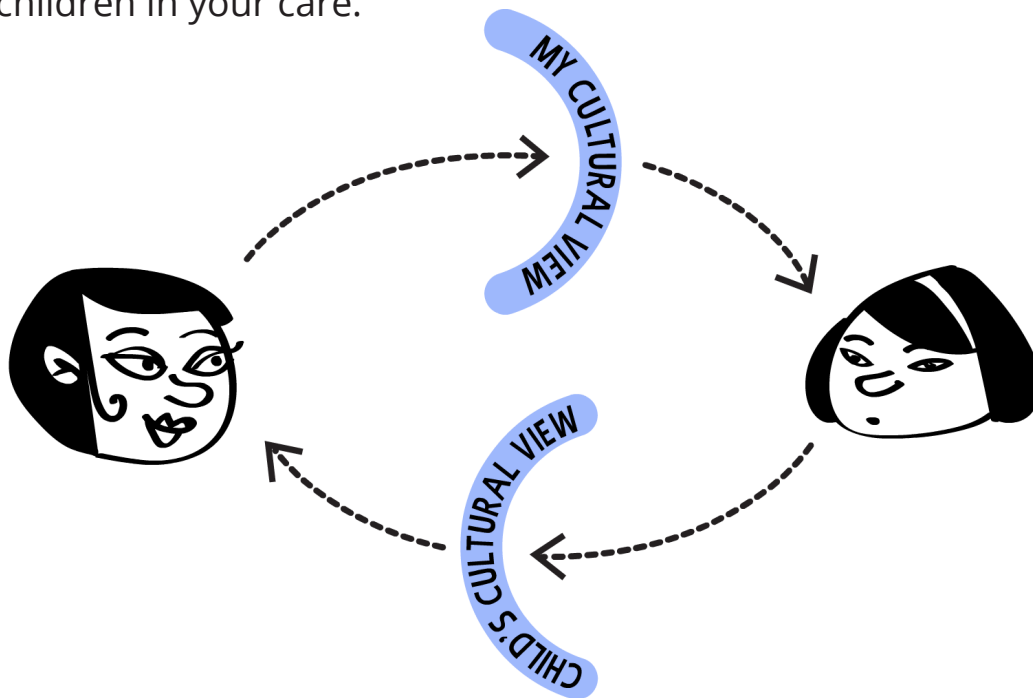


Partnering with Families in Assessment: **Observing Through a Cultural Lens**

WHAT'S IN THIS PD2GO PACK?

Accurate observation of children requires an awareness of family background and culture. In this pack, we explore strategies to better understand your own cultural lens and the cultural lenses of the children in your care.

Your Participants Will...
 increase their capacity to observe with sensitivity to cultural differences and families' values, beliefs, and child-rearing practices.



SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Facilitator's Guide Everything you need to facilitate this PD2GO presentation on *Observing Through a Cultural Lens*, including an interactive presentation page along with step-by-step presenter's notes.

Coaching Corner One-page resource with self-reflection and practice opportunities that can be explored individually, with peers, and in professional development sessions.


Additional resource materials related to this pack provide opportunities to explore and expand your skills and knowledge through **Digging Deeper**, **Resource Links**, and **Family Connections**.

HOW TO USE THIS FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

This Facilitator's Guide will provide you with step-by-step information on how to present this session using the interactive presentation page and downloadable materials specific to this PD2GO pack. We recommend [opening the pack presentation](#) as you go through this Facilitator's Guide.

Presentation Information

Text written in italics is meant to be spoken out loud during the course of the presentation.

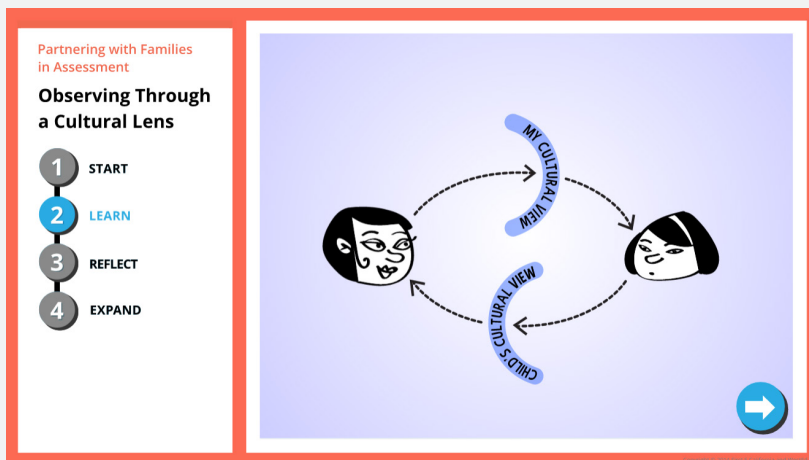
Other text, marked with this icon , offers important information such as instructions or suggested answers to facilitate the presentation of this PD2GO pack.

THE INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION PAGE

The presentation page includes the following elements:

Steps

Click on each number icon to begin the section of the presentation—use the presenter's notes in this guide to facilitate each step of the presentation.



DOWNLOADABLE MATERIALS

In This Pack

Click on the downloadable materials hyperlink to access all materials related to this presentation.

In This Bundle

Click on the downloadable materials hyperlink to access all additional resources and materials that can be used with this presentation and other related packs.

EXPANDING ON THIS PD2GO PACK

This presentation on *Observing Through a Cultural Lens* can be used individually or in conjunction with related packs in the bundle, *Including Families in Assessment* and *Interpreting Assessment with Families*. Additional resources and materials in this bundle (*Digging Deeper*, *Resource Links*, and *Family Connections*) are designed to extend skills and knowledge around these related packs, provide links to resources, and promote partnerships with families.

MATERIALS

In this pack, you will find:

[Download all \(2.8 MB\)](#)



[Facilitator's Guide \(2.9 MB\)](#)

Everything you need to facilitate this PD2GO presentation on *Observing Through a Cultural Lens*, including an interactive presentation page along with step-by-step presenter's notes.



[Coaching Corner \(160 KB\)](#)

One-page resource with self-reflection and practice opportunities that can be explored individually, with peers, and in professional development sessions.



[Handout: The Ladder of Inference in Observation \(240 KB\)](#)

In this bundle, you will find:

[Download all \(260 KB\)](#)

Additional resource materials related to this pack provide opportunities to explore and expand your skills and knowledge. The resources include:



[Digging Deeper \(150 KB\)](#)



[Family Connections \(160 KB\)](#)



[Resource Links \(180 KB\)](#)

STEP 1:
START

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Step 1



Greet someone in the room.




[2 min]



Step 1 - Start

Facilitator: *Stand up and greet someone in the room using any kind of movement that is familiar to you.*



Invite participants to stand up and walk around to greet each other.

Facilitator: *How did that go? Was it natural and comfortable? Was it what you expected?*



Invite participants to respond.



Facilitator: *Have you ever had an awkward greeting moment? What happened? How did you feel?*



Invite participants to respond.

Facilitator: *We all have styles of greeting shaped by our cultures. Styles could include a hug, a bow, a kiss or two, and many others. When two people have different cultural styles of greeting, it can sometimes create an unexpected or awkward moment. Each person may have an expectation of how to give and receive a greeting.*

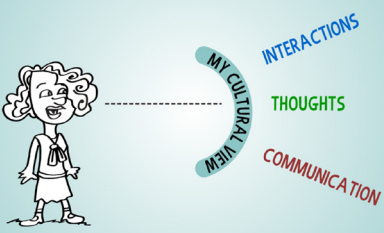



Facilitator: *We may sometimes think of culture as a set of traditions, food, and dress for a particular group of people. These things reflect culture on the surface, but the influence of culture is much deeper. It affects all aspects of our lives. Culture shapes how we interact with people, how we view situations, and how we communicate.*

Have you ever had an awkward greeting moment?




Culture influences our thoughts and actions.


STEP 1: *Continued*
START

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE

Culture influences our beliefs, thoughts, and actions.

Go to step 2: LEARN

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Facilitator: *Culture is such a deeply rooted part of us that it is often difficult to see how it influences our beliefs, thoughts, and actions.*

STEP 2:
LEARN

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE

Step 2

Culture influences our observations.

Meet Duju.

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

[4 min]



Step 2 - Learn

Facilitator: *Now let's think about how culture influences the way teachers/providers view and observe children every day.*



Facilitator: *I'll start with a brief story about a three-year-old child named Duju.*



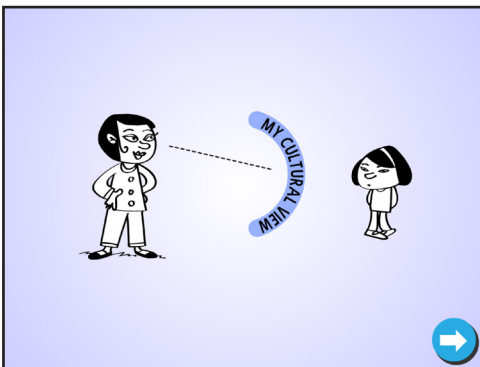
STEP 2:
LEARN *Continued*

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE

FACILITATOR'S NOTES



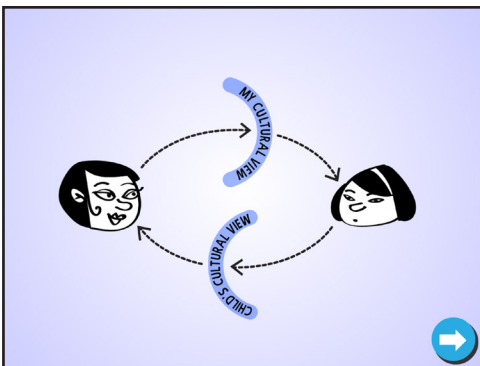
Facilitator: *Duju recently enrolled in Tiana's class. During morning mealtime on one of Duju's first days in the classroom, Tiana observes that Duju doesn't touch her food and seems to want help eating. Tiana believes Duju is capable of feeding herself and encourages her by saying, "Duju, you can pick up the banana and eat it all by yourself."*



After several prompts from Tiana, Duju still doesn't touch her food and begins to tear up. Tiana begins to help Duju but continues to prompt Duju to try to eat on her own. Tiana believes self-feeding is an important goal for Duju and decides to share this idea with Duju's mother at pick-up time.



Facilitator: *As teachers and providers, culture influences our beliefs about and assessments of children, particularly as we observe them.*



Facilitator: *During observation, we need to be particularly sensitive to:*

- *our own cultural views and background*
- *the cultural backgrounds of the children we observe*

Teachers/providers are an essential part of the assessment process. When we assess children, how we perceive them not only influences how we interpret what we see, it influences how children actually respond to us, as in the example of Tiana and Duju.



STEP 2:
LEARN *Continued*

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Considering Cultural Influences in Observation

The diagram shows a ladder with four rungs labeled from bottom to top: EXPERIENCE, NOTICE, BELIEVE, and ACT. An upward-pointing arrow to the left is labeled 'LADDER OF INFERENCE'. The 'EXPERIENCE' rung is highlighted in yellow.

Facilitator: *To help us think intentionally about culture when we assess young children, we can use a tool called the ladder of inference (refer to PD2GO Systems Thinking packs to learn more). Making interpretations about what we observe is like climbing a ladder. Moving up the rungs of the ladder illustrates how we move from observation to assumptions to action.*



Considering Cultural Influences in Observation

The diagram shows a ladder with four rungs labeled from bottom to top: EXPERIENCE, NOTICE, BELIEVE, and ACT. An upward-pointing arrow to the left is labeled 'LADDER OF INFERENCE'. The 'EXPERIENCE' and 'NOTICE' rungs are highlighted in blue.

Facilitator: *Think of the activities in your classroom as a pool of information and experiences at the base of the ladder. With each step we take up the ladder, we move farther away from the pool of objective information.*



Considering Cultural Influences in Observation

The diagram shows a ladder with four rungs labeled from bottom to top: EXPERIENCE, NOTICE, BELIEVE, and ACT. An upward-pointing arrow to the left is labeled 'LADDER OF INFERENCE'. The 'EXPERIENCE', 'NOTICE', and 'BELIEVE' rungs are highlighted in blue.

Facilitator: *The first step you take on the ladder is what you notice when you observe. It's impossible for us to notice everything in our environment, so we filter what we notice through our cultural view. In the brief story about Duju, while observing breakfast, Tiana noticed Duju was not feeding herself.*



Considering Cultural Influences in Observation

The diagram shows a ladder with four rungs labeled from bottom to top: EXPERIENCE, NOTICE, BELIEVE, and ACT. An upward-pointing arrow to the left is labeled 'LADDER OF INFERENCE'. All four rungs are highlighted in blue.

Facilitator: *We then add meaning to what we see based on our experiences and cultural backgrounds. Over time, this process leads to assumptions and beliefs. When Tiana moved up to the next step, her belief about children needing to eat independently influenced her view of the situation with Duju.*



STEP 2:
LEARN *Continued*

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Considering Cultural Influences in Observation

Facilitator: *Finally, based on our assumptions and beliefs, we make a decision and act. In trying to help Duju, Tiana decided that self-feeding should be a goal to work on, and spoke with her mother later that day.*

It is important to keep in mind two things. First, we are always somewhere on the ladder. Second, every time we act, we have climbed the ladder. All our actions are based on what we notice and believe. So, it is critically important to be as mindful as possible about our beliefs and assumptions as we climb the ladder.



Considering Cultural Influences in Observation

- What assumptions am I making?
- What interpretations am I making?
- In what ways is my cultural background influencing what I see?
- How might the child's family help me understand?

Facilitator: *So how do we move cautiously up the ladder? During observation, we stop and ask ourselves some key questions:*

1. *What assumptions am I making about this child's behavior?*
2. *What interpretations am I making based on my own expectations?*
3. *In what ways is my cultural background influencing what I see?*
4. *How might this child's family help me improve my understanding and make more culturally appropriate decisions about what I observe?*

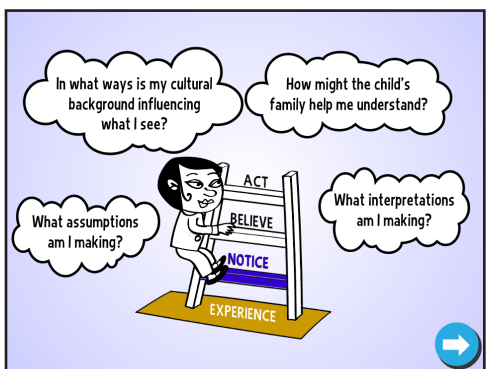


Facilitator: *Let's think about Tiana and Duju again. This time, Tiana will pause on the ladder to consider her cultural background and Duju's background.*



STEP 2:
LEARN *Continued*

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE



FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Facilitator: *Again, Tiana notices that Duju is not eating without the help of an adult.*
This time, before going up the ladder, Tiana asks herself the four questions.



- Facilitator:**
1. *What assumptions am I making about Duju's behavior?*
 2. *What interpretations am I making about Duju's actions based on my expectations?*
 3. *In what ways is my cultural background influencing what I see?*
 4. *How might Duju's family help me improve my understanding and make more culturally appropriate decisions about what I observe?*

Facilitator: *How might responses to these questions change Tiana's understanding of Duju's behavior?*



Invite participants to respond.

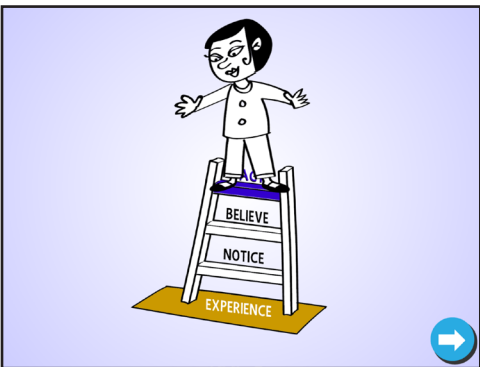
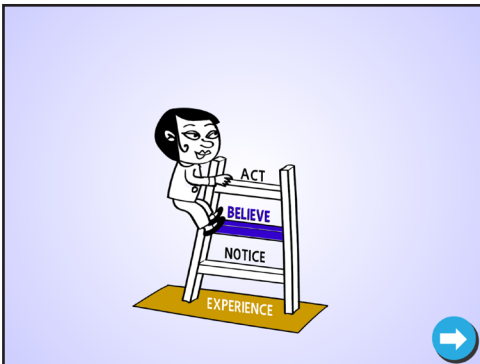
Some possible responses include:

- Tiana might recognize her own cultural beliefs. She believes three-year-olds should be self-sufficient, particularly while eating.
- Tiana might be assuming that Duju's family wants her to be eating independently.
- Tiana might realize she doesn't know what happens in Duju's home and needs more information instead of making assumptions.



STEP 2:
LEARN *Continued*

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE



The ladder of inference helps us to observe objectively.

Go to step 3: REFLECT

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Facilitator: *After considering the four above questions, Tiana speaks with Duju's family. Tiana discovers that Duju's family always feeds her at home, and they expect that an adult in the classroom will feed Duju as well.*



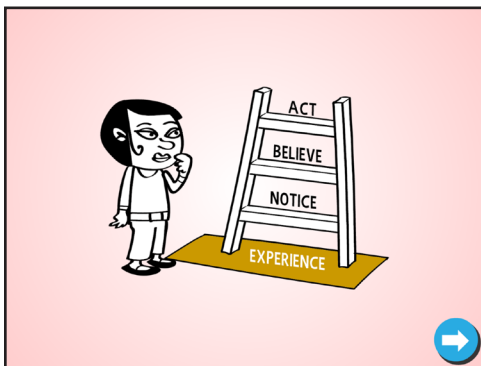
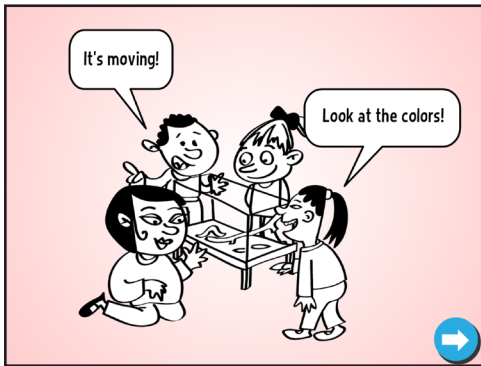
Facilitator: *Tiana moves to the next rung of the ladder with the new information she has learned about the reasons for Duju's behavior. She is now able to act based on relevant cultural information she has learned from Duju's family, instead of acting only from her own cultural beliefs. Tiana can now discuss the self-feeding expectations of the classroom and engage Duju's family in creating a plan that will support Duju's transition to this new setting, while honoring the family's perspective and cultural practices.*



Facilitator: *During observation, pause frequently on the ladder of inference to reflect on assumptions and expectations based on your experience and how they influence what you notice and how you decide to act. The ladder of inference helps teachers/providers thoughtfully consider assumptions they might be making when assessing young children.*

**STEP 3:
REFLECT**

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE



FACILITATOR'S NOTES

[5 min]

CLICK

Step 3 - Reflect

Facilitator: *Let's join Tiana in another observation. Use the handout, The Ladder of Inference in Observation, to work together through this activity.*



Pass out the handout.

"The Ladder of Inference in Observation"

CLICK

Facilitator: *Tiana observes that Farah, a five-year-old dual language learner in her classroom, has been quiet throughout the class's exploration of caterpillars. Tiana invites children to ask questions and share their observations while they stand around the caterpillars. Unlike most of her peers, Farah has not asked any questions, but has silently watched the caterpillars.*

Tiana has noticed that in group situations like this, Farah typically remains observant, yet silent. However, Farah is usually responsive in one-on-one experiences with a peer or teacher. Tiana thinks to herself, "Farah doesn't feel comfortable participating because she's developing two languages. I need to work on vocabulary development with Farah."

CLICK

Facilitator: *Where is Tiana on the ladder of inference?*



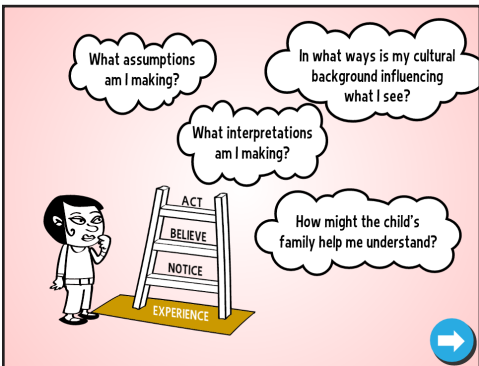
Invite participants to respond.

Facilitator: *With a partner, choose one of the four questions that Tiana might ask herself to gain a cultural perspective of what Farah is experiencing.*

CLICK

STEP 3:
REFLECT *Continued*

PRESENTATION SEQUENCE



FACILITATOR'S NOTES

- Facilitator:** *Remember, the questions are:*
1. *What assumptions am I making about this child's behavior?*
 2. *What interpretations am I making based on my own expectations?*
 3. *In what ways is my cultural background influencing what I see?*
 4. *How might this child's family help me improve my understandings and make culturally appropriate decisions about what I observe?*

Spend a few minutes with your partner thinking about how the question might help Tiana climb the ladder of inference more thoughtfully.



Invite participants to find a partner and discuss.
After a few moments, reconvene the group and ask pairs to share.



- Facilitator:** *Use the ladder in your daily observations and ask yourself key questions to ensure that your decisions are intentionally understood and accurately informed.*



Use the ladder in your daily observations.




Go to step 4: EXPAND

STEP 4:
EXPAND



PRESENTATION SEQUENCE

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Step 4



Think of one way you can use the ladder of inference.



[2 min]



Step 4 - Expand

Facilitator: *There are lots of ways you can use the ladder of inference in your observation practice.*

Observing with Awareness and Sensitivity to Cultural Influences


Facilitator: *Here are a few suggestions:*

- *Keep the ladder of inference handy during weekly review of data.*
- *Ask others to ask you, "Where are you on the ladder of inference?"*
- *Ask parents for more information that can make the pool of observed data at the floor of the ladder richer with cultural information.*

Choose one of the ideas or think of one of your own and write it down on your handout. Spend a moment considering how you will put this idea into practice.



Invite participants to spend a moment reflecting.



Facilitator: *The ladder of inference is an effective tool for increasing sensitivity to cultural differences. When we observe and interpret with a lens on culture, we honor the child, the family, and cultural values. At the same time, we are deepening our capacity to build relationships and to best support children and families.*



Building cultural awareness into observation honors the child and the family.




THIS PD2GO PACK WAS INFORMED BY THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

Desired Results Training and Technical Assistance Project (Producer). (2006). *Getting to know you through observation*. [DVD]. (Available from: <http://www.wested.org/resources/getting-to-know-you-through-observation/>).

Maschinot, B. (2008). *The changing face of the United States: The influence of culture on early child development*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2011). *Family engagement and ongoing child assessment*. Washington, DC: Office of Head Start. Retrieved from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/family-engagement-and-ongoing-child-assessment-081111.pdf>

Senge, P. M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R. B., & Smith, B. J. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.