

Practical ways to explore and promote diversity in early learning services

Transcript

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Maree Kirkwood

There are a variety of ways for everybody to engage and explore diversity. Everyone should have a voice in learning communities. So this is vital for the individual, and collective wellbeing, and in providing an inclusive community. Consider your communication with families, be inclusive and use respectful, appropriate language that does not exclude anyone. Be aware of educational, and literacy levels, and what means of communication best suits your learning community. A link will be provided for one of our Be You modules, Include and it elaborates in more detail about using those policies and procedures in an intentional way to acknowledge diversity.

Your learning community can develop policies and procedures that outline clear expectations of inclusive practices and legislative requirements, take advantage of Cultural Competency Training and other forms of professional development. These can support you to understand the experience of others who you might not know well and to better understand the challenges some members of your local community might be facing. What is cultural competence? Cultural competence begins from the understanding that we are all influenced by the different social, emotional, and organisational cultures around us.

When we recognise that our beliefs and values aren't the only ways of seeing, and doing, and being, we are opened up to learning about other perspectives. We understand and relate to others better, and build a sense of belonging among children and family when we explore similarities and differences in our cultural expectations.

I've mentioned that some people through the posts about reviewing curriculum and programs. You and your learning community can review curriculum materials including books and resources to ensure they include positive attributes about inclusion and diversity. This includes being alert to how learning materials can impact the engagement of children and young people from diverse backgrounds.

Viki Rozsas

I also like to mention just quickly that when you think about diversity and how we understand it, we might include and consult a number of different frameworks on a local, state or federal level. We might think about the NQS, and how our actions, and our goals can be reflected in a Quality Improvement Plan.

Remember, there are many ways we can gather and share information to grow our understanding and many ways to learn. When this is done with warmth, with kindness, with respect, empathy, and genuineness, relationships of trust, mutual respect also develop.

A word about seeking to understand in the moment, being a mindful educator is to be present and be aware of what is happening in each of the moments throughout the time we work with children, becoming aware of the way we as educators focus and tune in to what is happening within the program, enabling and connecting with the present moment. This wonderful quote by Shayne Hinton; "Being aware of every child and tuning into them will promote children's sense of self and grow understanding of the diversity in our places."

Ultimately, the best learning happens when children and adults see the community around them, value diversity, modelling this in everyday practice, and communicating both intention and understanding. Helping all children to understand difference, encourages them to feel good about who they are. It also helps children to understand where they fit in, in the world and to appreciate diversity in others. You know that when the environment is safe, supportive and inclusive for everyone, then diversity and everyone's identity is acknowledged and respected.