

THE COUNSELORS' CONNECTION



The Newsletter of the
Elementary Counseling Department

What's in this month's issue:

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- **DID YOU KNOW?**
- **SUPPORTING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION WITH CHILDREN**
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PROMOTING ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY

As a part of growing up, our children encounter new things each day. This means that they will encounter others who may be vastly different than individuals they have been exposed to in their lives. "Teaching young children diversity, equity and inclusion can be challenging, but it is so important to help your children learn how to embrace diversity in a way that is respectful and celebrates different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences" (Kim, Y., 2021). Diversity is the acceptance of differences in individuals and the celebration of each person being unique. When talking about inclusion, that is the focus on not excluding others and making everyone feel welcome.

It is important that children are inclusive of all people, including those who are dissimilar, and accept others for who they are. This helps to foster a sense of belonging and acceptance for all children. A child's level of acceptance for those who are different than them begins within the home.

Rouyer and Davis (2021) state that "talking openly and positively about differences can help children better understand themselves and those around them". This allows our children to explore their curiosity about differences that they see and adults can use these instances of curiosity as teachable moments to show kindness and appreciation for differences.

"Diversity and inclusion helps children learn to empathize with people who are different from them" (Rouyer and Davis, 2021). When modeling inclusive behavior, parents, who are our children's first and forever teachers, can provide them with an impactful approach to differences.

Some things parents can do to promote acceptance of diversity and inclusion include:

- Do not pretend differences don't exist, embrace and acknowledge them
- Speak up when bias happens
- Have an open discussion without shutting the conversation down; it is okay if you do not know every answer to your child's question, tell them you need to think about it
- Be aware of your own biases
- Talk about similarities as well
- Teach your child about their family history
- Learn about other cultures

DID YOU KNOW?

The SEL classes include lessons that support social awareness and an acceptance of diversity through perspective-taking, the use of empathy, and the acceptance of oneself and others as unique individuals.

Kim, Y. (2021). Teaching young children about diversity, equity, and inclusion: Extension: University of Nevada, Reno. Extension.

Stallbaumer Rouyer, J., & Davis, P. A. (n.d.). How to promote diversity and inclusion in your child's life. Children's Mercy Kansas City.

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION WITH CHILDREN



To define diversity in the classroom, it helps to understand what diversity is in and of itself. Simply put, diversity is everything that makes people different from each other, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, or religious belief. Embracing diversity can have benefits that reflect well beyond students' time in elementary school and can positively impact their lives going forward in a number of ways.

Diversity improves cognitive skills and critical thinking. The presence of diversity in the classroom allows students to consider perspectives and opinions beyond those that they've already formed or were shaped in early life by family and friends. By presenting students with viewpoints far different from their own, it gives them the opportunity to think critically about their own beliefs and examine the world in fresh ways.

Classroom students aren't the only ones who can benefit from learning about what makes them diverse. Schools are also working towards supporting diversity and inclusion with children by establishing zero-indifference negative behavior policies. In recent years, schools have enacted zero-tolerance policies in an attempt to curb bullying, harassment, and intimidation. However, the tide is now shifting toward zero-indifference policies instead.

Zero indifference is an alternative that promotes safety in schools by consistently and firmly addressing disrespectful behavior. Unlike zero-tolerance, in which a first offense results in punishments as harsh as suspension or expulsion, zero-indifference allows schools to use culturally insensitive moments as opportunities for learning and understanding.

"The Benefits of Inclusion and Diversity in the Classroom." American University School of Education, 24 July 2019, <https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/benefits-of-inclusion-and-diversity-in-the-classroom/>. Accessed 1 Oct. 2023.

<https://www.apa.org/education-career/k12/diversity>

TRY IT AT HOME!



Nurture curiosity. Squash judgment.

Sometimes kids are taught not to ask personal questions, as it might be seen as rude. But in fact, asking questions is a reminder that your child is curious about diversity. Help your child identify trusted adults who will be their best resource for answers. The discussion can lead to a child's deeper level of understanding about people who are different from them. Once that knowledge is acquired, try ending the discussion with "You be you and let other people be who they are."

SEL BOOKS OF THE MONTH

