

APPENDIX G Resources for Equity and Advocacy Work

Implied throughout the pages of this book is the need for local and national work to move the early childhood profession beyond its current limitations. There are many fronts to work on, including challenging policies that are leading to play as an equity issue; high stakes assessments, often with a cultural bias, that disenfranchise children, families and teachers; and the continued issues of trying to professionalize a field where wages aren't livable and working conditions are unsustainable to keep

children and teachers learning together and advancing quality.

Appendix G offers a selection of resources as examples of very local, program-based equity and advocacy work, to larger research/action efforts. If you are inspired by the curriculum framework offered in this book, you will find yourself in need of advocacy resources. Get involved, join with others, and become a strong leader in the early childhood field and your community.

The Early Care and Education Workforce: Essential But Neglected

Every day in homes and centers across the country, approximately 2 million adults care for and educate nearly 12 million children between the ages of birth and five. This workforce plays a critical role in our children's development and learning. When educators are well-prepared, supported, and rewarded, they can form strong relationships that positively impact children's future success.

Unfortunately, too many educators of our youngest children lack access to the education they need, are poorly compensated, and work in unsupportive environments. As a result, far too many practitioners do not have the necessary skills to do their jobs well and live with the burden of persistent poverty, ill health, and depression. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) works to meet these challenges by advancing federal and state investments that enable and reward the early care and education (ECE) workforce to deliver high quality care and education for all children. Critical reforms include investments in education and training, higher compensation levels and improved work environments, and the creation of comprehensive, longitudinal data systems to understand, track, and analyze the workforce.

Three Steps to Success: Prepare, Support, Reward

Transforming how we prepare, support, and reward the ECE workforce is essential to building a high quality early care and education system. Providing educators with appropriate educational opportunities, creating supportive work environments, and

compensating them appropriately are all critical components of the solution.

The benefits of success will be striking and numerous. Providers will establish warm and caring relationships with children, encourage curiosity and learning, and foster their development and readiness for school. Educationally successful young leaders will be attracted to the field, knowing that they can earn a professional salary. Providers will earn a living wage in stable jobs that can't be taken offshore. Adults already working in the field will be able to improve their practice and advance on a career ladder that appropriately rewards their educational investment and experience.

Experienced Policy Experts

CSCCE conducts cutting-edge research and proposes policy solutions aimed at improving how we prepare, support and reward the ECE workforce to ensure young children's optimal development. Since 1999, CSCCE has been:

- Conducting ground-breaking research on the ECE workforce
- Working with state and federal legislators to develop and assess policy
- Assisting with the development of workforce data systems
- Providing technical assistance to organizations nationwide on implementing sound ECE workforce policy

As a result of this work, policymakers, their staff, thought leaders in the field, and other stakeholders use CSCCE's research and recommendations to inform policy decisions that support the ECE workforce.

Perspectives on Equity

1. Human beings are born without prejudice. All forms of bias, from extreme bigotry to unaware cultural biases, are acquired—actually imposed on the young person.
2. We are all one species. There is no scientific justification for the notion of race or for claiming the superiority or inferiority of different groups.
3. Many of the assumptions, values, and practices of people and institutions from dominant groups in the society serve to the disadvantage of people from the non-dominant groups.
4. Individual prejudice and institutionalized biases are dysfunctional for individuals, their relationships, and to society as a whole.
5. Systematic mistreatment (such as racism, classism, or sexism) is more than the sum of individual prejudices.
6. People taking leadership in societal institutions are an important force in helping many people overcome the effects of societal bias and discrimination but institutions also serve to perpetuate the inequalities and prejudices in the society. Thoughtful action with regard to practices, policies, and organization is necessary to overcome the effects on people and institutions of a long history of prejudice and discrimination.
7. Individuals and groups internalize and transfer the systematic mistreatment. They often act harmfully toward themselves and other members of their group. This process must be identified and eliminated.
8. Racism, classism, and sexism and other forms of bias are serious issues facing U.S. society that are usually not discussed. Talking about them is necessary, not to lay blame, but to figure out better ways of making the world a better place for all people.
9. Diverse leadership is absolutely necessary for ending oppression. Lack of acceptance, recognition, and support is an impediment to the development of leadership among people of color, women, and the working class.
10. To make progress on this very complex problem, it will be necessary to improve alliances between people from different backgrounds, experiences, and identities.
11. Discussing and gaining new understandings about the existence and effects of bias and discrimination will usually be accompanied by strong emotions.
12. Attitudes and actions will change if we are listened to attentively and allowed to release our emotions as we work to make sense of our experiences and the experiences of others.

Perspectivas sobre la equidad

1. El ser humano nace sin prejuicios. Toda forma de prejuicio, desde la más extrema intolerancia hasta los prejuicios culturales inconscientes, es adquirida y en realidad se impone sobre los jóvenes.
2. Somos una sola especie. No existe ninguna base científica que justifique el concepto de raza, ni defender la supuesta superioridad o inferioridad de los distintos grupos.
3. Muchas de las suposiciones, los valores y las prácticas de las personas y las instituciones de los grupos dominantes en la sociedad van en detrimento de las personas que no pertenecen a los grupos dominantes.
4. Los prejuicios individuales e institucionalizados son disfuncionales para los individuos, sus relaciones y la sociedad entera.
5. El maltrato sistemático (como el racismo, el clasismo o el sexismo) es más que la mera suma de los prejuicios individuales.
6. Las personas que toman el liderazgo en las instituciones sociales cumplen un papel importante en ayudar a mucha gente a superar los efectos del prejuicio y la discriminación de la sociedad, pero las instituciones también contribuyen a perpetuar las desigualdades y los prejuicios en la sociedad. Se requiere una acción considerada en lo que respecta a la práctica, las normas y la organización, para superar los efectos de una larga historia de prejuicios y discriminación sobre la gente y las instituciones.
7. Tanto los individuos como los grupos interiorizan y transfieren el maltrato sistemático. Con frecuencia actúan de forma dañina hacia sí mismos y hacia otros miembros de su propio grupo. Este proceso se debe identificar y erradicar.
8. En los EE.UU, la sociedad y el sistema educativo se enfrentan al racismo, clasismo, sexismo y otras formas de prejuicio, temas importantes que no se suelen tratar. Es necesario hablar de ellos, no para culpar a nadie, sino para encontrar mejores formas de criar a nuestros hijos y hacer el mundo un lugar mejor para todas las personas.
9. Para eliminar la opresión, es absolutamente imprescindible contar con líderes que sean representativos de los distintos grupos. La falta de aceptación, reconocimiento y apoyo es un obstáculo en el desarrollo del liderazgo entre la gente de color, las mujeres y la clase obrera.
10. Para acercarnos a una solución de este problema tan complejo, será necesario mejorar las alianzas entre personas de distintos orígenes, con diferentes experiencias y que se identifican con distintos grupos.
11. Normalmente, se experimentan fuertes emociones cuando se intercambian ideas y se adquiere una nueva perspectiva acerca de la existencia y los efectos del prejuicio y la discriminación.
12. Nuestras actitudes y acciones cambiarán si se nos escucha con atención y se nos permite soltar nuestras emociones mientras nos esforzamos por comprender nuestras experiencias y las experiencias de los demás.

Play as an Equity Issue

Recently I have begun to consider what social justice issues need to be specifically addressed in the early care and education field. Visiting a variety of programs across the U.S., I realized that there is an equity issue in play. I wrote a blog post about it for NAEYC's Diversity and Equity Education for Adults Forum. Here's an excerpt:

Play is a right for all children and they deserve an early education experience that supports this right. As more research and opinion pieces are written about how play is disappearing in early education, the “elephant in the room” is that this worrisome trend is not impacting all young children equally. The reality is that early education is segregated by race and class in the same way K–12 is. We can no longer live in a fantasy that we can advocate for play-centered early care and education without dismantling the oppressive educational system that denies access play based on race and class.

In an early education environment where more assessments and regulations are administered the unintentional consequence has been the lack of play and more teacher-directed activities to “teach” children the skills that will make them “school ready” and “close the achievement gap.” Teachers are pressured to raise assessment scores so they “teach to the assessment.” These educational reforms applied to low-income children, children of color, and native children are restricting their access to self-initiated, complex play. It's time we discuss and analyze how systematic classism and racism privileges play for some children while devaluing it for others, with the

goal of moving play back to the center of childhood experiences for all.

As I continue to advocate and take action towards equitable access to play for all children I've gathered a listing of people, organizations, and websites to stay current and continue to work with educators to understand issues of race, culture, equity, and anti-bias practices. Of course this list isn't all-inclusive but a starting place.

Early Childhood

National Black Child Development Institute
(www.nbcdi.org)

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
(www.irlle.berkeley.edu/cscce/)

Early Childhood Education Assembly
(www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/social-justice-and-equity-in-early-childhood-education.html)

Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood
(www.commercialfreechildhood.org)

Social Justice in Early Childhood (www.sjiec.org)

Equity for Children, The New School
(www.equityforchildren.org)

I would love to have more conversations about this topic. You can find me on Facebook on my professional page Ijuma Jordan—ECE Consultant; my website Ijumaajordan.com; or lurking on Twitter @ijumaaj.

Sample Professional Development Agenda to Explore Equity and Anti-bias Goals

Epiphany Early Learning Pre-School has a strong commitment to developing ourselves as anti-bias educators. We regularly explore the four anti-bias goals for children and ourselves with staff meeting agendas that combine personal work on understanding ourselves and each other, studying our observations of children with an equity and anti-bias lens, and deepening our understanding of how children's literature can support or undermine our goals. A quarterly three-hour professional development agenda might look like this:

First Hour

With carefully designed activities and facilitation for each session, we explore how our personal histories and identities have been shaped in relationship to power and privilege. To launch this kind of big conversation, we often discuss a reading or watch a video such as *Light in the Shadows* by Shakti Butler. An outside facilitator for this portion of our agenda allows all of us to participate equally. We explore our experiences with regard to race, cultural and linguistic identities, gender, and economic realities. We uncover how institutionalized racism has shaped our country, the different forms it takes, and how justice and cultural democracy could look. We consider what is called the school-to-prison pipeline and how we can disrupt it in our work and communities. We seek to find our common ground, respect our differences, and learn how privileged people can be allies to those who are disenfranchised.

Second Hour

Teachers bring documentation as they do to each of our pedagogical staff meetings. We make a particular point to focus on the four anti-bias goals as a lens through which we study our documentation, attempting to better understand children's perspectives and identity development, and considering possible teacher actions that could help us learn more and foster our goals with children and families. Some of our time is spent in smaller teaching teams to do this work using a protocol for our discussion to keep us focused. At least one piece of documentation is taken up by the whole group to widen perspectives and keep ourselves abreast of what is unfolding in our different classrooms.

Third Hour

Because we believe in the power of high-quality children's books to shape how children see themselves and the world, we carefully build up our children's library with intentional purchases. We want our teachers to be very familiar with the books we have across our center and consider different ways and occasions when various books might be used. Teachers study the books and choose one they are drawn to. We meet together in small groups to discuss the content of the books and how we might use them to have discussions with the children. We also look for books that reflect bias or have issues we may have to think through as we read the books to children. The whole group shares their thoughts about the book and how they can help tie together the first two parts of our agenda and bring closure to our day.