



REFLECTING ON
ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION IN ACTION:
THE EARLY YEARS

FACILITATOR AND VIEWER GUIDEBOOK

by Debbie LeeKeenan and John Nimmo

antibiasleadersece.com

BEHIND THE SCENES

As the co-producers of this film, we bring our own identities and positionalities to this project. Debbie (pictured to the left) is Chinese-American and the child of first-generation immigrant working-class parents.



In contrast, John (pictured to the right) is a White Australian with Anglo-European, upper-class roots, who immigrated to the USA as an adult.

We both identify as cis-gender and able-bodied, enculturated in Christian traditions, each in heterosexual marriages with grown children. Our friendship and collegial relationship has spanned 30 years in a variety of ECE professional contexts, including as program directors, authors, and co-instructors. We are committed to and see anti-bias education as part of a larger struggle to dismantle White Supremacy and systemic oppression.

Preparation for this film began in 2018, with filming in 2020 and post-production work completed in early 2021. The teachers featured in the film work at the Epiphany Early Learning Preschool, Seattle, Washington State; Southwest Early Learning Bilingual Preschool, Seattle, Washington State; and Pacific Primary School, San Francisco, California. Debbie and John worked with the teachers at the three sites in preparation for the actual filming, including anti-bias workshops for the whole program, meetings with the directors, and individual coaching sessions with the teachers about anti-bias issues in their particular classrooms. Filming in San Francisco took place during the momentous uprising for racial justice and the Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020 and the continuing spread of the Covid-19 pandemic leading to the wearing of masks in schools. All of the scenes with children were filmed as they happened in the classroom.

An anti-bias perspective and goals are relevant to all types of programs, while implementation will look different depending on the children, families, educators, and communities. The teachers' interactions and activities with children in this film are adaptable to all early childhood education settings. What is key, is that the teachers take the time to engage in research and outreach to community resources to ensure that they can bring depth and authenticity to the topics they explore with children.

One film cannot show everything about anti-bias education. We focused on teachers' reflections and examples of classroom practice for preschool-age children (3–5-year-olds). However, these can be the basis for thinking about applications for younger and older children. In addition, the film's focus on teachers' classroom practice, does not mean that the role of families and communities isn't important; that aspect of ABE work is also essential.

The film is organized around the 4 anti-bias education goals, and intentionally not by social identity (e.g., race, gender), in order to emphasize intersections across identities. Representing the diversity of all educators' and children's social identities could not be done in a meaningful and respectful way. For instance, there is an absence of visible ability differences and Indigenous folks in the classroom vignettes. While the programs are non-profit programs serving a range of income-backgrounds, they are not public programs.

The film, *Reflecting on Anti-bias Education in Action: The Early Years* (48 minutes), was created for early childhood educators to visualize what anti-bias education looks like in the classroom. There is no recipe, no model for implementing anti-bias education. This approach involves critical thinking, risk-taking, and deep understanding of the complexity of the issues and your context. It is more than a series of activities and teaching strategies. Yet, it is doable!

This film is a provocation to generate dialogue about how to bring the approach into your practice. To further this conversation, we created this guidebook to provide additional resources and to pose provocations and questions for reflection about each vignette in the film. This guidebook is intended for facilitating professional development using all or parts of the film, as well as an aid for classroom educators viewing the film alone or with colleagues.

Produced by Debbie LeeKeenan and John Nimmo, the film features vignettes of anti-bias strategies in early childhood classrooms interspersed with teachers reflecting on their practice. Debbie and John partnered with filmmaker Filiz Efe McKinney of Brave Sprout Productions (pictured below, 3rd from the left) to create a film that shifts the focus away from the talking heads of experts and on to the voices and actions of teachers committed to making equity and diversity a part of their daily work. By taking viewers into diverse early childhood classrooms, the film demonstrates the importance of teacher reflection on identity, context, and practice in anti-bias education and provides a much-needed resource for teacher education and professional development.

Louise Derman-Sparks was the film's senior advisor. Louise produced the first anti-bias film in 1989, and is co-author (with Julie Olsen-Edwards and Catherin Goins) of *Anti-Bias Education for Our Children and Ourselves* (2020), and (with Debbie and John) of *Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs: A Guide for Change* (2015). The film's theoretical and research framework is based on these two books and was also guided by the NAEYC Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement (2019).



WHAT IS ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION (ABE)?

Anti-bias education places diversity and equity goals at the heart of everything we do in early childhood. It is a stance that is part of everything you do. We recognize that very young children are observing, experiencing, and actively making sense of social identities and biases. They have a deep and empathetic sense of fairness. We begin by affirming each child and family's social identities and cultural ways of being. Building on the strengths and knowledge children bring to school, anti-bias teachers seek the active engagement of families and communities. Anti-bias teachers observe carefully, think critically, and reflect deeply. More than a set of curriculum activities and teaching strategies, this approach recognizes and offers children and adults the tools to actively resist bias and systemic oppression in our society; it is a commitment to social justice. An anti-bias approach supports the goals of anti-racist teaching and culturally-sustaining pedagogies.

ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION GOALS

The film is organized around the 4 interconnected goals of anti-bias education, which build on each other and are relevant to all children and adults. Teachers create the learning environment to foster these goals. (Derman-Sparks, Edwards, & Goins, 2020, pp.15-17):

- Goal 1: Identity:** Demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
- Goal 2: Diversity:** Express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
- Goal 3: Justice:** Recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
- Goal 4: Action:** Demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination.

USING THE FILM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In this guidebook, we provide suggestions and resources to support using the specific vignettes in the film as tools for in-service and pre-service professional development, and to guide your own viewing.

You could:

- Screen the entire film (48 minutes) and then discuss it.
- Screen separate sections organized around the 4 anti-bias goals (about 10 minutes each).
- Use the specific topical vignettes directly from the film or use the separate longer vignettes available on the website (5-10 minutes).
- Closed captions can be turned on to show all dialogue in the film (currently in English and Spanish, with Chinese to be added); permanent English subtitles are included for Spanish dialogue and some difficult to hear children's dialogue.

Some important steps:

- This film is an introduction to anti-bias education, and does not address all of its complexities. The film should be preceded and followed by additional professional development and reading depending on the familiarity participants have with ABE (see resources).
- Introduce the film and share the context and purpose provided in this guidebook (e.g., Behind the Scenes). Engage viewers in considering what the teachers may have done before and after the scenes in the film to ensure depth in children's understanding.
- Provide some general prompts before viewing the film, and then reflective thinking prompts or protocols to structure the after-film conversation (see protocols on the School Reform Initiative website, and other resources provided in this guidebook). For instance, this "thinking routine" is modified from Project Zero's work in *Making Learning Visible* (2015):
 - Connect – How do the ideas presented in the film connect to what you know about ABE?
 - Extend – What new ideas did you get that extended or broadened your thinking?
 - Challenge – What challenges or puzzles have come to mind?
- Connect the scenes and teacher reflections in the film to the viewer's own practice and classroom dilemmas around diversity and equity. Ultimately, the goal is for viewers to critically examine and grow their own ABE practice.
- Having correct language/terms for talking about diversity and identities is important. These terms often change over time to ensure greater clarity or to emphasize new thinking. Teachers need to research preferred terms, but always be open to acknowledging how people want to identify.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AS YOU VIEW THE FILM

The anti-bias approach involves being responsive to your context, including partnering with families and community. Nobody has all the answers and this field is dynamic and changing. The teachers in this film made decisions that may differ from your own. Mistakes will be made; critical reflection on these missteps and planning new actions helps us to grow. We are life-long learners. Ultimately, we engage in anti-bias education because it is crucial to building a fairer and more just world.

- What values and images of the child do you see at play in the film? How do these align with your own and of those of your community?
- What are the strategies teachers in the film use to support anti-bias education?
- What enabled these teachers to take on this type of curriculum? What might the teachers need to have done before they started?
- How would you involve families in anti-bias work? How would you approach their questions, concerns, and support?
- What would you do differently in your classroom and program? What challenges might you face?
- How might your intersecting social identities (e.g., race, gender, language) influence this work?
- How is anti-bias education integrated into the daily routines, environment and curriculum in the film?
- What resonates with you in each vignette? What causes discomfort? What do these feelings say about you as an educator?

GUIDE TO EACH CHAPTER OF THE FILM

OPENING (0:00-2:09)

Anti-bias education requires some self-reflection and looking at your own biases.

GOAL 1: IDENTITY (2:10-11:56)



Self-Portrait: Teacher Veronica facilitates a small group self-portrait activity (2:20-6:45).

This learning experience was part of a much longer investigation into self-portraits and identities.

Key messages:

- The teacher carefully listens to and observes the children's comments and actions regarding human similarities and differences. She responds by supporting their thinking.
- Repeated and revisited experiences allow for depth and complexity about identity.

Provocations:

- What strategies does Teacher Veronica use to support ABE?
- Veronica draws attention to the children's discussion of "eye lashes." How does this conversation support the "Identity" goal, and how would you follow-up this conversation?

What next in the classroom?

- Read *Just like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists* (2013) or one of the children's books below. Each child dictates a story about themselves to accompany their self-portrait.

Children's Books:

- *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists* by Harriet Rohmer (ed) (2013)
- *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz (2002)
- *Our Skin: A First Conversation about Race* by Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli & Isabel Roxas (2021)
- *Parker Looks up: An Extraordinary Moment* by Parker Curry & Jessica Curry (2019)
- *Eyes That Kiss in the Corners* by Joanna Ho & Dung Ho (2021)

Good Morning: Teacher Karla sings a good morning song in different languages with the children at meeting time (6:45-9:02).

Key Messages:

- Home language is an integral part of one's culture and social identity.
- Reaching out to families to learn about their home language and culture.
- Taking risks to reach out beyond your own experiences.

Provocations:

- How do you feel about using songs/words in languages you do not speak or are not in your classroom community?
- In what ways do songs and music more generally foster enjoyment of diversity?

What's next in the classroom?

- Invite families to share favorite songs in different languages.
- Have families share songs about a common theme (e.g., stars, birthdays, friends) in their heritage language.
- Learn names in different languages for commonly used objects in the classroom and at home.

Resources/ Children's Books:

- *The Essentials: Dual Language Learners in Diverse Environments in Preschool and Kindergarten* by Iliana Alanís, María G. Arreguín-Anderson, Irasema Salinas-González (2021, NAEYC)
- *Hello World! Greetings in 42 Languages Around the Globe* by Manya Stojic (2002)
- *Your Name Is a Song* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow & Luisa Uribe (2020)
- *The Day Saida Arrived* by Susana Gómez Redondo & Sonja Wimmer (2020)

Sharing Heritage: Teacher Karla reads a book about making tortillas, a tradition from her home in Mexico, and children use a tortilla press with playdough (9:02-10:13).

Key messages:

- ABE requires teacher awareness of their own social identities, histories, knowledge, cultural wealth, biases, marginalization, and assumptions.
- Being willing to share who you are with children, families and colleagues (when meaningful) helps everyone feel comfortable sharing who they are.



Provocations:

- What do you know about your various social identities? What more do you want to know?
- What do you think/feel about sharing your cultural background and social identities with children and families? Are there times when you feel it is inappropriate to share your cultural background and identities? Why?
- How do you ensure that cultural sharing doesn't become superficial or stereotypical, and only focused on the more visible elements like food and clothing?

Children's Books:

- *Round Is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes* by Roseanne Greenfield Thong & John Parra (2015)
- *Dreamers* by Yuri Morales (2018)
- *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold & Suzanne Kaufman (2018)

Environment: Teacher Nadia talks about how the environment supports ABE (10:13-11:56).

Key messages:

- The classroom physical environment provides mirrors and windows-mirrors to reflect the children and families in your program and windows to become aware of the diversity outside their experiences.
- Typical materials in the classroom environment (e.g., books, dramatic play, blocks) and curriculum resources (activity books) are chosen to reflect ABE concepts and are used intentionally by teachers as appropriate.

Provocations:

- How do we set-up the learning environment to foster learning about justice (fairness) and action for justice, building on the learning from using the teaching strategy of mirrors and windows?

Web Resources:

- Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Books (Social Justice Books) socialjusticebooks.org
- Diverse Book Finder diversebookfinder.org
- We Need Diverse Book diversebooks.org

GOAL 2: DIVERSITY (11:57-24:14)



Breakfast: Teacher Claudia facilitates a small group conversation over breakfast about differences. Teacher Veronica reflects on empathy (11:57-14:22).

Key Messages:

- ABE is integrated into all parts of the day, including conversations and planned activities with children.
- Developing empathy is part of learning about differences in people.

Provocations:

- Why is it important for children to explore how we are both the same and different from each other?
- A child confuses the name for their peer's language (Oromo) with the Spanish word "aroma" (meaning smell). How would you follow-up this exchange to support an understanding of diversity, and each child's sense of self?

Children's Books:

- *Cora Cooks Pancit* by Dorina Lazo Gilmore & Kristi Valiant (2014)
- *Fry Bread* by Kevin Noble Maillard & Juana Martinez-Neal (2019)
- *Thank you Omu* by Oge Mora (2018)
- *Lovely* by Jess Hong (2017)
- *I am Enough* by Grace Byers & Keturah A. Bobo (2018)

Building Diverse Relationships: Teacher Brian talks about helping children see a person who uses a wheelchair as a multidimensional and complex person (14:23-15:26).

Key Messages:

- Provide multiple experiences with people of a particular identity (in this case people with different abilities) to avoid stereotypes and simplistic thinking.
- ABE curriculum can emerge from people in your community.

Provocations:

- Physical disabilities tend to be more visible in children's experiences. How can we make neurodiversity visible to children in respectful ways? (Neurodiversity is variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions)

Children's Books:

- *King for A Day* by Rukhsana Khan & Christiane Kromer (2019)
- *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You* by Sonia Sotomayor & Rafael López (2019)
- *Friends in the Park* by Rochele Bunnett & Carl Sanhlhoff (1993)



Sharing our Identities with Children: Teacher Joyce talks about responding to children's questions about her skin color and hair. Teacher Veronica talks about the importance of developing relationships with children and sharing your identity (15:26-17:21).

Key Messages:

- Responding to children's questions provides them with accurate information and lets children know it is OK to be curious and to talk about differences.

- Sharing who you are helps children feel comfortable sharing who they are.
- Teachers' identities can be starting points for modelling and initiating curriculum investigations.

Provocations

- What can you do when you don't know how to respond to a child's question or comment?
- Why is hair such an important part of one's identity and culture?
- Anti-bias work can be both personal and emotional. When do you feel vulnerable or uncertain about sharing some of your own stories about identity and bias with children and families?

Children's Books:

- *Hair Love* by Matthew Cherry & Vashti Harrison (2019)
- *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes & Gordon C. James (2017)
- *Big Hair, Don't Care* by Crystal Swain-Bates & Megan Bair (2013)
- *Shades of Black: Celebration of Our Children* by Sandra L. Pinkney, Myles Pinkney, Myles C. Pinkney (2006)
- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (2003)

Dramatic Play: Teachers share strategies for creating safe spaces for exploring diversity in dramatic play. (17:21-19:17)

Key Messages:

- Dramatic play can support children's exploration and understanding of similarities and differences
- Teachers can intentionally scaffold dramatic play to expand children's thinking, encourage perspective taking, and engage in problem-solving.
- Children can express their observations and ideas about diversity in many inclusive ways that don't require words, including dramatic play, drawing, building, and movement.

Provocations:

- How would you work with families to support children being free to dress outside of gender norms?
- How do you create safe spaces for children and adults to be able to express who they are?

What's next in the classroom:

- Challenge children's ideas in dramatic play by presenting them with problems and questions to take on diverse perspectives:
 - What are the different ways people can cook food?
 - What will happen if we don't have a sink with running water?
 - Where else can we sleep besides a bed?
 - How else can we carry and care for a baby besides a stroller or high chair?
 - How can we wash and dry our clothes without a washing machine or dryer?

Children's Books:

- *This Is How We Do It: One Day in the Lives of Seven Kids from around the World* by Matt Lamothe (2017)

Persona Doll: Teacher Joyce shares using persona dolls to address fairness; Teacher Maddie introduces a non-binary persona doll to a group of children (17:21-24:14).

Key Messages:

- Persona dolls are the teacher's dolls. They have their own, teacher-created, unique personality and life history, which is consistent from day to day. They only visit the classroom with adult supervision, and are treated with respect and care. They provide a way for children to reflect on their own experience, expand their thinking about diversity, teach social skills, and problem solve.



- There are strategies for both reflecting (mirrors) and extending (windows) awareness and empathy for diversity in your classroom community.
- Giving children access to new words can help them to think in more inclusive ways. Non-Binary (transequality.org) is a term used by some people who do not identify as either male or female.

Provocations:

- How might you use persona dolls in your classroom?
- What do you notice about how Teacher Maddie introduces Nash?
- Maddie tells the children Nash is non-binary and is "not sure if they are a boy or girl, so when people 'ask are you a boy or girl right now,' they just feel like saying "I'm a kid, I'm just figuring it out.'" How would you respond to children's questions or if they don't accept this response?

Resources on persona dolls:

- AmazeWorks in US amazeworks.org/education-programs/persona-dolls
- Persona Doll Training in South Africa pdt.org.za
- *Kids Like Us: Using Persona Dolls in the Classroom* by Trisha Whitney (2002)

Resources & Children's Books on gender spectrum:

- Gender Spectrum Website genderspectrum.org
- National Center for Transgender Equality transequality.org
- Learning for Justice Magazine - Gender Spectrum (2013) learningforjustice.org/magazine/summer-2013/the-gender-spectrum
- *It Feels Good to Be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity* by Theresa Thorn & Noah Grigni (2019)

GOAL 3: JUSTICE (24:15-34:59)



Teacher Nadia Talks about Fairness: Teacher Brian discusses shifting children’s thinking about what it means to experience homelessness (24:14-25:50).

Key Messages:

- Young children notice and show curiosity and concern about homelessness.
- Use community resources to provide children with accurate information about people experiencing homelessness (anyone can experience homelessness/houselessness).
- Children can use dramatic play to explore and expand their ideas about diversity.

Provocations:

- How do you talk with children about why people may experience homelessness/houselessness?
- How do you support children’s desire for solutions to homelessness and other problems of poverty in the world without being paternalistic (acting superior) or disrespectful of peoples’ dignity and agency?

Resources & Children’s Books:

- In-depth interview about homelessness: “Our Ethical Responsibility to All Children: A Conversation with Brian Silveira” by Margie Carter. *Exchange* magazine (2019) exchangepress.com
- *Still a family: A story about homelessness* by Brenda Reeves Sturgis & Jo-Shin Lee (2017)
- *Maddi’s Fridge* by Lois Brandt & Vin Vogel (2014)



Balance Board: Teacher Joyce presents a challenge to a group of children playing on the balance boards, “what if we had a friend who used a wheelchair, how could they use the balance board and play with us?” (25:50-29:24)

Key messages:

- Teachers provide intentional provocations for children to think about ABE issues.
- Children can develop ideas and solutions to make a situation fairer; Teachers treat children’s misconceptions and incomplete theories seriously and respectfully. They work with these to expand children’s understanding and to provide accurate information.
- Children can use different visual languages, as well as talking, to share their thinking about diversity (e.g., drawing, working with clay).

Provocations:

- How are the issues of unfair/fair depicted in this vignette?
- How can we create environments that are accessible to children and adults with a wide range of abilities (strengths and challenges)? (i.e., Universal Design for Learning/UDL)
- What steps would a teacher need to have taken before posing this challenge to the children?
- How might you approach this challenge differently if a community member used a wheelchair?

Resources/Children’s Books:

- *Universal Design for Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom: Teaching Children of all Languages, Cultures, and Abilities, Birth – 8 Years, 1st Edition* by Pamela Brillante &, Karen Nemeth (2017)
- *Squishy Sand* by Charlene McIver & Caroline Keys (2020)



Teacher Claudia reads “One” by Kathryn Otoshi and facilitates a discussion with children about fairness and standing up for unfairness (29:24-35:00).

Key messages:

- Children’s literature is a way to introduce anti-bias concepts and language to children and to generate discussion about what these concepts mean to them (e.g., fair/unfair, exclusion).
- Teachers are intentional about discussing anti-bias concepts, rather than only waiting for children to bring them up. They also respond to children’s comments and questions.

Provocations:

- Being fair is not the same as being equal. What does this concept mean to you? What questions do you have about it?
- How might implementing this concept look like in schools/ECE programs? How would it change what you do in your work setting? How do we discuss this concept with children?
- How is fairness and unfairness in anti-bias work different than other types of fair/unfair in early childhood?
- The book, *One*, is about learning to come together, stand up and stand together when there is something unfair. Share examples of doing this in real life.
- In the book *One*, “red is a hot head.” Explore how colors have different symbolic meanings in various cultures. Discuss the significance of colorism and how we can counteract that.
- What are the limitations and pitfalls of using non-human characters to represent human diversity and issues of bias?

Children’s Books:

- *One* by Kathryn Otoshi (2008)
- *Looking after Louis* by Lesley Ely & Polly Dunbar (2004)

GOAL 4: ACTION (35:00-45:57)



Spreading the Word: Teachers Nadia and Brian respond to racial injustice, police violence, and protests in their community (35:00-45:57).

Filming in San Francisco took place during the momentous uprising for racial justice and the continuing Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020, and the continuing spread of the Covid-19 pandemic leading to the wearing of masks in schools.

Key Messages:

- Teachers take the time to do research and to reach out to community resources about issues to ensure accuracy and depth.
- ABE strategies are most effective when grounded in people, events, and environments that are most meaningful and immediate to the learners.
- Young children are not immune from or necessarily unaware of injustice in society. Find out about and pay attention to their ideas and feelings about local and national events that widely appear in the media and in family conversations.
- ABE requires both immediate responses and longer term (planned) strategies.

Provocations:

- How did Nadia and Brian reach out to and include families and other community members in the Black Lives Matter action project? What would you need to do in your setting to ensure this kind of project would successfully happen?
- How do you decide what is appropriate for teachers to bring up and provoke rather than waiting for children to bring it up? (organic vs intentional provocations)

- Discuss differences between the meanings and implications of the concepts “Black Lives Matter” and “All Lives Matter”. Why do you think people choose to support one or the other?

Web Resources:

- 6 Reasons “All Lives Matter” Doesn’t Work - in Terms Simple Enough for a Child
parents.com/kids/responsibility/racism/reasons-all-lives-matter-doesnt-work-in-terms-simple-enough-for-a-child
- BLM principles for Kids
dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org/black-lives-matter/resources/early-childhood-elementary#13
- Black Lives Matter Website
blacklivesmatter.com/whatmatters2020-its-on-us-join-the-movement-blacklivesmatter
- How to Talk to Kids About Racism, Police Violence and George Floyd’s Death by Beverly Daniel Tatum (2020). NPR podcast
beverlydanieltatum.com/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-racism-police-violence-and-george-floyds-death

Children’s Books:

- *Enough! 20 Protesters Who Changed America* by Emily Easton & Ziyue Chen (2018)
- *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, & Ann Hazzard (2019)
- *The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander & Kadir Nelson (2019)
- *Hands Up!* by Breanna J. McDaniel & Shane W Evans (2020)

Call to Action:

Anti-bias education is the foundation of our vision for children.

No matter who you are, where you live, where you work

How will YOU bring your voice to this vision?

Collective Voices Montage (45:58-48:30)

Key Messages:

- The goals of anti-bias education are relevant for all people, with all kinds of social identities.
- Your particular social identities “portrait” influences how you experience the world, how society treats you, and what draws you to doing anti-bias education.

Provocations:

- What themes do you notice in the thoughts of the people’s voices?
- Are there points not already mentioned in the film?
- What points most resonated for you?
- How will you bring your voice to the ABE vision?



FAQS ABOUT ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION (ABE)

1. *Are children too young to do this work? Is ABE developmentally appropriate?*

Children as young as infants see, hear, and feel diversity among people. Starting at about 2 years-of-age, children may ask questions and begin to develop ideas about the meaning of these differences. As young as 3 and 4 years, they also can begin to develop discomfort and negative biases about various kinds of diversity among people (see Winkler, 2009, Children are not Colorblind: How Children Learn Race, PACE Vol. 3-No. 3).

NAEYC's most recent Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) Position Statement (2020) notes:

Throughout the early childhood years, young children continue to construct knowledge and make meaning through their interactions with adults and peers, through active exploration and play, and through their observations of people and things in the world around them.

In addition to learning language and concepts about the physical phenomena in the world around them, children learn powerful lessons about social dynamics as they observe the interactions that educators have with them and other children as well as peer interactions. Well before age 5, most young children have rudimentary definitions of their own and others' social identities that can include awareness of and biases regarding gender and race. (para 24-25)

2. *What to do if I don't know how to respond to the child's question?*

We don't need to know all the answers to do anti-bias work and respond to all of children's questions. Yet we don't want teachable/learning moments to slip away either. Be sure the children involved feel safe.

Then say, “That’s a really important question. I need to think about how we can talk about it,” or “let’s go talk to XXXX who might be able to help us talk about your question.” And then be sure to follow up.

3. ***When is it appropriate for teachers to bring up and provoke anti-bias issues rather than waiting for children to bring them up? (emergent vs intentional provocations)***

ABE is a balance between child-initiated (emergent) and teacher-initiated (intentional) provocations and responses. While working with children’s questions and comments are essential to ABE, teachers and families also have the responsibility to bring up social justice and equity issues that are affecting children and families and which they believe are important for them to learn about and to engage with. Adults can provide provocations that are developmentally appropriate and can incorporate the children’s ideas.

4. ***Isn’t ABE just teacher propaganda?***

Children hear information, misinformation, and biases about diversity from the media, their families, and other sources in their communities. They bring their questions and ideas, which reflect the influence of these messages, into the classroom. It is important for the adults in children’s lives to notice and respond to children’s questions, ideas and feelings about differences. If we ignore the questions, or try to discourage children from asking them, we convey the message that there is something wrong about the difference, or it is wrong to talk about diversity among people. Teachers have the opportunities and responsibility to give children accurate, factual information about diversity and fairness based on the developmental level of the children. Teachers can also offer multiple perspectives about children’s questions, thereby further fostering children’s critical thinking and expanding awareness of their own and others’ ways of being. At the same time, an anti-bias approach does call on teachers to promote explicit values about embracing equity, respecting all people and seeking social justice (fairness). Teachers’ words and actions are not value-free. Whatever adults do, (or don’t do) they communicate a stance on diversity and social justice.

5. ***Is ABE a fit with standards and required curriculum? Is it an add on?***

Anti-bias education is not a separate curriculum or standard. It is an integrated framework through which teachers evaluate, alter, and design all aspects of their classroom, their routines and management, and their curriculum to create more equitable and inclusive experiences for children. The anti-bias goals are part of social-emotional development, and ABE is crucial to best practices. The NAEYC Position Statements on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2020) and Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education (2019) both draw on the Anti-Bias Education Goals and Approach.

6. ***How do you engage families in ABE work?***

Early childhood educators understand that engaging families in the education of their children is essential to best ECE practices (NAEYC, 2019, 2020). This is also true for ABE. We must develop reciprocal home-school partnerships where we are learning from and with families. We also need to use an inclusive definition - “a family is a circle of people who love you.” (see Resources)

7. ***Is there room for discussion when a family does not agree with or want anti-bias education? for their children?***

Families come from diverse cultural, religious, socioeconomic, linguistic, and geographic backgrounds, and this wealth of diversity contributes to the overall health and vibrancy of a school. Within this diversity, it is inevitable that there will be varying viewpoints, cultural conflicts, and differences in values, goals for children, and expectations of schools. In a nutshell, all families may not always agree with each other or with a school's commitment to specific values and goals. While anti-bias education does not offer simple solutions for when such conflicts or differences in expectations arise, it prepares us with the confidence that these conflicts are a healthy part of the process of learning from one another. Anti-bias education supports open dialogues and opportunities to engage with differences. Anti-bias education tries to find mutually agreed upon solutions, rather than ignoring or minimizing them.

Some foundational principles (or “bottom lines”) guide us in our efforts to make every family feel respected, valued, and included within the school culture. We have the four goals of anti-bias education stated above; we also have the school's published philosophy, guiding principles, and commitment to inclusion. Families are always welcome and encouraged to share their experiences, questions, and concerns with teachers and administrators. These bottom lines provide the scaffolding necessary for the school and families to approach differences with mutual respect, a spirit of generosity, and trust in the process that we are partners in working for solutions that consider the needs of individual children and families as well as the good of the community.

8. ***How do you deal with conflict and disagreement in ABE?***

Conflict and disagreement are inevitable elements of anti-bias work. These occur when there is cognitive and emotional dissonance between two or more perspectives—whether from staff or families. The anti-bias education approach accepts and works with complexity. Multiple perspectives, viewpoints and solutions live within the space of anti-bias values, and offer ways of thinking beyond dichotomous-either/or thinking. There are no simple solutions or recipes. Specific incidents of conflict must be worked with in relation to their particular contexts.

We use a strategy we call “finding the third space,” that involves 3 A's- Acknowledge, Ask and Adapt. (See *Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs*, under resources). We need to listen and learn from each other and seek to find common ground. It is always possible to learn something from each other, even if everyone doesn't get all they want.

9. ***How do you handle opposition to or uncertainty about ABE?***

- a. Explicitly include the anti-bias education perspective and goals in your school/program's mission statement. Also state that ABE is part of our national early childhood standards (NAEYC Advancing Equity in ECE Position Statement and NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice Statement)

- b. Take time to analyze the situation. Where is the uncertainty or opposition coming from? What is it about? Why is it there? (use the first step of the 3A's strategy together this data)
- c. Provide people with accurate information and education about what your anti-bias education approach is about and its benefits to all children. Correct any misinformation and misconceptions about ABE. Try to find common ground through understanding of the benefits of anti-bias education. There are times when you may not be able to find common ground. It's OK to agree to disagree in a non-judgmental manner.

10. **What is the role of program leader in pursuing ABE work?**

Leaders play a vital role in creating the culture and foundation for anti-bias education in the program. They need to create a safe and brave space to do the work, ensure it is part of the mission, vision and values of the program, and need to be inclusive in the process of building the anti-bias community. A Leader's job is to integrate the equity stance in all aspects of the program - organization, policies and procedures, hiring, supervision and professional development for staff, budget, engaging families, etc. (see *Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs* book).



RESOURCES ON ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION

Books:

Derman-Sparks, D. & Edwards, J.O, with Goins, C. (2020). *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*, (2nd ed). NAEYC.

Derman-Sparks, L., LeeKeenan, D., & Nimmo, J. (2015). *Leading Anti-bias Early Childhood Programs: A Guide for Change*. Teachers College Press/NAEYC.

Derman- Sparks, L. & Ramsey, P. (2011). *What if all the Kids are White? Anti-bias Multicultural Education with Young Children and Their Families* (2nd edition). Teachers College Press.

Friedman, S. & Mwenelupembe. A. (2020) *Each and Every Child: Teaching Preschool with an Equity Lens*. NAEYC.

Iruka, I.U., Alanís, I., & Friedman. S. (Eds.). (2021). *Advancing Equity and Embracing Diversity in Early Childhood Education: Elevating Voices and Actions*. NAEYC.

Iruka, I., Currenton, S., Durden, T., & Escag, K., (2020). *Don't Look Away: Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms*. Gryphon House.

Kissinger, K. (2017). *Anti-Bias Education in the Early Childhood Classroom: Hand in Hand, Step by Step*. Routledge.

Koralek, D., Nemeth, K, & Ramsey, K. (2019) *Families and Educators Together: Building Great Relationships that Support Young Children*. NAEYC.

Ramsey, P. (2015). *Teaching and Learning in a Diverse World*, (4th ed). Teachers College Press.

Souto-Manning, M., Lugo Llerena, C., Martell, J., Salas Maguire, A., & Arce-Boardman, A. (2018). *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching*. Heinemann.

Websites:

Embrace Race embracerace.org

Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance) learningforjustice.org/NAEYC

NAEYC Advancing Equity Statement naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity

NAEYC DAP Statement naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/contents

Teaching for Change teachingforchange.org

Rethinking Schools rethinkingschools.org



FILM ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Inspired by the work of educators implementing anti-bias education and young children seeking a more just world

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Featured Schools:

EPIPHANY EARLY LEARNING PRESCHOOL, Seattle, WA; SOUTHWEST EARLY LEARNING BILINGUAL PRESCHOOL, Seattle, WA; and, PACIFIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, San Francisco, CA

The film was made possible by a generous grant from the TYLER RIGG FOUNDATION and support from PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Additional Images in this Guidebook provided by: FILIZ EFE MCKINNEY, DEBBIE LEEKEENAN and JOHN NIMMO

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