*Reflections, Part One –Nurturing Your Own Empathy and Understanding Behavior*

*7/22/2020*

*Reflections from Kathy:* Chapter one reflections on teacher bias. Bias are everywhere! As educators, we must be sensitive and reflective to our bias. I believe mindful reflection is so important when we examine our bias. Before a teacher can accept and embrace diversity in the classroom, he or she must reflect on the challenges that may interfere with acceptance. As a novice teacher, I had to take time to open my lens to new diversity and cultures. As I learned and embraced new perceptions, my world opened up to new ideas and so did my classroom with new activities and rituals for my children. Becoming a reflective ‘*educarer*’ to my children and families helped me to understand better my explicit and implicit biases. Using NAEYC’s Ethics for children, families, colleagues, and community was a compass also guided me as a novice teacher. Teachers’ attitudes also need to be examined. As the authors described in chapter one, we cannot assume a family’s reason for not coming to conference or missing a meeting. Each family is on their own journey, and we must be sensitive to bias that could influence the child. This is a ‘lifelong’ process for teachers. Our journey as educators is a constant process of self-examination of our bias and also transformation. We have a responsibility to children and families to work toward recognizing, acknowledging, and eliminating our bias and relearning who we are.

From chapter two, I embraced the eight strategies. Many times I would ask myself the hard questions. By doing this, I was more spiritually open to new ideas and values. My number one way to build empathy was to model warm and responsive actions. Our group talked a lot about Becky Bailey’s *Conscious Discipline* and how important it is to welcome children each morning into the classroom and with a smile. Being kind, compassion and carefully selecting picture books, games, toys, and songs are also important. I love building a library for my families with resources and parenting books for different identities …. Sharing cook books, music videos, picture book really make a difference. It’s important to have an open-door policy to welcome guests of all talents and to introduce new traditions into the classroom. I believe it is very important to tap into families interests. I did this when teaching a co-op. Each family had the opportunity to introduce a family circle with their favorite interests. From dancing, to football, to cooking, to sewing—our children so enjoyed these family adventures. I wanted my children to celebrate heroes in their own families. Finally, it is important to embrace and reflect on the progress you, as a teacher, is doing to deepen your understanding of culture and embracing empathy into the classroom. To create classrooms with empathy, children need caregivers who are kind, caring, and intentional.

Cultural diversity and children: Our group discussed the power of children’s literature and also having mirrors in the classroom, so children can SEE themselves. I loved this idea! We discussed the artwork and being child-focused. Children bring their own culture and funds of knowledge into the classroom, and when they do, the entire class is visible! Everyone participates and contributes to the classroom community. Our group also shared the difference between difference between ‘equal,’ and ‘equitable.’ When we consider being equal, it’s sharing the same materials and activities with children. To be equitable, it taking the next step to including the children’s abilities, strengths… it’s embracing developmentally appropriate practice! Culture certainly counts for forming authentic, caring relationships with families and building strong family connections. We need to honor children’s cultures and their life experiences. We need to learn from families too. This chapter reminded me how important it is to embrace, and honor, all children in our classroom culture.

July 23, 2020

*Reflections from Trisha:* Here are my reflections from Wednesday's discussion of Part 1:

- In examining our biases, both implicit and explicit, we can improve our relationships and reactions to those around us. Harvard has developed a series of [implicit bias tests](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html)to help examine where our own biases may lie.

- Our conversation about empathy centered around the importance of the caregiver to create an environment where empathy is modeled and encouraged, with both children and adults. The physical environment is important, as well, and families should see reflections of their culture in children's books, art, and communication.

- A comment was made about 'being transparent and vulnerable' and that really stuck with me. I think in order to grow, we have to put ourselves in situations that can be uncomfortable, so being open to being transparent and vulnerable is my goal for the weeks ahead.

- Names that came up for further exploration: Becky Bailey (Conscious Discipline), Teaching Tolerance

Looking forward to continuing our journey next week!

*Reflections from Brigitte:* I was very surprised to learn and confront my prejudices and biases as it related to other people of color, interactions with white children, and people from the LGBTQI+ communities. I have decided to consciously make myself aware of my actions and thoughts before engaging with those communities. I have made a plan of questions to ask, taking breaths for clarity, and acknowledging that my change in behavior will be a work in progress.

I will be open to approach each interaction with an open mind and continue to find resources that will help me be confident in forging these new relationships. I will extend myself grace as I learn to really treat everyone with respect and being enough no matter what society may say in a subconscious way.

I am looking forward to the next discussion in our book club!

July 24, 2020

*Reflections from Denise:* Much of what I have read so far falls in line with our Head Start/Early Head Start standards of family focus, including empathizing and supporting families through difficult family situations, honoring their culture, parenting style, values, and  making sure that we are promoting diversity, inclusion, and broad anti-bias standards. I do feel that we have a lot of room for growth, however, and that I have a lot of room for growth...I am striving to be a better person every day.

While I have always felt that each and every person, every child, has so much to offer, if we provide them the opportunity to share their individuality openly, without fear, without resistance, without criticism, but instead with open arms and open hearts for those many facets of diversity that make them wonderfully who they are, I am now recognizing the changes I need to make to ensure that happens with everyone I meet. I look forward to learning more and growing so much more.

7/25/2020