
Examples from students at Northern Virginia Community College in 2023

Mini- Lesson 3 (embedded in CHD Literacy Course): Summary of Lesson Themes

Belonging and Children's Literature- Exploring Common Roots

Discussion Board Assignment:

- Respond to the following questions on Discussion Board:
 - What do I know/ need to know about the identities of the children and families in my early learning program?
 - How is my identity similar and different from others in my setting?
 - How can children's literature support the sense of belonging for the children and their families?
 - What can I do in my early learning environment to increase the sense of belonging of all learners?

What do I know/ need to know about the identities of the children and families in my early learning program?

- I need to know a student's family dynamic and this gives the children opportunities to share with the class memories, or just a little background, about themselves and the people around them who care about them. The world now has more diversity, and each child is different, so the more we know about inclusivity and diversity in the class allows the educators to know more about the types of values, traditions, or customs that are important for their students. We can teach students how to make others feel welcome, and they can feel accepted and comfortable in their classroom
- Nowadays we deal with a lot of diversity. A majority of our culture is very mixed with many races. Therefore, it is very important when you are a teacher to be inclusive when it comes to cultures in our curriculum program. Not only this will allow students to feel welcome and accepted, but also to have a sense of trust with their teacher.
- In an early learning program, it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of the identity of the children and families we work with. Like, being aware of the diverse ethnic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds that we show in our program, which includes understanding their customs, traditions, and values. Determine the language spoken by students and families, which helps us in their language growth and development. We should also recognize the structure of families, such as single-parent families, mixed families, or same-sex parents, and respect and recognize them. Obtaining information about their social and economic status will help us to overcome any financial obstacles students may face and provide appropriate support resources.
- Educate yourself on who is in the class and what you can do to make them feel more at peace or connected to each other.
- Overall, the United States is a diverse country, and Virginia is the most diverse,

so as a teacher of young children I need to know about the children's cultures, languages, and traditions. Then, I should prepare my lesson plan based on their traditions, cultures, and languages because it is important for teachers in early learning programs to strive hard to create supportive and inclusive environments where children and families feel valued, respected, and understood. By recognizing and appreciating the diverse identities of the children and families they work with, teachers can foster a sense of belonging and promote positive learning experiences for all.

- As an early learning professional, it is important to understand the diverse identities of the children and families in your program. This includes factors such as their cultural background, language, race, socioeconomic status, abilities, and family structure. It is crucial to have knowledge about each child's individual experiences, values, and beliefs to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- Reflecting on your own identity and understanding, and how they may be similar or different from others in your early learning program, is essential. This involves recognizing your own biases and privileges, as well as acknowledging and respecting the diversity of identities among the children and families in your setting.
- Children's literature plays a vital role in promoting a sense of belonging for children and their families. By featuring diverse characters and exploring various cultural backgrounds, it allows children to see themselves, their experiences, and their families represented in the stories they read. This helps children develop a positive sense of self and validates their identities, leading to a greater sense of belonging.

How is my identity similar and different from others in my setting?

- As an early learning professional, it is important to understand the diverse identities of the children and families in your program. This includes factors such as their cultural background, language, race, socioeconomic status, abilities, and family structure. It is crucial to have knowledge about each child's individual experiences, values, and beliefs to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Reflecting on your own identity and understanding how it may be similar or different from others in your early learning program is essential. This involves recognizing your own biases and privileges, as well as acknowledging and respecting the diversity of identities among the children and families in your setting.
- I think I am a very empathic person and can be understanding toward children. Growing up I had a very different cultural background than the students in my class and I didn't know English, but my classmates and teacher did a great job including me and helping me in areas I needed help with due to my language barrier. I think I can understand children who are from different backgrounds

whether it be cultural or have a language barrier.

- My identity may be similar to others in a certain aspect and may be different in different aspects. For example, I and others in our environment have similar goals such as learning, personal growth or achieving certain results. It may be that in terms of goals and aspirations, we have different personalities.
- My identity is similar in the sense that I was born here in the US and my culture is something I can look into and discover more about. It's different in that the majority of Italians in my area are not very prominent. So knowing my culture is a one sided view of what I learn from my mother or my past time in **** than anything else I learn is based on research.

How can children's literature support the sense of belonging for the children and their families?

- With books in the classroom, I think this a great way for teachers to have books with different stories about culture and they might have a story they can connect to. It is important to have different types of diverse books with different cultures, traditions, family dynamics.
- Children's literature plays a vital role in promoting a sense of belonging for children and their families. By featuring diverse characters and exploring various cultural backgrounds, it allows children to see themselves, their experiences, and their families represented in the stories they read. This helps children develop a positive sense of self and validates their identities, leading to a greater sense of belonging.
- Children so often get familiarized with stories that they can relate to. That is why it is very important to have a wide variety of books available within the cultures that you have in the classroom. If they could be in their language even better.
- Children's literature can introduce them to different languages. By reading stories that explore different cultures, children gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. And it also encourages children and families to get involved with the community. For example, by reading books about volunteering, helping others, or saving the environment, students may be motivated to participate in community projects.
- Children's literature can open doors to building curiosity about one's cultures and others. In my environment, I can provide this literature that is different and shows children differences in their society.
- When teachers prepare inclusive materials, promote empathy, fostering culture in children's literature, they support the sense of belonging for children and their families because when children's literature includes diverse materials

such as books, language, and every culture's costumes, children and their families feel seen, heard, and validated.

-

What can I do in my early learning environment to increase the sense of belonging of all learners?

- As mentioned above, to be mindful and respectful of the cultures you have within your classroom, my suggestion will be at the beginning of the year to have a questionnaire ready for parents to complete so that way you have an idea of the different celebrations you may add to your curriculum and for the students.
- Have family members participate in cultural days where they could provide things of their culture such as history, customs, clothing, books, toys, ect.
- To increase the sense of belonging, we must create a pleasant environment in the class and use decorations, posters and diverse and inclusive materials. Include artwork and projects that celebrate the uniqueness of each child. By promoting cooperation and teamwork among learners, a sense of belonging is fostered. We should plan activities that require collaboration, problem solving, and sharing of ideas to promote cultural appreciation.
- There are certainly many things I can do to increase the sense of belonging in my students. I can add more diverse literature, facilitate more discussions about the cultures represented in my class, continue to connect with my students and share food, clothing, traditions at a Multi-cultural Night Event. One thing I do in my class that the student's love is to send home a page at the beginning of the year asking for them to draw or attach pictures of all of their favorite things. Pictures of their families, pets and sports are all attached to their special page. I laminate it and put it in the class library. This is one of their favorite things to look at and talk about with each other. It has helped us all connect, discuss and relate to each other.
- As a teacher of young children, I should value diversity and promote inclusivity in my classroom. I should encourage children to have respect, empathy, and acceptance with each other. I should also teach children about different cultures and traditions to develop their understanding and appreciation of diversity. I should also include relevant materials in my lesson plans to reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the students in the classroom because this will help students to see themselves represented and validate their identities. I should also create opportunities for students to share their cultural traditions, language, and personal experiences because this method promotes a sense of pride and belonging for all learners.
- Create a diverse and inclusive classroom library that showcases a wide range of

authors, characters, and experiences. Incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices that value and respect the rich cultural backgrounds and experiences of each child and their families. Display visuals such as flags, maps, and photos that celebrate the diversity of cultures and identities in your classroom. Encourage open and respectful discussions about unique identities, cultures, and experiences to promote understanding and empathy. Involve families in classroom activities and events, giving them opportunities to share their traditions and cultures with the entire community. Foster positive relationships and connections among children by promoting cooperation, kindness, and inclusive play.

As a teacher in the early childhood field we have an opportunity to provide an intentional learning experience in our classroom. It starts by being aware of each of our students' family histories and experiences. If we create an open and welcoming atmosphere in our classroom we can learn about each other and make our world so much richer. At the same time, reflect on your own experience growing up. What were you exposed to? How did you learn about different cultures? As you reflect, ask yourself this question: Am I assuming something about these cultures or do I really understand them? Then ask questions, read books, learn about the amazing cultures all around us.

Then invite people of diverse cultures to come into class to help the children learn about these cultures from those who know.

I work in a very diverse school. Most are from some Latin culture. I had to learn a lot about those cultures to better identify with each person I work with. How to approach, or listen or talk to each individual so working together is supportive and fun. I try and do that with my families as well.

I create a diverse library of book, so the children in my class can see themselves in the book (looking in a mirror) or so that others can walk though that sliding door and learn about their classmates' cultures.

I have also made a point to celebrate holidays of different cultures in my class. I work in a Christian preschool, but knew I had a young student who celebrated both Christmas and Hanukkah. We asked his parent if he could teach the class about Hanukkah. It was really rewarding to see how happy he was to show his friends his menorah and how to play the dreidel game. We also just celebrated Diwali in our class, because one of our teachers is Indian.

Diverse books in your class help represent all children in your class. If they can see themselves in a book or doing things that are part of their culture they feel

represented. If we tell our children that each and everyone is uniquely made then we should have books that support that statement. It also helps widen our students' experiences and worlds. Our world is not as narrow as it was when I was growing up. With the internet and living in this area my own world has widened quite a lot and I feel I have benefited from it.

As an early childhood educator, it is vital to recognize and appreciate the diverse backgrounds of the children and families in your program. This includes factors like culture, language, race, economic status, abilities, and family structure. Understanding each child's unique experiences, values, and beliefs is key to creating an inclusive learning environment.

Consider your own identity, recognize any biases, and value the diversity in your community. My identity is vastly different than many of my students who are typically from a Spanish-speaking background and are learning English as a second language. It is particularly important for me to learn more about their cultures and their families' backgrounds. It is essential to include children's literature featuring diverse characters and cultural backgrounds as it plays a vital role in making them feel recognized and nurturing a sense of belonging.

To implement these ideas:

1. Create a diverse library with various authors and stories.
2. Use teaching practices that respect each child's cultural background.
3. Display visuals celebrating cultural diversity.
4. Encourage open discussions about different identities.
5. Involve families in sharing their traditions.

In managing a daycare center, gather information about the children's cultures at the start of the year through a letter. In today's mixed culture environment, being inclusive in your curriculum is essential for students to feel welcome.

Children connect better with stories that relate to them, so having a variety of culturally representative books, preferably in their language, is important. Additionally, involving families in cultural days enhances the learning experience by sharing aspects of their culture.

- **What do I know/ need to know about the identities of the children and families in my early learning program?**

There are several factors to consider when it involves the identifies of the children and

families at my center. If the child has any allergies of some sort then parents will need to let us know so that we provide foods that are suitable for the child. This is also the case if the child comes from a religious family in which certain foods are not eaten, such as pork or beef. If the child has any medical challenges, diseases, or special needs to consider, then that is another factor that we as educators must consider. In addition, if the child has experienced any trouble at home due to divorce, parents or relatives that are terminally ill, and so on--these are all factors to consider about the child and how it affects them emotionally.

- **How is my identity similar and different from others in my setting?**

I would say that one way I am similar to my students at my center is that I am a very sensitive person. I try not to always show that, but I am a sensitive person and I tend to experience stress and anxiety quite often. My students are also very sensitive since they have to understand how to manage their emotions. In addition, some of my students already experience levels of anxiety.

One way I'm different from others could be my experience as a twin. A lot of people are not able to relate to that and understand how it affects a person's identity.

- **How can children's literature support the sense of belonging for the children and their families?**

Children's literature can support children by showcasing that the emotions they experience are normal. Representation of different skin tones and cultures within children's literature is another way in which children can feel supported. They can look at the images of pictures and feel some sort of familiarity and relief that others look like them.

- **What can I do in my early learning environment to increase the sense of belonging of all learners?**

Assigning children cubbies with their name and picture, giving them assigned tables, nametags, classroom jobs and celebrating their birthdays are all great ways to elevate the child's sense of belonging. Also, learning from families certain things they would like to see in the classroom and working with them to promote cultural identities and such is another effort educators can make.

1. I know that I have children of all different cultures in my daycare center. I know that they speak different languages as well as may celebrate different holidays and traditions. I learn this information at the beginning of the year when I send out my Teacher Letter and ask

questions about my children and their families.

2. I would say I have some children that celebrate the same holidays that I do in my center. We have a Thanksgiving luncheon and Breakfast with Santa each year and most of the families come and join in. I do have one family that celebrates Kwanzaa so the little girl's family comes in and talks to the class about that!

3. By having a lot of different books displayed in the classroom for everyone to be able to look at and read about can help children feel like they belong. As well as talking about all the different cultures that we have in the class and maybe allow the children to share!

4. This one will go along with my answer for number 3 and I can have a group discussion and let the children share things about them and their families. I can see what language they speak and try to greet them in the morning using their languages!

I have to comprehend the identities of the children and families in my early learning program in order to provide a supportive and inclusive atmosphere. and to get to know the cultural backgrounds of the children and families in order to be prepared for cultural practices, customs, and celebrations. Children's literature plays an important part in helping children and their families feel a feeling of belonging. Literature may help to build a sense of belonging by encouraging parents to share their favorite memories from childhood or cultural folktales. This develops a feeling of community and encourages families to participate in the group's reading experiences. Fostering a sense of belonging in my early learning setting is critical for building a good and inclusive atmosphere where students may create meaningful relationships. Every kid should have positive relationships. Spend time getting to know their unique personalities, preferences, and talents.

1. I need to know about the identities of the children/families in my early learning program because I want to connect with them. At the school's "Meet the Teacher" event, I have the opportunity to not only meet the students but the parents as well. This helps me to know more about the children's background. I love this time because I get a glimpse into the children's home life and family, which brings so much more richness to our relationships. Children smile when I say their siblings' names or pets' names. They love it when I remember special moments when they're not

at school that they have told me about. It is through that connection, that meaningful learning moments open up and flourish.

2. My identity is similar to most of the children in my class who have two parent homes, a similar income bracket, and an English speaking home. However there are four children in my class who have recently divorced families, one who only speaks Spanish at home, and one whose parents are bilingual. I also have students with different ethnicities. In that regard I am very different.

3. Children's literature can support the sense of belonging for children and their families by seeing themselves through the characters in the book. When they see themselves, the book becomes relatable. It makes us feel happy to know we are not alone in our feelings and experiences. Books that do not reflect ourselves are also wonderful to read because they allow us to see things we otherwise may not know about. It benefits us to read about another diverse world because it allows us to step into that world and empathize with others, be supportive of others and share their joy.

- **How is my identity similar and different from others in my setting?**

I feel like we are the same in some aspect only difference is religion and place of origin, but again that should not matter because at the end of the day we are all human and entered the world in the same way (sperm and egg). I am African American and Native American but to others like police officers and schools I am Black and there is that stereotype of me being the ghetto kid, problem child, disrespectful, etc. I feel like everyone has their fair shares of stereotyping and my experiences are different from others.

- **How can children's literature support the sense of belonging for the children and their families?**

I remember reading this book about a multi diverse family where the child was mixed with African American and Hispanic cultures. The book then went into how the child celebrates and combines both cultures sharing with her friends and being happy about where they come from

and loving their parents' cultures. This book shares that we are all different in our own ways but can still come together and still be collaborative as one regardless of differences. It creates the sense of belonging and showing it is okay to be different.

- **What can I do in my early learning environment to increase the sense of belonging of all learners?**

I can share books or show videos of other families from around the world and talk about what do the children see and ask how it relates to their families or what is different about them compared to their friends. Then further talk about our families and what makes them unique.