TABLE 16-1
A Dozen Ways for a Teacher to Communicate Successfully

- Show a genuine interest in the child, and ask the parent to share feelings and concerns about the child.
- Encourage the parent to ask questions, to visit the early childhood education environment, and to participate whenever possible. Seek parental input.
- Be an active listener. Focus on the parent or guardian, not on how to respond. Assume nothing. Clarify any confusion or misunderstanding by repeating what was heard.
- Provide parents with verbal and written information about the child and the concerns or information that will help address the safety, nutritional, and health needs of the child.
- Think before speaking. What is it that must be communicated? What is the best way to do it? Practice through role play if necessary.
- Any concern about the child should be dealt with immediately and not allowed to go unchecked.
- Never discuss a child in front of other children or adults.
- Be positive and discuss good behaviors and accomplishments as well as problems.
- Be flexible. Each family is unique and has different needs. Be aware of the family situation, the cultural background, and the child’s home environment.
- Be a good observer. Often it is what is not said or done that may be significant. Learn to read nonverbal cues such as body tension, avoidance of contact, a sense of chaos, or other vulnerabilities.
- Never compare the child or situation with others. This never accomplishes anything and can cause resentment and guilt.
- Always keep whatever is communicated in confidence. Use the information to help the child and family find resources or get any help necessary.
- Remain calm; do not argue or be defensive. Model good coping skills.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Is the family’s cultural perspective on this issue different from mine?</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>How does the family’s cultural perspective relate to its care practices for their children such as feeding, napping, and toileting?</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Am I aware of the child-rearing differences in that particular culture? How does this culture deal with a child who cries, is angry, or is curious? What gender differences between boys and girls do they enforce?</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>What goals do the family have for the child, and how do those goals relate to the cultural perspective of the family? Do they want the child to be independent or interdependent?</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Are the policies of care particularly suited to one culture and not all? What might have to be changed to adapt to more than one culture?</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Have I attempted to understand the family’s perspective and the complexity of the issues that may be present?</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Have I tried to explain to the family my own rationale based on my perspective, and have I looked at my own perspective from my background and values and how culture may have affected it?</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>How might I work with the families to construct an environment that meets their needs and the needs of early education and brings resolution between the two? This may take a little education on the part of both the teacher and the parent to understand each other’s perspective.</td>
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**TABLE 16-3**

*Techniques for Developing Cultural Competence*

- Develop a dialogue with parents about their own cultures. Invite them to share their culture with others in the early childhood education environment. Express a desire to learn from the parents. Ask for their opinions, and encourage them to participate. This might include having them help plan curriculum and participate in activities.

- If language barriers exist, try to find someone who can translate and break down any barriers to teacher–parent communication.

- Have family evening potlucks where families bring dishes representing their backgrounds and share some of their histories with other families.

- Research games, songs, and so forth, from other cultures in books on child care curriculum and histories. If there are children in care who have disabilities, this can also be researched. Incorporate these into the curriculum.

- Attend cultural fairs to get a greater understanding about the cultures represented in the early childhood education environment. Learn everything you can about a child’s home culture.

- Create a support group with other teachers. Use this collaborative effort to share information, resources, and hold open discussions. This is a good way to remove barriers that the teacher may have.

- Observe children who are from diverse cultures, socioeconomic levels, or abilities. Watch the child with parents and family members. Do this without judgment. Watch how they communicate in verbal and nonverbal ways.

- Talk to others in the community who represent the diverse group to find out about the group.

- In larger early childhood education situations, encourage the hiring of diverse staff.

- Acknowledge with parents that a topic may have many points of view and, when necessary, reach a consensus for the well-being of the child.

- Create a family book where families of the children in care talk about the people in their families, their customs, their home, and their lives. Ask children to bring pictures from home to go in these books; if the family has no camera, have the children draw the pictures to go in the book. If the care environment has a digital camera or video recorder available, it could be loaned to families to accomplish this task.

- Create a regular time every week or two to invite parents to sing songs from their culture or share stories. Have them talk about cultural traditions. If a translator is needed, try to have one in attendance.

- Put up pictures of famous buildings or places around the world and of children and families from all over the world.

- With prior parental permission, use digital cameras and video recorders to take pictures of the children to place on the wall.

- Provide some distinctive cultural clothing and props, such as product boxes, for the dramatic play area.

- Provide children’s books about other cultures and in the prevailing language. A number of books from many cultures are now available.

- Incorporate storytelling from other cultures into activities. If possible, bring in bicultural storytellers.

- Incorporate music from other cultures.

- Plan cooking projects for foods from other cultures, maybe even recipes brought in by children to represent their family’s culture.
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<th>Keys to Cross-Cultural Communication</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Be open, honest, and respectful.</td>
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<td>• Understand and respect personal space. Individuals of different cultures have varying degrees of comfort about the amount of personal space between them and another person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish a rapport in the common interest of the child.</td>
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<td>• Express interest and pay attention by listening carefully.</td>
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<td>• Respect silence. It may be a cultural norm or the result of taking time to understand what is being said in a nonnative language.</td>
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<td>• Watch how, when, and if eye contact is made. In some cultures making eye contact shows lack of respect.</td>
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TABLE 16-5
Activities that Integrate Diversity

- Create a nonjudgmental atmosphere. Avoid isolating any child.
- Focus on the diversity of the children in your own early childhood education environment. This includes not only culture, but also lifestyle and socioeconomic differences.
- Weave different cultures into the curriculum themes. This allows for greater depth of understanding.
- Provide materials that depict diverse images. This might include pictures on the wall of children from all backgrounds and toys that are nonexist and representative of the different cultures in your early childhood education environment. Dolls should be anatomically correct. Books and stories should be from a cross-section of society, including those in different languages represented by children in your care.
- Include staff from diverse backgrounds at all levels of responsibility. It is important to have this representation reflect the diversity of children in your care.
- Actively involve parents. Have parents and teachers from diverse cultures share their knowledge of their home cultures.
- Encourage participation by community helpers from diverse backgrounds for special circle times or programs that deal with safety, nutritional, or health issues. For example, a visiting nurse may be Filipino; a police officer may be African American; and a dietician may be in a wheelchair.
- Initiate activities that help provide self-esteem, self-identity, and well-being for mental health. Help children learn to value the differences and similarities among themselves. This will help break down stereotypical viewpoints that may impair how a child feels about himself or others.
- Encourage children to develop critical thinking skills to resist prejudice and develop acceptance.
- Respond positively to children’s questions about issues concerning diversity. A child who asks about a disabled person should be answered instead of being ignored or having the question sidestepped. What is not discussed becomes the foundation for bias. These are the teachable moments.
- Discuss and try to find ways to support the differing values of the families in your care.
### TABLE 16-6
Common Local Resources for Safety, Nutritional, and Health Information or Assistance

- Department of Public Health
- Hospitals, children’s hospitals
- Health centers and clinics
- Fire and police departments
- Child care licensing/foster care licensing
- Child care resource and referral agencies
- Children’s protective services
- Gas and electric companies
- Colleges and universities
- Medical societies (e.g., American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Local chapters of national organizations such as American Red Cross, American Dietetic Association, Girl Scouts, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and March of Dimes
- Poison control centers
- Libraries
- Head Start
- Department of Social Services
- Dental societies
- Family day care associations
- State and local affiliates of the National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Schools and school districts (for screening, school nurses, and special education resources)
- Humane societies
- County extension services
- WIC
- Visiting nurses associations
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Pharmacies and pharmacists
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Associations for cultural and ethnic affiliations