



# An Examination of Cultural Sensitivity Activities in Preschool



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## Sample

- Convenience sampling
- 7 teachers from 7 preschool classrooms in Central Illinois
- 3 separate early childhood centers are represented in the study

## Methods

Instruments [modified from the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS)]:

### 1. The Teacher Survey:

- Survey asked teachers to evaluate to what extent they were providing a culturally sensitive classroom curriculum and instruction
- Researchers sent survey out to 6 early childhood centers
- Two weeks later, the researchers visited the centers and collected teacher surveys
- 3 centers responded and a total of 7 teachers completed the survey

### 2. Classroom Checklist:

- Researchers observed 7 classrooms
- The classroom checklist was used to rate the quantity and type of multicultural materials present in the classroom.
- Rated on a scale of 1 to 4, as follows:

1=Adequate, 2=Minimal, 3=Good, 4=Excellent

## Theoretical Framework

- This study defined cultural sensitivity as follows:
  - "An awareness of the nuances of culture so that a culture can be viewed objectively, evaluated, and appreciated" (Cateora & Graham, 2006)
  - "Knowing that differences exist between cultures, but not assigning values to the differences" (University of Kansas, 2010)
- Addressing the requirements of cultural sensitivity is a practice that is critical in meeting the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood centers (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009)
- Young children need quality early care and education (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008)

## Data Analysis

### Teacher Survey:

- Data from teacher survey was analyzed descriptively to determine whether preschool teachers had competence in teaching cultural sensitivity activities

### Classroom Checklist

- Data from classroom checklist was analyzed descriptively to determine if the centers' preschool activities met the program standards of culturally sensitive early childhood education

## Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which preschool teachers implemented culturally sensitive activities and practices in their classrooms.

The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative results, through the use of teacher surveys requiring narrative responses and a classroom checklist employed to rate classrooms on their inclusion of multicultural materials.

Findings suggest that the sampled preschool teachers and classrooms were not fulfilling cultural sensitivity requirements. Expanded professional development on cultural sensitivity practices is a possible remedy for this problem.

## Research Questions

1. Do preschool teachers have competence in teaching cultural sensitivity activities?
2. Do preschool activities meet the program standards of culturally sensitive requirements?

## Findings

- None of the early childhood centers were using ethnic foods as a regular part of meals/snacks
- None of the centers encouraged parents to share family customs with other children in class
- Most of the centers solicited feedback from parents of all cultural backgrounds on the centers' program
- Most centers referred non-English speaking parents to other professionals when needed
- Approximately 14% of classrooms always:
  - Provide props in the dramatic play area that represent diversity
  - Change centers and materials to create children's awareness about other cultures
  - Provide ways to extend art activities that encourage diversity

## Implications

- Lack of diversity in preschool classrooms in central Illinois may have an affect on the teachers' competencies in teaching cultural sensitivity activities
- Because of this, preschool activities are not meeting program standards in regards to culturally sensitive requirements
- Teachers could attend professional development to increase their knowledge of and competence in teaching culturally sensitive activities

## Survey Responses

Below are the questions posed in the teacher survey and a list of the various answers provided by the 7 classroom teachers.

1. Are there any activities used to help children become aware of diversity? If yes, can you give some examples?

- Chinese New Year
- Martin Luther King Day
- Cinco De Mayo
- Cooking experiences
- Japanese paper lanterns
- Diverse posters and photos throughout the classroom

2. Are many cultures represented in holiday celebration? If yes, how many?

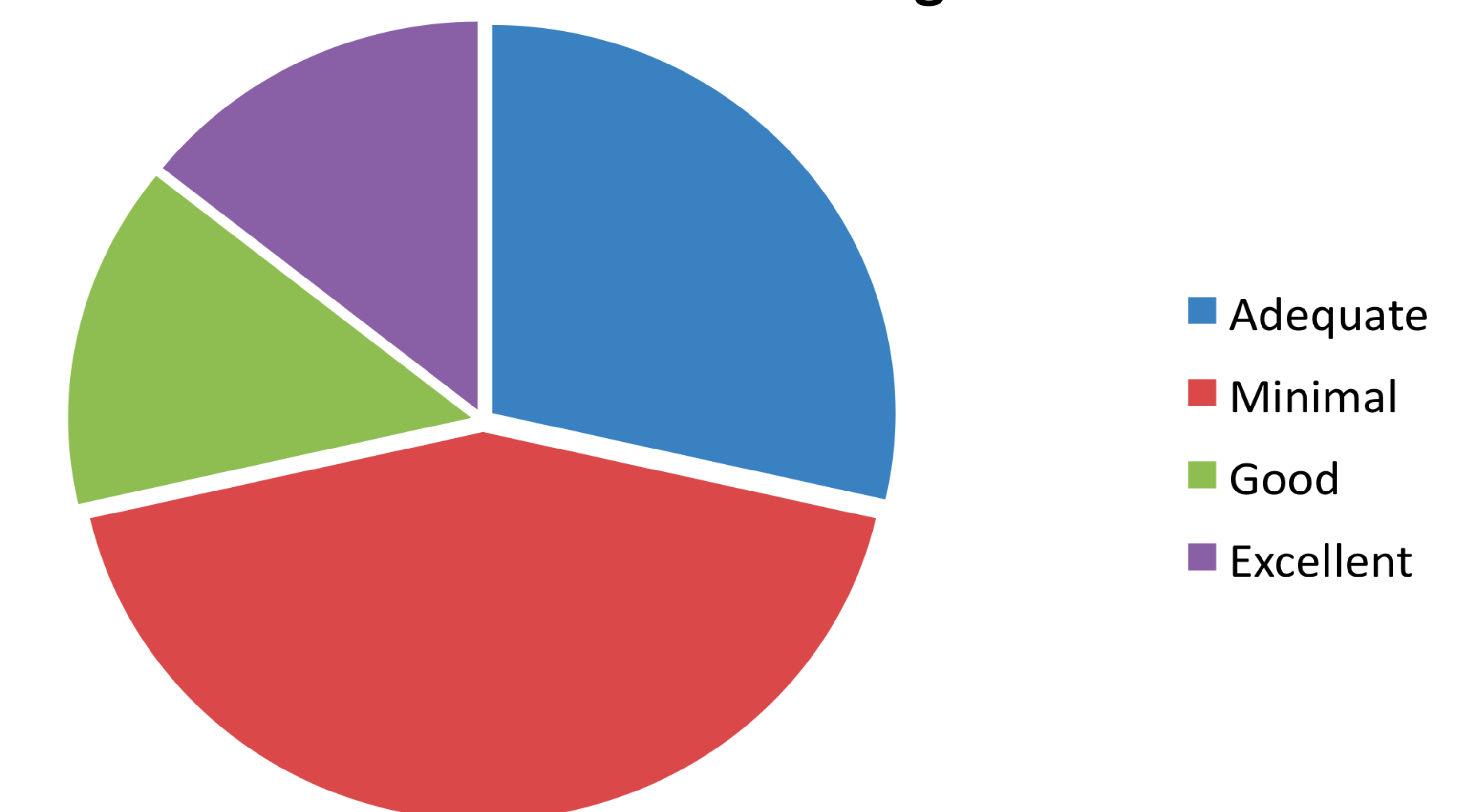
- Hanukkah
- Kwanzaa
- Christmas
- Chinese New Year
- Martin Luther King Day

3. Do you and the parents share information about the children? How is this done? About how often?

- Parent meetings
- Letters home
- Verbal communication
- Newsletters
- Home visits
- Notes
- Sharing bag: sent home to "open the door" for children and parents to share things from their homes and backgrounds with the other children

## Checklist Results

Classroom Checklist Rating Scale



## References:

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- University of Kansas (2010). *Building culturally competent organizations*. Community Tool Box. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culturally-competent-organizations/main>