, families, schools, and communities together to support children’s learning and development.
Discussion
share your strategies

- How do you connect with the immigrant families and communities?
- Examples??

Discussion:
- Provide opportunities with educators to share how educators are connecting with immigrant families and local communities
6. Comments and Questions
   - End the workshop by sharing what I have learned through this project and what I wish to happen in the field of early childhood education
   - Have educators share their thoughts or questions
Supporting
Immigrant Preschool Children

Global & Canadian Immigration

- In 2013, the number of international migrants made up approximately 3.2% of the world population
- 53 million people migrated in North America
  - 4.77 million were children age from 0 to 19
- Over 1.1 million foreign-born people immigrated to Canada from 2006 to 2011
- 1 out of 5 people in Canada is foreign born
- British Columbia in 2012
  - Metro Vancouver: Home to over 88% of new immigrant children and their families between 2005 and 2009
  - 1,890 young children age from 0 to 4
  - 4,051 children age from 5 to 14

Immigrant Children’s Identity Development

- As children are exposed to more than one culture, ethnic identity development (apart from the development of sense of self) also emerges
- Developing a healthy, positive sense of ethnic identity is crucial for immigrant children to cope with negative environmental forces that they may encounter in a new cultural setting

Understand Each Child & Build a close Relationship

Understanding each immigrant child is one of important steps for educators in order to build a close relationship with a child. However, it can be challenging to understand and connect with immigrant children because of cultural and language barriers. **Multimodal tools** such as drawings or photographs can become alternative communication tools for immigrant children with limited English skills to express their feelings and thoughts to educators. Multimodal tools could provide opportunities with immigrant children to explore and express their world, experiences, or cultural values in the ways that verbal language may not be able to produce. (Begbie, 2007; Gough & Low, 2013; Kast, Strickland, & Marinsak, 2009; Kress, 2000; Kress & Jeavons, 2005; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005; Miskel, 2010)

Example - Photography
How:
1. Have students bring disposal/digital cameras home
2. Ask them to take pictures of things that matters in their life (e.g., families, favorite places, things they like to do at home)
3. Provide each child enough time to talk about the pictures with you
4. Be an active listener!

Culturally Responsive Approach

This approach acknowledges and honors the cultural diversity of all children, and emphasizes the importance of including children's cultural references in learning.
- Be sensitive and relevant to the cultures of children
- Encourage children to use their family's cultural tools such as their native languages
- Intentionally create activities within children's cultural contexts
- Increase cultural awareness among children
- Provide diversity-positive environments
  - Prepare materials and resources that are relevant to different cultures
  - Display pictures of families with messages written in their languages
- Critically reflect on your own cultures, biases!

Family & Community Partnerships

Building strong partnerships with family and community is an important strategy to support immigrant preschool children's development and learning. Here are some approaches to enhance the partnerships:
- Make information available to immigrant families and provide the information translated in different languages
- Have volunteers or immigrant families who share the same cultural backgrounds available
- Get to know more about immigrant families
- Use Learning Stories as portfolios to connect and communicate with immigrant families
- Invite families and community members to school activities
- Take active involvements and participations in the community
- Use community resources
- Join the community events with students

(Durden, Escalante, & Blitch, 2014; Gay, 2000; Gough & Silva, 2010; Landen-Billings, 1994; Perlman, Karkasian, & Zhang, 2008)