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ECE 210- Prof..Freitas

Advocacy Project

Anti-Bias Curriculum's

There have been many times that educators make the mistake of saying an unintended bias remark towards a student. Too many times have parents made the mistake of saying something around their children and thinking they're too young to understand what is being said. Our children are like sponges, absorbing all that they can see and hear to then reiterate without truly understanding what was said and how it could affect others. What we say around children and how we respond influences how children view themselves and others. This is why I firmly believe in advocating for an anti-bias curriculum to begin as early as possible within the school system. At an early age children begin to notice differences and ask questions about gender, culture, class, sexuality, religion and race. It is our job as educators and parents to work together to guide them past the misconceptions. The issue is we don't have an environment where educators and parents can come together to discuss and learn methods on how we can first self-manage our own unconscious bias to then work together to answer children's difficult questions to where we are all on the same page and create curriculums to assist on their journey through self-awareness.

Without some sort of anti-bias curriculum within schools children will continue to repeat the cycle of misconceptions which can cause them to hurt another classmate's

feelings or even throw them off from their path to self-awareness. When children aren't properly guided their perspective of others different from them can be blurry and cause implicit bias that they will take with them as they proceed through life. We as educators and parents need to understand that we are fighting systematic oppression from the things our children hear and see on television, from the character they read in books and from what they hear in music. We must begin to make a change in ourselves so that we can make the change within our children. Our country and our world is racially, culturally and socially divided causing bias and prejudice. You may think bias is a small matter but it plays a large role. If we raise awareness on these matters and work together to change them we can create a better environment for our children at home and at school. If we want to see a future where society isn't as separated as of today we must begin to make changes within our children's understanding of themselves and others.

If we can implement more culturally responsive teaching methods within the educational system it can leave little space for implicit bias. For example in the article "Moving beyond anti bias activities: supporting the development of anti-bias practices" it discusses some ways we can approach/guide children's understanding. For example, during expressive art children are told to draw themselves but were first given the opportunity to look in a mirror and also compare skin tones with other classmates to notice differences and similarities. They were then given multi color mixing paint to then draw themselves, the purpose of this activity was to seize the opportunity to engage children with questions about their observations. Another example can be during

creative play supply multi-racial dolls and action figures which again may have children asking questions. There can be more books that discuss the many differences and similarities within the many facial features of other children their ages. Some believe that elementary may be too early of an age to discuss differences but studies have shown that children will begin to notice racial cues, and the many different classes like rich or poor by the ages of 3 or 4. The article “Engaging young children in activities and conversations about race and social class” discussed a project in which they observed kindergarten children's responses to specific anti-bias and multicultural activities to see which activities and teaching practice most frequently bring out meaningful conversations. It talked about a study where children during music class listen to different songs in different languages but failed to spark children to ask questions or start a discussion because the teachers lacked in cooperating with the theme. Instead, what could've been done was to apply stories about the meanings of the song or even select a song that they would have understood that discussed some type of struggle against a group of people.

Another activity that was attempted was a puzzle game where it featured people of various gender, race and age but again this activity failed because students focused on completing them even as the teacher asked questions. The reason I brought up these attempts is because this process of blending anti bias curriculum can be challenging and requires the ability to observe anti-bias work as an opportunity to teach. It might be difficult to know where to start, and there isn't always an easy answer. It is crucial for teachers to find a balance between addressing children's needs and not

upsetting families. So I've decided for my advocacy action I would like to create a program to support educators and parents so that in turn they can then proceed to implementing an Anti-bias curriculum. For my advocacy plan to work I would need to bring my idea to the PTA at the school I'm currently working at and with their support we will then bring it to the principal to get it approved. My first step will have to be creating workshops/seminars, the first couple of workshop/ seminar will discuss the meaning of bias and implicit- bias and show examples of how they may look in and out of the school setting, the goal for this activity is to have educators and parents realize that they play a grand roll in their children's bias and implicit bias ways. Then the next workshops/seminars will be an activity where educators and parents will be sent into small groups and given cards with many difficult questions asked by children about gender, race and sexuality. As a group they must work together to give at least three possible ways they could answer there questions, to get everyone openly comfortable to speak and share their thoughts, but the overall outcome for this workshop/seminar is to have parents/educator realize how much easier it is to answer these questions with the support of each other. Another workshop/seminar will be to show articles and videos showing various ways others have taught or tried to teach anti-bias curriculum. Next set is showing examples of successful activities and some that have failed and the reasons they were successful and the reasons they failed. Showing these activities allows for the groups to see what works and what doesn't and will allow them to brainstorm ideas of what they think can work for their students. I can now take the steps to get the principal's approval to use at least two classes to participate in my workshops/seminars

and with the support and approval of the parents and teachers within these two classrooms we will then document the process.

With all the collected data and filmed documentations I can now successfully create a program where I could continue the process of having more workshops/seminars to support more parents/teachers. The next step would be to create social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube where I will upload a bit of the documented films and also mention that you would like to see these programs in almost every school. For the large advocacy action I would ask my supporters to embark on a mission to take my idea to a town hall meeting to bring awareness and see if I could get funding to expand my programs to other schools. I would explain my envision of gradually assisting in implementing anti-bias curriculum within schools with the help of educators and families.

I chose to write about anti bias curriculum in schools because in reality, bias exists in all aspects of our society. If we truly wish to eradicate prejudice and bias then we should start with young minds in our education system. This issue is personally meaningful to me because I would like to live in a world where children are taught that we all have our differences as individuals but to live in the world, it's important we learn to respect our differences and also understand that those differences don't make anybody inferior or superior. This topic impacts me as an early childhood educator because it's important to me that the students I work with now and my future students to truly understand the real differences between people in an informed and educated way, and I want them to

understand that in life everybody has physical and social qualities that are different but we all have to learn how to live with each other and respect one another.