

MINNESOTA MULTICULTURAL MULTILINGUAL TRAINING CURRICULUM

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Children Learning about Diversity

Objectives

This course was developed to address the following learning objectives. You can reasonably expect that, by the end of the session, actively engaged participants will be able to:

- Describe how children learn about diversity.
- Make the link between how children perceive diversity and the Minnesota Early Learning Standards.
- Begin to plan for anti-bias education.

Let's practice: Today you are learning about how children learn about diversity and how educators can help children develop a strong self-concept as well as learn to respect and interact comfortably with people different from themselves. This is done with the strategies described in the field of anti-bias education. Sometimes we are caught off guard by children's comments or reactions, so it takes practice to find the right words, and the appropriate response.

Now we are going to practice with vignettes. As educators, situations happen fast. We need to be good at presenting the information to children. We also need to be fast in responding if children bring up comments. Of course, it is appropriate to take the time to think and find a response for the next day. But it is important not to ignore. Each time we ignore, or let comments slide by, unfortunately it is an opportunity for bias to be reinforced. And it is a missed opportunity for positive anti-bias thinking to develop.

Vignettes

Here are some vignettes heard in classrooms. Take a moment to also think of some real-life situations you have personally encountered.

- "Why is Precious' skin dark?" (White child about an African American classmate)
- "I don't like brown people" (African American girl)
- "What's that? (Peter pointing to a person in a wheel chair during a field trip at the park)
- "Why do you speak funny?" (to a bilingual educator with a Spanish accent)
- Matthew: "My doll has two daddies" (a boy who has gay parents organizes the plot in dramatic play. Henry: "No. That's silly! She can't have two daddies. She has a daddy AND a mommy!"

- “Boys can’t be in the kitchen. That’s for girls only” (Middle-eastern girl to a boy who wants to play in kitchen)

Let’s practice activity: Giving thoughtful responses to children’s questions and comments

This is serious business but for this practice, it is OK to be playful and have some smiles and laughter. If you can only come up with some off the wall answer the first time, your colleagues will help you find something more appropriate. Use the following guidelines for responding from the NAEYC brochure *Teaching Young Children to Resist Bias* (2009) ([Teachingyoungchildren\(mjc.edu\)](http://Teachingyoungchildren(mjc.edu))):

- Show that you value diversity
- Make it a firm rule not that a person’s identity is never a reason to reject
- Initiate activities and discussions
- Provide opportunities to learn
- Respectfully listen and answer
- Use accurate and fair images
- Teach children to recognize stereotypes

Goal setting for session 2

1. Write a goal related to what you have learned in this session. Decide how to integrate new ideas into your daily work.

My goal

One action I plan to take as a result of today’s session: