

Same or Different: Stories about Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

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INTRODUCTION

The teachers have been conscious about making sure that the common thread in preparing curriculum this year focuses on opportunities for conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion. One of the first activities focused on the hands of the children and teachers. What things were the same for all of them (five fingers, thumbs, bones), and what was different (size hands, color of the skin).

This led to a discussion about fingerprints and the teachers provided ink pads and paper to the children. They were able to put their fingers in the ink and make fingerprints all over their paper. As they were making the prints, they used magnifying glasses in order to see the patterns more clearly. They discovered that while they all had fingerprints, the swirls and designs were all different.

Another area of focus was on the eyes of everyone, and pictures were taken of each child's eyes for the opportunity for closer examination and observations. They noticed that everyone had two eyes which consisted of a colored part and a white part. The difference was that the shape of the eyes and colored parts were different for each child.



Colors of the World markers, crayons, pencils, and paint were introduced to the children to enhance the discussion of skin tones. As children were choosing colors to represent their personal skin tones, teachers were available for discussion about the choice of colors chosen, as well as providing mirrors for closer observations. As the children began to choose markers or crayons, or mix paint, they discovered that they were not just one color, but rather a blend of several shades. There were many times that they could see that even though their own skin looked different from a friend's skin, they shared a common shade within the mix.

In taking a next step in helping to understand how all the children could be the same yet different, the teachers introduced the concept that they were like a book. Books have a front and back cover, and so did each of the children. A book has a spine to hold it all together, and so did the children. Inside each book is a different story to tell, and each child contained a different story as well. In order to make this abstract thought more concrete, the teachers had the children draw pictures of their families, create self-portraits, and write a story about themselves. Families of the children were contacted and asked to share a favorite memory or story about their child, and this too became part of that child's story.



CONNECTION TO OHIO'S EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Social and Emotional Development:

- Identify diversity in human characteristics and view how people are similar and different
 - Example: Noticing how we're all humans but we each have different ideas, interests, and experiences
- Compare own characteristics to those of others
 - Example: Using tools such as magnifying glasses, pictures, and mirrors to observe and compare the unique traits of our hands, eyes, hair and skin color

Language and Literacy Development:

- Describe familiar people, places, things, and experiences
 - Example: Students took turns sharing their family photos with friends, describing the people and experiences in each picture. They were excited to share these special moments with friends
- Use drawings or other visuals to add details to verbal descriptions
 - Example: Students created family and self-portraits then described the people in their drawings

Cognition and General Knowledge:

- Identify similarities and differences of personal, family and cultural characteristics, and those of others
 - Example: Students asking why their skin color is different than others and discussing how melanin affects the pigment within our skin
- Develop an awareness of his/her personal history.
 - Example: Looking at family photos, pointing to family members and telling others about a shared experience



CONCLUSION

At this age, children's thinking is limited, distorted, and inconsistent. For these reasons, it is easy for them to believe stereotypes and form pre-prejudices. In the Anti-Bias Curriculum (1989), Louise Derman Sparks states, "The goals are to facilitate children's awareness that their racial identity does not change, to help them understand that they are part of a large group with similar characteristics (not "different" from everyone else) and to foster their desire to be exactly who they are."

RESOURCE

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Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Biles, B. (1994). Activities that promote racial and cultural awareness. In Todd, C.M. (Ed.), "Family child care connections", 4(3), pp. 1p:4. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.

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