



Tuesday Tools: Preparing Environments for Cultural Learning

Hello Rock and Roll Community! Welcome back to another Tuesday Training Tools as we continue to discuss the prepared environment.

Cultural curriculum is one of the most exciting areas of learning at RRDC. As children grow up in the 21st century, it is of critical importance for educators to teach about the diverse beauty of our local and global communities. At Rock and Roll, we take deep cultural dives every two months through our Fiddlefox curriculum. Here, we use international children's music as a gateway to open a world of cultural learning.

But singing songs is only the beginning. Try to imagine the last time you traveled to another country, or even just another city. Before the pandemic, the last place I visited was Barcelona, Spain. I can remember the unique energy in the air, the quality of the light, the relaxed, human pace of the people, the passion of the music and performances, and of course the smell of the incredible food.

Travel is a sensory experience, and young children are sensory learners. When I work with classroom ambassadors to prepare their presentations for our toddler and preschool students, I focus less on raw, informational text and more on physical, tangible materials that students can see, touch, smell, hear, and taste. As teaching staff, you can look to include maps, flags, currency, paintings, sculptures, photographs, figurines, textiles and fabrics, everyday household objects, dolls, toys and games, and musical instruments in your rooms.

Consider special areas in your room where cultural items can live and be explored independently. As you research a new country, pay close attention to domestic tools and practices that can integrate into your practical life area of the classroom. For example, using a tortilla press from Mexico, or grinding spices with a mortar and pestle for India.

As pandemic health regulations ease, you can also start to consider simple classroom cooking projects like sushi rolling for Japan or making an apple pie for the United States. We'll also upload a special long-form playlist for each cultural unit to explore the sounds of a new country through many different genres and time periods of the country's history. We encourage staff to listen to these playlists in the classroom as you learn more about a country's musical heritage alongside your children.

You may be thinking "that sounds great, but where can I find this stuff?" The internet is a great resource of course and you can find lots of materials there. You can also explore local specialized grocery stores and community centers. In my experience, the best resource for cultural learning is your own classroom community. Reach out to parents and staff members with ties to your country of focus and ask them if they're comfortable lending some items to your class.

When in doubt, consult your World Heritage Curriculum Guide from Fiddlefox. Each guide has research and discussion topics, maps, Montessori-style lesson plans, craft instructions, music lesson plans, and printable activity pages to inspire you on your own cultural learning journey alongside the children in your class.

Have a great week, Rock and Roll staff, and I'll see you for the next Tuesday Tools.