

Diversity and Inclusive Learning Environments

Jane Cawley

Inclusion means welcome!

For most young children, the first place for active participation outside the family is our child care classrooms. In this new 'community' we expect a great deal: to leave the familiarity of home; to meet new people who may look, act and speak differently from themselves; and to "fit in" successfully with these strangers as learners and friends.

One of the goals of high quality child care programs is to help children become sensitive to issues of bias and to develop anti-bias skills. A multicultural approach to working with young children is based on appreciating many human differences. The obvious ones include culture, race, occupation, income level, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and physical ability and disability.

Research suggests that children as young as 2 will use gender labels and the names of colours. By 3 years of age children have a growing awareness of gender and racial differences and may be noticing differences in people's abilities. We begin by fo-

cusing on the children, families, and staff repre-

they are; drawing and talking about their lives, supporting positive feelings about one's self, family, race, culture, and community.



sented in our programs. With them at the center, we expand outward. We start with activities that encourage children to share who

In fact, young children do notice differences. Children make comparisons among themselves, looking at the ways they are both similar and different. They quickly learn from their environment to attach values to

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A Message from the Director

Dear Colleagues,

We had a wonderful fall settling into our new location at 6208 Quinpool Road. We followed the large admissions of 2009 with a record breaking 1st year class of 50+ students entering the program in 2010. We know the ECE community will benefit from the increased number of graduates. Mark your calendars and make plans to join us at our annual Job Fair on Wednesday, February 9, 2011 from 3:30 to 5:30. This is an opportunity for our students to network with potential employers and for you to accept resumes from potential candidates. For those looking to book meeting or training space, I am pleased to let you know that College is now able to accommodate groups looking for evening or weekend rentals. Please call for details.

Jane Cawley, Executive Director, NSCECE

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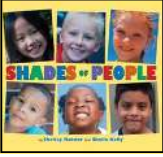
A publication informing the early childhood education community of events, services and professional development opportunities offered by the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education

Please circulate and post this newsletter!

**E-mail: info@nscece.ca
to be added to our e-mail list or
visit our website at
www.nscece.ca**

The Shades of People: A Curriculum Story

Lisa Armstrong



A little boy was being picked up by his mother, just as she came in to the classroom so did another little girl's Grandfather. The little boy looked at his friend and then at her Grandfather and said "You can't be her grampy because you have light skin and she has dark skin like me."

It was that moment that gave me the idea to read the story *Shades of People* to open up a conversation about the shades of people. During circle time I showed the children the book. Before reading it I asked them if they knew what the shades of people meant. The little boy who had previously noticed the difference said "It means the different colours of people." I told him

he was right and opened the book. I asked the children what they noticed about all the faces they saw.

At first the children only noticed that the people were all smiling. Then I asked what else they noticed. Looking harder the children noticed that the people were different colours. In the story it talked about how even in the same family there can be many shades of people.



I read the story, the children sat listening and looking, and then I saw the children begin to compare their skin by placing their hands next to one another. This gave me another idea; I asked the children if they would like to take a picture to show all the shades of our friends in the classroom. They were very excited to do this. The first photo was of all the children lying on their backs in a circle and their smiling faces looking up. In the next photo the children laid on their bellies and placed their hands in the circle.

The children were so receptive to this exploration that I created a documentation board to share this experience with families and staff at the centre. Next I created a board continued from this experience to show the shades of people in our classroom. Each of the children had a picture taken and this was added to our board. The children are noticing themselves and their differences daily. They have now begun talking about their eyes and hair being different too.

This entire experience has opened a world of conversation and experiences to share with each other. Multicultural crayons, markers, and paper were available on our art shelf. Our classroom always reflected a wide variety of shades, cultures, and people in all areas, but now children are aware of it and appreciate it so much more. Comparing themselves to crayons, dolls, and story books has been a wonderful experience for everyone.

A special thank-you to my co-workers Steven Smith and Sebastian Schlosser.



Lisa Armstrong graduated from NSCECE in 2009 and works at Edward Jost Children's Centre.

Inclusive Learning Environments (Cont.)

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those differences and to mimic the dominant society's discriminatory behavior unless those biases and behaviors are challenged. Children need help in recognizing and challenging bias rather than internalizing it.

Children will learn that different is OK. This creates the foundation for respecting and valuing differences beyond their own families and communities.

Is your environment bias-free? Does it reflect diversity?

Children, families, and teachers need to see and interact with materials that reflect themselves as well as a variety of cultures, gender roles, ages and abilities.

• Identify materials that reflect negative or biased stereotypes.

• Add multicultural and gender diverse toys. Many toy companies have dolls and other toys that are representative of various races, ethnicities, and disabilities.



• Incorporate pictures and representations that are diverse. If all the pictures in your class are of girls, add some pictures of boys. Include pictures of children with disabilities, families that are racially or culturally diverse, and children from various backgrounds.

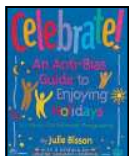
• Make sure the books in your classroom do not overtly depict stereotypes. We all have favorite books from our childhoods, but those are not always appropriate and bias-free.

• Make sure that your environment is as accessible to individuals with disabilities as much as possible, and make reasonable accommodations as needed.

Jane Cawley teaches a class called Inclusive Learning Environments (ECE 213) to NSCECE students.

In the Resource Centre

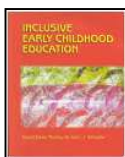
The Resource Centre has many learning materials and books available to support you in your work creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.



Celebrate an Anti-bias Guide to Enjoying the Holidays in Early Childhood Programs (375.10 Bi)
Tools for addressing the “holiday question” in new, creative, and effective ways.

Inclusive Early Childhood Education: Merging Positive Behavioral Supports, Activity-Based Intervention, and Developmentally Appropriate practice (371.9 Ric)

Effective practices for inclusive settings. Theory and practice in an easy-to-understand style.

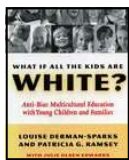


Gender Equity in Early Childhood Education (1028)

A collection of articles on the importance of providing early learning environments that are not limited by

gender stereotyping or bias.

What If All The Kids Are White? Anti-Bias Multicultural Education with Young Children and Families (370 De)



Proposes and explores seven learning themes that might help children develop a sense of caring and connection toward people outside their immediate world. Offers an anti-bias framework to help young white children resist messages of racism and give them the skills they need to thrive in multicultural world.

Supporting Indigenous Children's Development (370 Bal)

Describes the partnership that lead to the development of the concept of a “generative curriculum”. This approach supports community capacity to design, deliver, and evaluate culturally appropriate programs for young children.

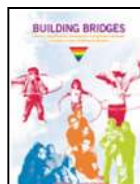


The Challenge Of Children's Rights For Canada (362.7 Cov)

Using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child this book focuses on the challenge of changing the view of children as parental property to one where children are independent bearers of rights.

Building Bridges: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender and Queer Families in Early Childhood Education (306.8 Jan)

This resource addresses questions that commonly arise when ECE teachers meet a LGBTQ parent family for the first time.



These books are just a sampling of the many adult resources dealing with diversity issues in the Resource Centre collection. You will also find over 100 children's picture books that depict a range of cultures, races, abilities, and identities.

Related Materials in the Resource Centre

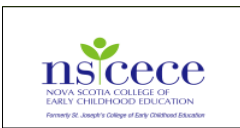
- Multilingual Welcome to Child Care Booklet (I 023)
- Diverse Faces Puzzle Set (P 625)
- Cultural Profiles Information (I 013)
- Traditional Memory Match (G 207)
- I Never Forget a Face (G 208)
- Diverse Families Set (DP 811)
- Differing Abilities Play Set (C825)
- World Playground (CD 041)
- Association de Mots (L 420)
- Multicultural Instruments (CM 09)

Resource Centre services are offered with support from the Department of Community Services, Early Childhood Education Training Initiative.

Resource Centre Professional Development Opportunities for Centres or Groups

- Reaching In ... Reaching Out - Promoting Resiliency in Young Children in Child Care (2 day training)
- The Encouraging Classroom: Social Problem Solving for Preschoolers (full day workshop)
- Magical Environments (1/2 day workshop)
- Meeting the Challenge: Effective Strategies for Challenging Behaviours (full day or 3 sessions)
- What are we doing here? Reconnecting with your vision (documentation visit + workshop)
- Tumble Bugs Active Play (1/2 day leader training)
- The Affective Curriculum (five, 3-hour workshops focused on cultural competence, self-esteem, optimism, problem solving, and emotional intelligence)
- Hold a Staff Meeting or Work Bee in the Resource Centre

Have a professional development need you don't see listed here? Call Carrie Melsom, NSCECE Resource Centre Coordinator at 423-7114 ext. 227 to discuss the possibility of a workshop designed for your centre or group.



6208 Quinpool road (2nd Floor)
Halifax, NS B3L 1A3
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www.nscece.ca



First year students use the Resource Centre. (Fall 2010)

At the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education, we provide an opportunity for students to study and gain experience in Early Childhood Education through a diverse range of courses and practical settings.

We are proud to lay a foundation for the personal and professional growth and development of our students. It is our hope and goal that NSCECE graduates continue to learn, practice and reflect throughout their years in early childhood education.



Join the crowd—become a member today!

Take advantage of the many services provided with a NSCECE Resource Centre membership

Resources for the early childhood community



To download an Information Brochure or Membership Form visit www.nscece.ca

E-mail: resourcecentre@nscece.ca

Tel: (902) 423-7114 ext. 227



Diversity On The Doorstep—Responding to a Changing Community

Cathy Lamb

As the Director of a daycare in a low income housing area for the past 19 years I have seen many changes take place within the community. One change that has affected the daycare and the way we offer our program has been the influx of immigrant families to our area. Within the past 5 years we have seen the community change. What was once a traditionally “White and Black” neighborhood has become a more diverse community rich with new cultures, languages, and religions. Families from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Kenya and many more have made this community their new home. What has this meant to our centre?

We have looked first at our staff. Do we reflect the people that we serve? We have hired two new staff within the past four years who are new Canadians themselves. They speak many different languages and know what it is like to come to a new country where everything is new and a challenge. These staff are able to com-

municate with many of our families who struggle with English. They are able to make children feel welcome when they come to the center and can help them assimilate into their new environment.

We also looked at our program. Holidays that we traditionally celebrated are not celebrated by many of our families. We now have Eid, Kwanza, Ramadan, Old Christmas, and Norooz among others. Previously we had many families taking time off at Christmas; now we have a greater number of children attending at this time. They take special days off at various other times of the year. We have also made changes to our menu. Foods such as pork have been eliminated and new items have been added. We are trying to incorporate menu items that reflect the community.

Another area that has been a challenge is that many families come from cultures where the father and males in the household are superior to women. Our staff are women and it is sometimes difficult to

help families with this view appreciate that Canadian culture values equality. Many times we have spoken to a father only to find that if he doesn't agree the issue is ignored. We find that when there is an issue speaking to the parents together is the answer. We have a lot of dialogue about rules being for all the children and that we treat all children equally. This cultural difference has been the biggest learning curve for us as a program.

For us, diversity means recognizing and accepting that all people are not the same. We have accepted the change in our community by celebrating and valuing the people who call our community home. When I walk into the centre and see the different cultures and children accepting one another I know that the changes we've faced as a centre have been wonderful learning experience for all of us.

Cathy Lamb is Director of Bayers Westwood Day Care Centre. She participates in The Leading Edge, a discussion group for early childhood administrators run by the NSCECE Resource Centre.