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## Inclusion and Racial Diversity Curriculum in Preschools

Vanessa Sanchez  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

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Inclusion and Racial Diversity Curriculum in Preschools

Vanessa Sanchez

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

### **Introduction**

Preschool aged children begin to observe the things that makes individuals different in the world around them. Teachers have the opportunity to teach children the importance of recognizing the differences and accepting towards others who are racially different. Lessons around racial diversity will help children extend their knowledge about others and help develop positive attitudes towards racial diversity . To address the need for preschool aged children to learn about diversity in a positive way, I created a 3 day lesson plan about racial diversity executed at CSUMB child care center.

### **Need Statement**

Early Care and Education programs should take the opportunity to incorporate racial diversity curriculum for children to begin to develop positive attitudes towards others (Littlejohn-Blake, 2002). Children recognize race in a simple superficial manner based on what they see, and in physical traits (Aboud, 1988 as cited in Park, 2011). Adults in children's lives should actively take the opportunity with their children to teach them the importance of diversity. Benefits of teaching children about racial diversity and inclusion can lead to prosocial behaviors such as practicing being fair to their peers and other (Zakin, 2012). Children can learn to practice acceptance and tolerance of racial differences among their peers (Zakin, 2012).

Preschool programs are one setting where a teacher can develop curriculum towards explaining tolerance towards others that are different and finding similarities students have with others of the same or different culture. I believe that young children can learn lessons regarding racial diversity and inclusion through implementing lessons at school. By beginning to assist children recognize diversity children have the opportunity to develop empathy for others rather than judging them for being different (Paley et al., 1998 as cited in Zakin, 2012).

Many adults and educators may shy away from the topic of racial diversity this may lead to not having discussions. When someone does not acknowledge a difference or does not engage in talking about racial diversity with student. Research has found this manner can backfire and actually increase racial inequality (Apfelbaum, 2010). This practice of lack of acknowledgement has long term effects on children and leaves children unable to identify when injustice it happens in the long term. If racial differences are not talked about, children are left to learn based on what they observe in the environment. Castro (2006, p.11) noted that preschoolers begin to form their ideas about race based on how adults in the children's lives respond. Children observe their environments closely and mixed signals from adults may reinforce societal biases, prejudices, and stereotypes (Castro, 2006). Cultural diversity lessons allow children to learn about their culture and others, learn to value differences, and develop a positive self image and appreciation for others (Souto-Manning, 2009).

By implementing racial diversity and inclusion lessons in early childhood development programs, students' are exposed to those who are different from themselves. Leading to improvement in cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem solving (Wells, 2017). By teaching cultural diversity, teachers can assist in the growth of knowledge and mold individuals who respect and appreciate others rather than viewing others indifferently with negative outlook on others who are different (Baker, 1994). By doing so, children will be able to have positive attitudes towards others while creating positive sense of self as well which will promote confidence.

Research has shown that when the adults in children's lives such as parents or staff are racially diverse it promotes a positive attitudes towards children (Reid, 2015). A diverse

selection of people in their actual lives are impactful. The National Associations of State Boards of Education strives to place ethnically diverse people in administrative positions in order to establish role models for students to impact their socially and intellectually (Reid, 2015). This suggest that children who observe individuals like themselves in positive careers and higher positions can within themselves. It is not a guarantee that staff or peers will represent diversity in their everyday lives, but with creativity and commitment from staff at a preschool program they can display diversity in books and dramatic play (Reid, 2015).

Given that preschool aged children spend a majority of their time at school where they may be exposed to racial diversity biases, I want to take the opportunity to execute lessons that represent diverse populations through stories, activities and dance. In order to increase their awareness and create positive attitudes, I intend to provides a 3 day lesson about racial diversity and inclusion for children ages 3 to 5 at California State University, Monterey Bay's Child Development Center.

### **Theory Application**

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that behavior is not only learned through operant and classical conditioning but, may also be learned through observational learning. Research has shown that observational learning occurs in children as young as two to three years old (Degen, 2013). Children can learn behaviors just by watching others model the behavior without practice or reinforcement. Individuals that are being observed are called models and these models can vary in children's lives. Typically, children are exposed on a daily basis to individuals such as guardians, siblings, family members, peers and teachers. Children will observe these models and may possibly imitate behaviors observed. Therefore, modeling desirable behaviors can possibly influence young observers. The opportunity to be interactive

with children on modeling positive behaviors can be combined with explanations and interactive conversations about what behaviors are being observed to help shape positive behaviors.

Observational learning occurs during any age but tends to occur more in young aged children. Factors that increase the likelihood of a behavior being mimicked include authority positions, people who the individual admires, and when a situation is new or unclear.

Observational learning can be used as a learning tool adults use to assist with learning behaviors for children. In my three day lesson what I intend to do is be the model that children observe. Children will observe me do three lessons about the topic regarding diversity and inclusion. I will express the importance of inclusion among peers and with others in everyday interactions. Along with expressing positive attitudes towards recognizing diversity but being able to recognize that people can be different. Also, that we all have many similarities and should treat others with kindness. By modeling positive attitudes towards the topic I hope children will be listening, will understand the importance, and imitate these positive attitudes. Therefore, I am creating lessons to expose preschool aged children to racial diversity and inclusion.

### **Consideration of Diversity**

My project will be conducted at California State University Monterey Bay Child Development Center. They have a total of 50 students enrolled in their program including two to five year olds. The ethnic composition of the participants ought to reflect that of the children in the preschool age program at CSU Monterey Bay Child Development Center. According to Learning Genie program provided by the site supervisor the information provided by preschool age demographics are 37.5% White, 12.5% Samoan, Black or African 12.5%, and 37.5% Hispanic. English was 87.5% of the preschool age students primary language and 12.5% of the students knew more than one language. Socioeconomics were not provided by the Genie App

(Jennifer Sebolino, Personal Communication, 4/20/19). Based on the information provided, I expect that a majority of the preschool age children speak and comprehend English. Since I will be conducting the lessons in English, the participants will have to be proficient in English. Enough as to understand the content. This project is geared towards preschool aged children and is not likely to be executed in the same way with toddlers or young preschool age children. Due to its simplicity it can be used for elementary school aged children.

### **Learning Outcomes**

I intend to provide three activities, across three days to students enrolled in the preschool age program at CSU Monterey Bay Child Development Center.

By the end of the project, participants will:

1. identify similar and different physical characteristics; focused on skin tone, hair, eye color.
2. identify a traditional practice from home and traditional meal that is paired with it.
3. identify differences and similarities of the dances and their importance.

### **Method**

#### **Day 1**

I will introduce myself to the children and tell them I am there to do activities with them. I will set up my materials at a small table during free play time. I will have two to four children at my table at a time and ask for their names, assign partners, and prepare their pieces of paper with their names on it so I can write notes during discussion. Then I will read *All Kinds of People* (Rotner, 2018), a story that discusses about differences in skin tone, hair, and eye colors. While reading to the children, I will ask questions to keep them engaged and have them express thoughts while I write down responses. I asked them to look for children in the book who looked like them. Followed by asking them why they thought that child looked like them “color eyes/

hair color” Also who their partner looked like with same questions. After reading and discussing, I will hand out their piece of paper and have the children draw one of their classmates while reminding them to focus on eye color, hair texture, and skin tone. Asking them similar questions when asked during reading to help them focus on partners eyes, hair and/or skin tone. After they finish I will write what they expressed during the activity with the notes taken during reading.

### **Day 2**

I will set up my material at a small table during free play with small groups again and read, *All Are Welcome (Penfold, 2018)*, a story that focuses on inclusion of diverse students. During the reading, I will ask children what they observe they have in common with children in the book along with differences. The book displays different children at home and practices they do differently. For example, Chinese New Year is illustrated by traditions and displays food traditionally accompanied by this occasion. Other pages highlighted their different types of traditional meals children have at home. After reading, I will direct the children to draw a traditions practiced at home along with a meal that they eat during this special occasion. I will give them examples to help them. For example, I will share with them that I celebrate Christmas and as a family we make meat filled corn wraps called tamales.

### **Day 3**

During free time, I will set up a speaker with a four song playlist with different styles of dance. I will then play one song at a time and ask children what kind of music it is to see if they have any previous experience and are able to distinguish. Then, tell them what type of music it is followed by a short discussion about where this type of dance and music are from. I will then provide a brief background of the dances created highlighting purpose of creation and the

differences in dance. First dance is hula dance practiced by those pertaining to the Hawaiian culture. Second was Celtic dance practiced by the Irish community. Third dance was folklorico dance practiced in Latin culture. Lastly, belly dancing practiced in the middle east. After learning all four dances and music that coordinates with the songs, I will have the children dance when a specific song is played. After I will have have a brief discussion about the differences and similarities of the dances and their importance.

### **Results**

LO#1 identify similar and different physical characteristics; focused on skin tone, hair, eye color

LO#2 identify a traditional practice from home and traditional meal that is paired with it

LO#3 identify differences and similarities of the dances and their importance

Learning outcome 1 was that participants would identify physical characteristic similarities and differences with others. Many children were able to find commonalities with their partners, other classmates, and children in the book. They were also able to identify differences. Unfortunately I was unable to provide skin tone crayons to allow children to represent what they were thinking on paper. 8 out of 12 participants were able to identify at least one difference and one similarity they had with others. See table 1 for what the students said during activity #1. Although there were 20 students in the class, eight did not participate due to a shortage of time. I believe that the classmates that did participate were able to display understanding of the learning outcome because children that participated were able to verbally answer the questions I asked them regarding identify similarities and differences they had with others.

Learning Outcome 2 was that participants would be able to identify a traditional practice from home and traditional meal that is paired with it. Children were engaged during discussion

during the reading of the book. But, when trying to convey the importance of the topic of the book children were unable to make the connections to their lives. The book highlighted how students had different practices from one another. I gave students the example in the book were some students celebrated the new year and had special clothing and food made for that occasion. Children asked many questions in this portion of the story were the Chinese New Year was being displayed. Most children identified that they did not celebrate Chinese New Year at all. I also gave them an example of what type of tradition I practiced at home and a traditional meal. The activity was set during the classes free play outside so I did not have many participants that stayed for the two part activity. So this learning outcome was not met. See table 2.

Learning Outcome 3 was not met. Children were able to imitate the dance moves and identifying which song pertained to what type of dance as well. But, children were not able to identify similarities, differences or the importance of the dances. Children were focused on the physical aspect of the dance and were very engaged with the interest of music and learning but did not care much for the discussion held during or after the lesson. Many children would join the lesson and during the activity so I only had 12 participants.

### **Discussion**

I believe this project was unsuccessful. Although the children were engaged with the activities they were participating in, the children did not show an overall understanding of the topic. The topic of racial diversity and inclusion is a complex topic and I failed to simplify the topic for the better understanding for the age group. Activity number two was particularly too

difficult. Attempting to have the children connect traditions from the book to their personal lives followed by having them draw was complex. Although the book was excellent in displaying inclusion and diversity the activity was not well suited.

In Bandura's Social Learning Theory, one of the ideas is the learning through observation of models. Children observe models that are typically represented by guardians, teachers, and peers with whom they interact on a daily basis. Children then are likely to imitate what they observe from models as well as behaviors that can be expressed by actions and verbal expression. What I attempted to do for my project was having a three day lessons with activities to expose children to more direct activities that promote diversity and directly discuss diversity. When speaking to site supervisor she spoke about using ECERs, this helped staff promote diversity and inclusion. The staff used clothing in dramatic play along with inclusion in the books they read. So what I wanted to do is have activities with the children to promote and have them express their current practices. By having children participate with hand on activities exposing children to observe behavior by adults and peers who practice inclusion of others.

If I could do this project over again, there are a couple things that I would have done differently. First, I would have preferred a different setting when presenting the information to the participants. My activities were executed during the program's free play time. During free play, children roam around their classroom, based on their interest. Due to the busy environment and conversations happening, my participants had difficulty focusing. Classmates would also approach our work area mid-activity and begin to interact with students breaking the participants attention. A couple of ways that this could have been resolved was doing large group time to have all the children focused on the same task rather than small groups.

Lastly, after doing this project I would have preferred to do this with an older audience. Although I tried to simplify my topic for preschool aged children, the concept was too complicated for the age group. Children were able to reflect superficially but not make the connections to display an understanding of the topic. Possibly simplifying the project to just inclusion would have been more beneficial for the children.

Overall, my project would have benefited from many improvements and ultimately could have benefited the students. Caregivers begin to teach children about skills they could possibly carry with them in the long term. Preschool programs have taken the opportunities to help children with their development in many domains. For example physical, cognitive and social/emotional contexts that promote positive growth. I think this project could have helped students as a stepping stone to understanding the complexity of what racial diversity is and the importance of inclusion. Adding to their development of self esteem and how they view others.

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## Appendix

*Table 1**Discussion on Similarities and Differences among others*

	Similarity	Difference
Child #1 (group 1)	When asked who has eyes like him in book, pointed to a boy with same eye color. What color are they?, "Blue"	"Black hair" when referring to child #2 aske what's different
Child #2 (group 1)	Pointed at a girl with similar characteristics like her. I asked why, " Her hair" child had black hair like hers	"We don't have the same hair" when referring to child #1
Child #3(group #2)	Points at child in book," He has small brown hair like Child #4"	"My hair is black, not like Child #4"
Child #4(group #2)	Points at child with similar characteristics in book when asked who looks like him. Why? " My hair" points as child's hair that is the same	No comment

	in color and texture	
Child #5(group #3)	“I have brown skin like him”, referring to child in book when asked who he looked like and why	How do you look different? “He has a belly” when referring to his partner he was drawing child #6
Child #6(group #3)	“I don’t know” when asked who looks like him in book	No comment
Child #7(group #3)	“Child #8 has curly hair, but I want to draw a rainbow”, when asked about their similarities	“My eyes are brown and Child #8 are blue”
Child #8(gorup #3)	“This looks like #3!” points to child in book. Why? “ His hair”	“I don't have hair like her” Why? “ look it’s curly” when referring to child #7
Child #9(group #4)	Who has your same eye color? “ Child #8!” Why? “ They brown”	Who looks like you? “ Not him” Why? “ Hair” Why? “ Yellow”. Child #9 had black hair
Child #10 (group #4)	“Our hair is the same” points similarity in book with girl with short curly hair	“She does” She has different color eyes than you? Points and child in book with green eyes, child #10 had brown eyes
<u>Child #11 (group #5)</u>	No answer who looks like her and why	No answer when asked who has different color eyes

Child #12 (group #5)	“She has hair like me” Why? “She's blonde like me” when pointing with girl with similar hair on book	“She doesnt have eyes like me. Mine are blue.” When asked who has different eyes.
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Table #2 (similar to table #1 include quotes) Activity #2

Child	Tradition	Food
Child #1	Christmas	Cereal
Child #2	Christmas	Cookies
Child #3	Chinese New Year	-
Child #4	Christmas	Corn and potatoes
Child #5	Christmas	Dumplings
Child #7	-	-
Child #8	Santa Claus	cookies
Child #9	-	-

## Presentation

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# Racial Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum in Preschool

— Vanessa Sanchez —

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## Need Statement

Opportunity to incorporate racial diversity and inclusion curriculum for children to begin to develop prosocial behaviors such as practicing being fair (Zakin, 2012) tolerance and empathy towards other (Littlejohn-Blake, 2002).

## Bandura Theory of Social Learning

Research has shown that observational learning occurs in children as young as two to three years old (Degen, 2013)

Individuals learn through observing others' behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors

## Where this took place?



CSU Monterey Bay Child Development Center

Class size of 20 children

Ages 4 to 5 enrolled

3-Day Lesson plan

## Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

LO#1 Identify similar and different physical characteristics; focused on skin tone, hair, eye color.

LO#2 Identify a traditional practice from home and traditional meal that is paired with it.

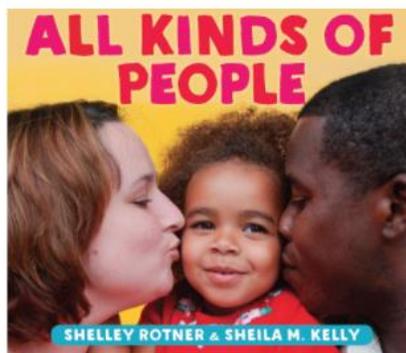
LO#3 Identify differences and similarities of the dances and their importance.

## Day #1

LO#1: Identify similar and different physical characteristics focused on skin tone, hair, eye color.

12 children in small groups read & discussion of *All Kinds of People*

Activity: Drawing a portrait of their classmate



## Day #1 Results

LO#1: Partially Met

Similarities & differences they had with children in book during the reading

During the activity children were able to identify distinct characteristics themselves



## Day #1 Results Continued

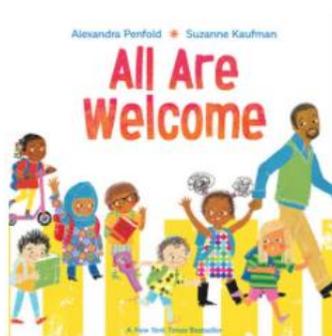
	Similarities	Differences
Child #1	When asked who has eyes like him in book, pointed to a boy with same eye color. What color are they?, "Blue"	"Black hair" when referring to child #2 asked what's different
Child #2	Pointed at a girl with similar characteristics like her. I asked why, "Her hair" child had black hair like hers	"We don't have the same hair" when referring to child #1
Child #3	Points at child in book, "He has small brown hair like Child #4"	"My hair is black, not like Child #4"
Child#4	Points at child with similar characteristics in book when asked who looks like him. Why? " My hair" points as child's hair that is the same in color and texture	No comment

## Day #2

LO#2: Identify a traditional practice from home and traditional meal that is paired with it.

9 children & read in small groups with discussions of *All Are Welcome*

Activity Drawing of their Tradition and Food practices from their homes



## Day #2 Results

LO#2: Not Met

Some children were able to describe a special traditions celebrated at home but struggled with the food tied to their celebrations

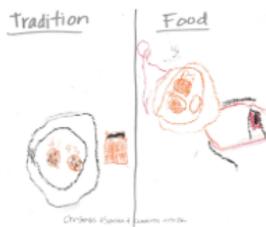
Most children played off the example I gave them



## Day #2 Results continued



Ex: My family celebrates Christmas and we make tamales on this special occasion



"We do Christmas but I want to draw Santa and what he eats."  
-Child #8

## Day #2 Results Continued

	Tradition	Food
Child #1	Christmas	Cereal
Child #2	Christmas	Cookies
Child #3	New Year	-
Child #4	Christmas	Corn and potatoes

## Day #3

LO#3: Identify differences and similarities of the dances and their importance

12 participants in small group discussion with dance & music

Activity: played music and displayed dance moves



## Day #3 Results

LO#3 Not met

Children were interested in learning the dances but did not display understanding of importance of dance and purpose of dance

## Discussion

Success?

What I learned?

Small group activities were executed during free play

Not display examples

**Thank you. Questions?**

Vanessa Sanchez  
Racial Diversity and Inclusion  
Curriculum in Preschool