

Promoting Diversity in a Toddler Classroom

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What does diversity look like in a classroom setting with young children?

Teaching for diversity, equity and inclusion helps us acknowledge and embrace differences and helps us transform the way we think, teach, learn, and act such that all experiences and ways of being are handled with fairness and justice.

In this past year, the children have been interested in the family portrait wall in the classroom. Teachers have discussed how all members make up a family dynamic. They talked about how moms, dads and siblings looked different from one another. In the writing area, teachers printed family pictures that included the teachers too. The children would name each family member in their household. The classroom was reading Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom, and the interest in letters sparked and interest where the children wanted to write and spell their names. Children & teachers would work together to trace letters and then spell the children's names while singing the Busy-busy, bumblebee song.



Classroom family portrait wall. Children are reminded of home but also look at each others' families. They focus on similarities & differences.

Supporting Diversity in a Toddler Classroom



In the following weeks, the children noticed pictures of people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds along with their siblings' pictures on the walls. They would point to the pictures on the walls and doors; people looked different from one another. They would then connect them to their families and the baby dolls they were playing with in the dramatic play area. Teachers brought books from the library and placed them in every area of the classroom; the books were about families and babies from around the world, books about cultures and race, along with books that highlighted diversity. The children would pick out their books and read in groups, independently, and with teachers. They would turn each page and look at the pictures carefully, studying what they saw.

One child noticed that a teacher's skin tone was different than one baby doll they were holding and their own skin color. The discussed how the teacher was from another country and what outfits, food, and languages she spoke. During the next few weeks, teachers displayed different languages and how different moms from around the world carry their babies and how people dress. Pictures were added to the writing table, dramatic play, and reading space.

A teacher from a different country works in the classroom next door and she will communicate in Spanish with the children. They have learned a few words and phrases in Spanish; teachers began adding words all around the classroom in Spanish along with English translations.

Connection to Ohio's Early Learning Standards

Language & Literacy Development

- Book reading
- Tracing letters and names
- Learning new vocabulary

Social Emotional Development

- Interacting with each other and sharing stories about their families
- Noticing and comparing skin tones in our classroom community

Approaches Towards Learning

- Exploring baby dolls in dramatic play from various ethnicities
- Showing their peers different family members in their households



Reading books about diversity. Noticing how all are different, but are the same

Conclusion

Acceptance of diversity encourages children to appreciate and respect differences in others. Infants and toddlers will enjoy babies, dolls, bilingual books, and multi-cultural friends representing many ethnicities.

It is important that policy makers, educators, teachers, and parents pay more attention to the diversity in children's social and emotional development. There is a need to integrate research more rigorously, specifically investigations of the development of socially and culturally diverse children.



Reference

- Cultivating Diversity, Equity, and inclusion in Early Education Environments, 2022, [Citation, Linking, and Syndication Policy | Share to Learn \(resilienteducator.com\)](#)

"In diversity there is beauty and there is strength."

- Maya Angelou.