

Creating and Celebrating Diversity in Preschool Classrooms



How to Connect Children's Learning to Their Real Life Experiences

Presented by

Berna Artis and Jill Telford

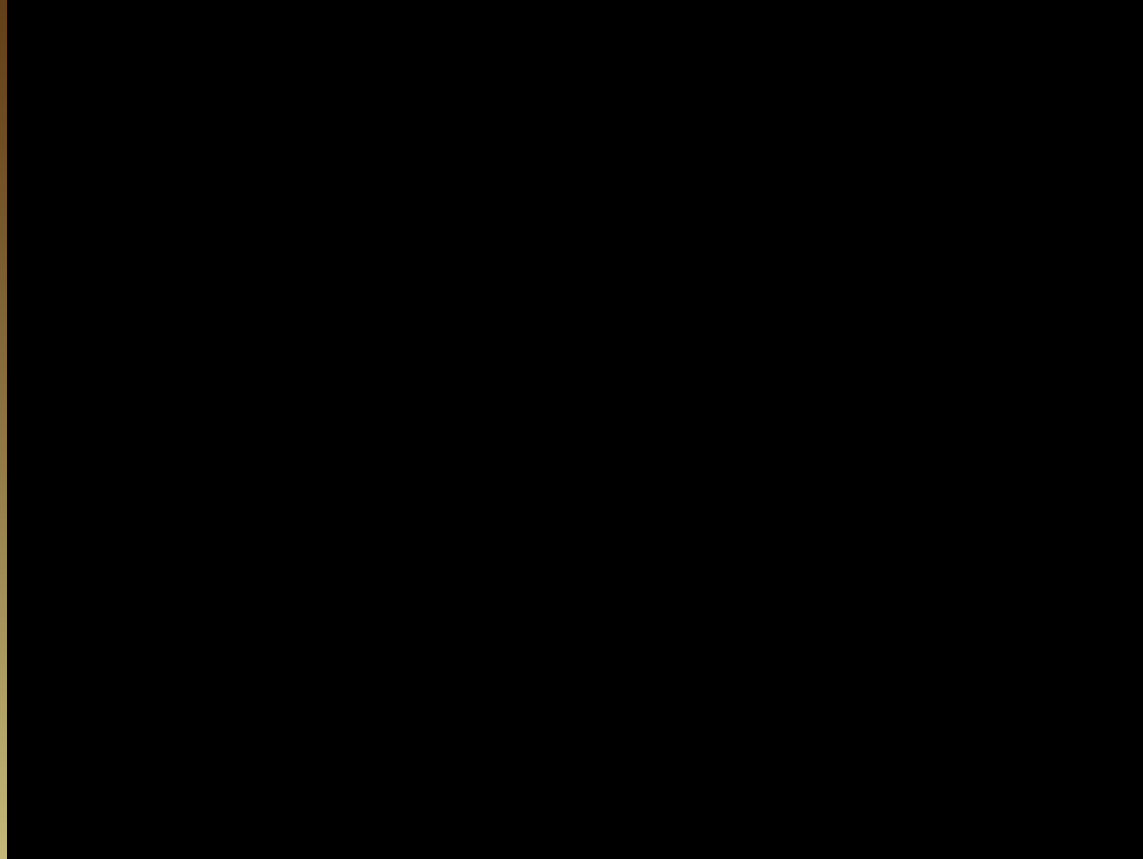


WHAT IS DIFFERENT ?

- Growing **diversity in 21st century** brings new opportunities and challenges for educators who aim to create healthy, inclusive learning environments.
- **What do you think? Schools** with high percentages of underrepresented students of color and low income students are perceived by teachers of all races as less likely to have family and community support. By contrast, teachers in diverse **schools** with a white student majority, along with teachers in stably diverse learning environments, report more positive student relations and **school-community** relationships (Horsley and Bauer, 2010)



Let's watch...



Wide range of educator responsibilities

- Promote culturally inclusive classrooms and experiences including but not limited to social and religious diversity
- Reflect on your own responses to diversity
- Plan experiences and provide resources that broaden children's perspectives and encourage appreciation of diversity
- Encourage children to listen to one another and to respect diverse ideas and thoughts
- Demonstrate positive responses to diversity whenever possible in the classroom
- Engage in interactions with children that promote respect for diversity and value differences
- Explore the culture, heritage, backgrounds and traditions of each child and family within the context of their community



TERMS TO KNOW

- **Multiculturalism** focuses on the creation of equal educational opportunities and positive attitudes toward differences.
- An **anti-bias curriculum** adds an emphasis on the individual's actions in response to discrimination and prejudice.
- **Interculturalism** is the sharing and learning across cultures that promotes understanding, equality, harmony, and justice in a diverse society.
- **Cultural context** includes all aspects of a child's cultural identity that are unique and influential, such as ethnicity and race, primary language, family composition, socioeconomic status, and special needs.
- **Reflection** is the ability to think critically about oneself and others. It contributes to thinking about alternative perspectives and informs decision-making.



INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

- Making assumptions generalizing characteristics and drawing conclusions about children and families just because they share a racial or an economic background can lead to erroneous conclusions.



Intercultural Approach Continues...

- Children, families, and teachers have the opportunity to learn from each other. There is no expert knowledge given since each child and family is unique.
- Multicultural approach differs from intercultural approach. How?
 - Multicultural ———— Teacher introduces information about different cultures
 - Intercultural ———— Teacher, children and families, have the opportunity to learn from each other.



- Young children are highly impressionable. In their formative years, teachers can and will have long lasting, life time effect on them. Teachers must take advantage of teaching respect for diversity in their group settings when children are open and receptive. AND they begin to form their prejudices ...



What do you think of her?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxPZh4AnWyk>



Why is experiencing diversity important?

- Infants begin to distinguish himself/herself from others.
- Toddlers can recognize racial and gender differences.
- Preschoolers form their identities and are very interested in their similarities and differences from others. They are also aware of family structures and socio-economic statuses.



Children's Prejudice

- As a consequence of young children's growing positive feelings about their in-group, there is a simultaneous increase in negative feelings toward out-groups (Aboud, 1980).

For instance, white children from as young as 3 demonstrated a pro-white/anti-black bias (Katz & Kofkin, 1997) that solidified by age 6 (Doyle & Aboud, 1995).

More recent research further affirms these findings and points to the importance of the environments within which children are raised (Mac-Naughton & Davis, 2001).



Hear what children say...

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcAuO0PNnrs>



Early childhood professionals have the responsibility to demonstrate sensitivity, inclusiveness, and respect toward all family compositions, regardless of how they differ from their own experiences of family life (Turner-Vorbeck, 2005).

In order to accomplish this, you must reflect on your biases and culture.

The ability to think critically about oneself and others is essential to the development of respect for differences (McFarland, Saunders, & Allen, 2009; O'Connor & Diggins, 2002).



What does a diverse classroom look like?

- Each classroom represents and reflects what the school stands for and what they think of families and children.
- Children follow the leaders and learn to behave in the manner that is acceptable in that setting.
- Classroom materials including displays reflect the children and the teachers in that classroom.
- Teachers make time to talk about families, cultures, homes frequently.
- Teachers invite parents to share a cultural song or a game with the rest of the classroom or the school and make families an integral part to their best ability.
- Children and families feel proud, belong and welcomed after sharing a piece from their culture.



What would you do?

- Susan's family is from Tokyo.
- Victoria's family is from Bosnia.
- Nathan's family is from Spain.
- Cecile's family is from Africa.
- Jackson's family is from Ireland.



What would you do?

- Jason is using his fingers to eat.
- Anita is throwing the toilet paper into trash instead of the toilet.
- Dayna cries but does not want a hug from her teacher.

POINT: Understand the reason for the behavior before trying to change it.



OVERCOMING CULTURAL CONFLICTS

- Keep communication lines open.
- Resolve issues and or complications between the school and the family in a mutually respectable way.
- Know about both parties' expectations.
- Respect each child's identity and culture.



Celebrate Diversity and Connect Classroom and Home

- Go for a walk in the neighborhood
- Partner with the community and families to see what opportunities they can offer
- Organize field trips and enhance the subject you are teaching and learning
- Invite families for cooking, building, playing instruments and singing. All part of their culture.



“Supporting diversity in early childhood programs is a two-pronged process: helping children to feel good about themselves, their families, and their communities, and also exposing children to differences, things that are unfamiliar, and experiences beyond their immediate lives.”

Francis Wardle, Ph.D.



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