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**Implementing Anti-Bias Curriculum in the Kindergarten Classroom**

Ariana Gonzalez

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science

### **Introduction**

The capstone project will be centered on teaching about diversity and inclusion to four to five-year-old children in a predominantly Latino elementary school. There is a lack of cultural, racial, and family representation in the early childhood curriculum which makes it difficult for some students to establish their identity and sense of belonging in school. The lack of diverse representations also makes it difficult to instill compassion, kindness, and empathy in multicultural and other diverse settings. To help with the problem, the installation of an anti-bias curriculum can lead to the creation of a community that supports all dimensions of human differences. Therefore, I developed three lessons for kindergarten children that promote appreciating diversity and treating people with respect regardless of their background. To start I will have a subtopic about family diversity centering on the different shapes and sizes of family variety. Then I will implement a lesson on cultural diversity by showcasing worldwide celebrations. Lastly, a subtopic on skin color will focus on why people have different skin tones. These three activities will generally focus on the acceptance of others to increase children's development of inclusiveness. This will take place in Landmark Elementary in Watsonville with a group of primarily Latino kindergarten students.

### **Needs Statement**

Children need to be exposed to an anti-bias curriculum at a young age. Having an environment that is centered on promoting cultural awareness helps children understand diversity and instill compassion in others. Exposing children to diverse ways of being leads to more acceptance and respect, regardless of people's differences. Oftentimes, in the school curriculum, there is a lack of representation. This can vary from family structures, culture, and race. Including these types of diversity at a young age can be a positive influence on students' lives. Children at a young age can point out differences between one another and begin to form their own biases. Without the awareness of diversity, there is difficulty in establishing identity and forming inclusivity. The need to promote an anti-bias curriculum is significant where children can learn from the representation of diverse groups. This is because cultural and racial bias can influence actions that can be shown as discriminatory when children are not exposed early on. Therefore, it is significant for children to be exposed at an early age. It is said that bias starts as early as three months old (Gardner et al., 2022). This will continue when children can express bias using race and other cues when selecting toys, friends, and social values of others (Gardner et al., 2022). The project was centered around developing an anti-bias curriculum for young children to interrupt the early stages of biases. It was through the demonstration of positive and diverse representations of people, that children will gain family, cultural, and racial appreciation.

Children are exposed to biases every day in their lives. That can be from cultural or racial groups, or family differences that are shown in media and talked about in school, or at home. Children are quick to notice the perception of others, and this can affect their identity development. From an early age, children can absorb messages about the construct of biases from many sources (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021). These sources range from family to teachers,



the media, and much more. Due to these messages, children construct a racialized identity based on three dynamics (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021). The first is how the environment in which the child is surrounded defines cultural, racial, and family groups (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021). The second is the child's experiences and how they are treated by the important people in their daily lives (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021). The third dynamic is how children individually come to think and feel about who they are, and who others are (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021). It is important to note that infants start to notice differences in skin color, and by the time they are toddlers, they become aware of feelings related to racialized identities and begin to act on negative feelings about others (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021). For children's identities to be aware of biases and reflect on them, one has to let children express themselves through language and answer their questions in an atmosphere of interest and accurate information (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021). This will help with building a strong foundation for thriving in a diverse society now and in the future.

An anti-bias curriculum can help support young children in appreciating and embracing differences. To start, anti-bias in terms of early childhood education is an approach to early childhood education that fights for principles in supporting people's differences, while also acting against biases and unfairness (Teaching for Change, 2022). The anti-bias approach is important to implement because it commits to helping children develop their full potential. This conveys that with the help of an anti-bias curriculum, children will learn to be proud of themselves, and their families, and respect others. Anti-bias work can provide teachers and families a way to examine their understanding of children's lives, to work more effectively in understanding their lives and others (Nguyen, 2021). If an anti-bias curriculum is implemented to its fullest potential it can grant children a sense of belonging. Children will be able to have

affirmation of their identities and their cultural way of being. The overarching goal is creating an environment of positive self and group identity development, through which every child will achieve their abilities.

One kind of diversity addressed in my project is family diversity. It is significant to note that families do not come only in one size. There is no such thing as only having a mother and father with children to define the word *family*. Family comes in all sorts of packages. The nuclear family has been idolized by many, but at times sets an unrealistic expectation for children and families. It is conveyed, “Families with children have become increasingly diverse over the past several decades, with significant increases in single parenthood, multi-partner fertility, cohabiting, and stepparent families, and the number of same-sex couples raising children” (Cenegy et al., 2017). There is a need to implement family diversity awareness to reduce children’s biases and discrimination against nontraditional families. Once children are aware of family diversity, it helps them develop a better understanding of how happy-well-functioning families truly are. To teach children about family diversity one has to take into consideration that it stems from the educators. Educators must implement family diversity in the classroom for children to become aware of this particular representation. Keeping it simple seems to always work best when answering children’s questions. Turner-Vorbeck (2005) discussed that teachers can help the classrooms become a more inclusive and accepting environment for children from different family structures by following a list of objectives. Firstly it is important to develop awareness and understanding of family diversity (Turner-Vorbeck, 2005). This means educators will need to educate themselves on how they will work with issues of family diversity in their classrooms. Second, would be finding children's biases and opinions regarding family diversity (Turner-Vorbeck, 2005). Letting it be an open conversation where children share their thoughts

regarding family differences. The third would be creating a positive curriculum centered on families (Turner-Vorbeck, 2005). Thus, the third objective can provide a positive and practical direction in which to turn by requiring some creative thinking about how to use classroom activities to be inclusive of many forms of family.

The second kind of diversity addressed in my project is cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is about appreciating that a community is made up of people who are in different groups. This can be from different cultures or traditions, skills, or interests. Implementing cultural awareness with children will help them learn about different cultural backgrounds than their own. Concerning cultural diversity, it is said that educators promote children's learning by valuing the social and cultural contexts of children and their families (Adam et al., 2019). This means that educators will honor children's histories, languages, traditions, and lifestyle choices. Children will be able to feel appreciated and included in the classroom and their community. With cultural diversity, students will learn about different backgrounds making them feel more comfortable with the differences they see from their own. That makes them feel more at ease with themselves, leading them to feel more accepting towards others. Upon research, one of the most practical ways to teach children about cultural diversity is through literature. Literature provides many multicultural narratives where children can learn about other communities compared to their own. It is important to observe that children take notice of characters who are different from them. This can convey the message that they do not matter compared to the people who are being represented (Gardner et al., 2022). However, the promotion of cultural diversity at the linguistic level introduces traditions of families, multiple languages, pictures, and symbols to show children that they matter.

The third type of diversity directed in my project is racial diversity. The topic of race or skin color can be a difficult subject for teachers, families, and students to face in the classroom. However, learning about other racial groups can help develop children's attitudes positively. Researchers show that at a very young age children notice racial differences. Also, unfortunately, many educators have learned not to address the topic. Upon findings, children during the toddler stage can express bias using race and other physical cues as deciding aspects when choosing toys or making friends (Gardner et al., 2022). These racial biases are brought upon due to familiarity where they can set the foundation for more harmful biases to develop over time. To strive for understanding and acceptance, we can first start by positioning ourselves as learners. Young children will not have strategies for interrupting racism if we do not teach them to recognize it. To teach children about racial diversity, educators are the start for the implementation. According to research, regardless of family structure or race, an *effective* teacher can teach all children, it does not matter who they are (Grant et al., 2006). An effective teacher is someone who takes notice of their student's development and strives for the student's educational needs. It is very often that children experience the same educational curriculum that does not meet their standards (Grant et al., 2006). However, effective teachers will be skillful at constructing a curriculum that is based on anti-biases. Educators can build a bridge to help address race-related topics and bring awareness to help students thrive in an inclusive environment.

An anti-bias curriculum is significant because it can grant children a sense of awareness to understand diversity and inclusion. Through exposure to biases, children will be affected by their self-identity and develop antisocial behaviors. The overarching goal is creating an environment of positive self and group identity development. By doing so, executing lessons centered on family diversity, cultural awareness, and skin color will help gain better recognition.

### Theory

Erik Erikson is a child psychoanalyst, psychologist known for his theory on psychosocial development, which has been a significant contribution to early childhood education for years. Erikson emphasized that parents and educators are significant in supporting the success of the child at every psychosocial stage of development. Each stage involves the psychosocial needs of the individual conflicting with the needs of society (McLeod, 2024). His theory is based on encompassing the notion that we develop through an unfolding of personality (Main, 2023). Our environment and culture influence how we as people progress. The eight psychosocial stages theorized by Erikson are: Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, and Ego Integrity vs. Despair (Main, 2023). The fourth psychosocial stage, Industry vs. Inferiority, will be applied to the project. At this stage, children are approximately at the age of five to eleven years old. Erikson claims that during this particular stage, children begin to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments and abilities (Cherry, 2022). Except, their sense of pride in achievements can depend on whether their experiences are positive or negative. Also, children who are encouraged and educated in a positive light by parents and teachers develop a feeling of competence and belief in their skills (Cherry, 2022). The growth of development and supporting the success of the child will lead to a personality that continues to grow positively.

Erikson's psychosocial theory claims children of this age group can seek their individuality and validation for themselves (Main, 2023). At this stage, children are eager to explore their abilities and they seek praise and support from caregivers and educators (Main, 2023). At this stage children further develop their readiness and be contributing members of

society. However, if they do not succeed they can develop low self-esteem and view themselves in a negative way (Main, 2023). Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory applies the anti-bias topic because it identifies the goals and challenges of the Industry vs. Inferiority stage in children's development. This helps educators guide and encourage in the right direction. This is in common with the anti-bias approach that sets values in supporting and including differences with others. The theory influenced the lesson content by producing inclusivity in a way that would make children comfortable to explore and ask questions. This can make the environment and lessons flow in a positive way, where children's self-esteem is valued and appreciated.

### **Consideration of Diversity**

The target audience for this project will be predominantly Latino kindergarten children who speak both Spanish and English. I expect to allow the children to speak whatever language they prefer. This is to keep a positive and joyful atmosphere in the classroom when teaching the anti-bias curriculum. Landmark Elementary is part of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), where 83.7% of Hispanic/Latino students are enrolled in their schools (2024). PVUSD has an enrollment of 49% female students and 51% male, along with 46.2% of the students being English learners (2024). The student population of Landmark Elementary is 506 students, with 72 kindergarten students (2024). My project is geared towards everyone, all groups can learn and experience new knowledge with the anti-bias curriculum that is equipped for children. To make the lessons and materials appealing for both girls and boys I made sure to have colorful images. It was designed with simple and basic characteristics so that children do not get overwhelmed by what they see. Also, include directions or vocabulary words where children and adults know what to do in each lesson. Most of the participants are Latino, many will be able to share similarities. That is why it was important for the project to respond to a

range of participants by including more than the Latino attributes. Providing other diverse and cultural concepts will not only showcase a diverse range of people, but also teach children about differences compared to their own.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The focus of this project is to teach children about appreciating diversity and treating people with respect regardless of their background. This will take place with predominantly Latino kindergarten students. It will be done by implementing lessons regarding the subtopics of cultural and family diversity, and a lesson regarding skin color. I hope with these lessons children will gain a better understanding and appreciation for diversity in the classroom.

1. **Family Diversity:** During circle time, children will do a Show and Tell about who is in their family.
2. **Cultural Awareness:** Children will be able to draw one new cultural celebration that is different from their own.
3. **Skin Color:** Children will identify the three reasons why we have different skin colors.

### **Methods**

#### **Location and Participants**

The project was conducted at Landmark Elementary School, located in Watsonville, California. The participants were five-year-old kindergarten students, most of whom were of Latino background. I was made aware that some participants spoke Spanish. However, all students communicated back to me in English. The number of participants varied from six to eight children across the lessons. This was because the head teacher chose the students regarding each lesson.

#### **Procedures and Materials**

Since I was working with kindergarten students, it was more convenient to work on a set of three lessons to be taught over three days. In the first lesson, I focused on family diversity. I showed a set of slides to the children that showcased various images of families (see Appendix A). The families differed in size, shape, and more. This meant showcasing images of families that were different in quantity. Along with families of different ages, or different colored skin. I delivered a small presentation to a small table group of children. At times they would input about their families, and others would explain how theirs was different or the same. Then, at the end of the slides, the children were given a worksheet to draw their very own family to be assessed. Once they were all done, the children, one at a time, would share what they drew. This was to demonstrate family diversity in a show-and-tell manner. Having this form assessment conveyed to me that they understood everyone has a different family. Having a worksheet with a diversity of images of families for students to circle or cross out did not seem right. This is because each family looks different from everyone else. Having a show-and-tell where everyone would be able to execute it seemed like the proper way to assess children's understanding of family diversity.

In the second lesson, I focused on cultural diversity. By doing so, the theme of the lesson was world celebrations. I created flashcards that had images of Hanukkah, the Day of the Dead, Chuseok, Ramadan, the Lunar New Year, and Diwali (see Appendix B). I made sure to implement various celebrations that children would likely not know. Meaning, that Christmas and Halloween were something that every participant was familiar with. I would have the children pick out which flashcard they were most interested in, and then I would explain to them the holiday. At times children would confuse the Day of the Dead with Halloween, but I made sure to correct the misinformation. This would go on until there were no more flashcards left.



Finally, once I delivered the content I assessed them by having them draw about a new world celebration they learned about that day.

The last lesson that was delivered to the participants was about skin color. In doing so, I read the book “All the Colors We Are” by Katie Kissinger (see Appendix C). The book focuses on how we are all special and different from one another, through our skin. The book is written in a simple form that scientifically explains how our skin color is determined by family, the sun, and melanin. In my table group, I read the book with them. I would try to make it interactive, by asking them about their opinions, or if they had any guesses about why their skin color is the way it is. After we were done reading, I provided a worksheet. This worksheet had them check mark the three reasons why we get our skin color. The worksheet that was created had images of food, clouds, the sun, a family, to wash your face, and melanin to assess the students on their comprehension of the book.

## **The Results**

### **Learning Outcome 1: Family Diversity**

The learning outcome for family diversity was centered on having children do a Show and Tell about who is in their family, during circle time. Children were shown a mini presentation showcasing different family images. Afterward, to assess their understanding, children were given a worksheet immediately after the lesson on the first day. The worksheet states to draw their own family and to later do a Show and Tell. Doing a Show and Tell demonstrates the diversity of each child’s family. Since this assessment was more of an oral delivery, I concluded once children were able to complete the given tasks, then they passed. I reviewed all participant's performances. Six out of seven children (85%) were able to draw and

orally communicate who was in their family drawing. Therefore, I concluded that the first learning outcome fully met the criteria, passing the first learning outcome.

### **Learning Outcome 2: Culture Awareness**

The second learning outcome was to have children draw one new cultural celebration different from their own. The assessment used to evaluate the lesson was to have another worksheet given where participants were directed to draw one new celebration they learned about. The assessment was given immediately after the lesson on day two of a three-day curriculum. For a passing score, a point was given when children drew about a new celebration they learned about. To assess their understanding, once a child was done with their drawing I would ask them what they drew. I was able to review all the participant's worksheets and explanations. Seven out of seven children (100%) were able to meet the criteria of drawing a new celebration. This meant that the second learning outcome was fully met.

### **Learning Outcome 3: Skin Color**

The last learning outcome was having children identify the three reasons why we have different skin colors. The assessment method that was given to the participants was on the third and last day of the curriculum. I gave the participants a worksheet showcasing six images, where children needed to find and check mark the correct answers for why we have different skin colors (sun, family, melanin). The assessment was a total of three points when identifying all the correct answers. This meant checking the images of a yellow sun, an image of a family, and small grains representing melanin. Upon completion of lesson delivery, I was able to note all worksheets. Seven out of seven children (100%) were able to identify the 3 reasons for having colored skin. This resulted in having the third learning outcome fully met.

### **Discussion**

The focus of this project was to implement an anti-bias curriculum in a kindergarten classroom. This was to have more family, cultural, and racial representation in classrooms starting at an early age. The project was an overall success, where all learning outcomes were fully met. This is because the kindergarten classroom was welcoming from the start. This helped form a connection with students where they were able to feel comfortable and not afraid to ask questions. Also, the participants were able to find the lessons engaging because they were able to take a break from school work and have their full attention on something they could relate to. For example, having the cultural holiday cards brought positive participation in the classroom. It was satisfactory when children would ask questions when taking a look at a celebration they did not know about. This brought an open conversation between the students and I, to form a connection. Having conversations about family, culture, and skin color brought up similarities and differences and everyone was excited to share their own experiences.

Despite all the success, there were some challenges along the way when implementing the three lessons. One of those challenges was having children focus on the lesson. This was because children saw me more as a fun teacher, and someone they could chit-chat with. At times, the lessons were being sidetracked, and I would have difficulty focusing back their attention on the topic. Another limitation that I experienced was time. Kindergarten children are at school physically at a much shorter time compared to older children, so they run on a completely different schedule. This would cause me to have difficulty managing my lessons on time because I was running on their tight-packed schedule. At times I felt rushed, but ultimately tried the best I could.

This project is just a small example of what can be done in classrooms and can be much more effective in the future. By doing so, a way to make this project stronger is by adding more topics that support all dimensions of human differences. These can be topics relating to language ability, religion, and socioeconomic status. Adding more topics such as these can also make the project more inclusive and effective for different groups. Another suggestion for the future, can be highlighting different types of careers. This can be emphasizing on non-traditional careers where children learn more than just a doctor, firefighter, or teacher. It can be supporting careers in plumbing, technology, retail, and much more. In the future, I hope that children will be more exposed to diverse ways of being, leading towards more acceptance and inclusion regardless of people's differences.

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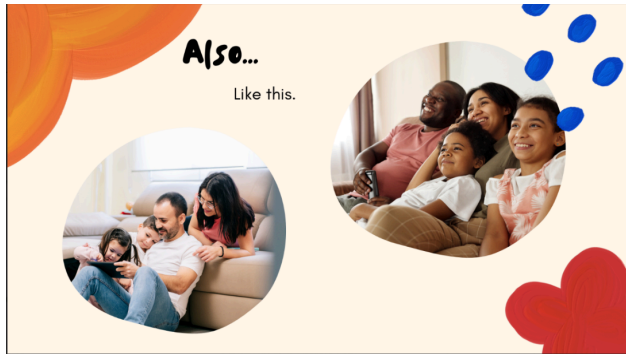
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Appendix A

Family Diversity Slides







Appendix B

Cultural Diversity Flashcards





Appendix C

Racial Diversity, “All the Colors We Are”

