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Celebrating Diversity

God’s Way!

Increasing Multiculturalism in Christian Early Childhood Settings

A Practical Manual for Practitioners

Master’s Project
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Tamari Nduaguibe
INTRODUCTION

This manual is for early childhood professionals, working within a Christian educational setting, who seek to include multicultural education within their curriculum. By early childhood professionals, I am referring to caregivers and teachers who work with toddlers through children in grade two. The settings they work in include, but are not limited to Christian day care centers, preschools, private elementary schools, and even Sunday school classes within a church. The purpose of this manual is to help all of those who work with children, following biblical principles, to use those same guidelines to affirm diversity, teach children to resist bias, and see themselves and others as an equally valuable part of the world.

There are three overarching questions that this manual seeks to answer. First, what exactly is multicultural education? How is it defined in the literature, and who are the theorists that have been influential in broadening and deepening our understanding of the topic? How does our lens, as Christian educators, shape our own understanding of this topic? What role does multiculturalism have within the church in general?

Second, why do we, as Christian educators need to include multicultural education within our classrooms? What part should it play in a biblically based curriculum? Does God desire for us to learn more about this area as we continue to grow professionally and in the likeness of Him? What does scripture have to say about the values underlying, and the principles inherent, in multicultural education? Will the children that The Lord has entrusted into our care benefit from our purposeful inclusion of multicultural education?

Third, what does multicultural education look like in a high quality Christian early childhood setting? How does a classroom that is committed to affirming diversity and helping children to resist bias look? What will we need to implement these principles and ideas into our teaching? What are some concrete lesson ideas and teaching strategies

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1 The church, as defined by Jesus, is the body of believers and the bride of Christ, a people group, not a building
As an educator, I firmly believe in the wonderful capacity children bring to us. “The Kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18:16). Although not based on scripture, my personal belief is that God gave children to us, as part of our learning landscape and training ground, to help us learn to be more like Him. Children can teach adults valuable lessons, especially young children who have yet pick up and fully embrace the ‘culture’ that adults are so immersed in. Children by nature are honest, sincere, and forgiving. Working alongside them, opportunities to identify ways we need to grow become painfully obvious. Anyone who works with children can easily see why our Lord calls for us to “become like little children” in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3).

Although there are many educational theorist who have advanced the field tremendously, those that have influenced my thinking the most are progressive and constructivist educators, such as Dewey, Bruner, Vygotsky, and Thorndike. I firmly believe as Dewey did, that to prepare people for their role in a democracy, we must give them plenty of opportunities to practice within schools. Not in superficial ways that scratch the surface, but in ways that activate their understanding of, and experience with how to influence and direct the world in which they seek to live. One of the important roles of our educational system is to shape strong, active citizens who are not afraid to use their first amendment (and other) rights to stand up for what they believe and create a more just society.

Children need opportunities to use their natural curiosity to inquire, to learn by doing, to collaborate and create, and to act and reflect. Young children’s learning is most enhanced by active learning, engaging in concrete learning experiences to promote development in all areas: physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and last but not least, spiritually. Life experience and prior knowledge is an asset that children bring to their classroom, and if tapped, is the catalyst that shapes meaningful learning.
Chapter One

WHAT IS MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION?

Understanding a Multidimensional Definition of Culture

Multicultural Education, not surprisingly, is a term that has probably as many definitions as its base word ‘culture’. Culture can be defined as any combination of various attributes, both seen (as in the behaviors, words, customs, and traditions), and the unseen (values, assumptions, thoughts, feelings, and processes). The observable traits of culture are the easiest for people to notice, and frequently get the most attention. In conversation, reference is made to people’s culture when individuals speak about language, ethnic heritage, style of dress, food preferences, artistic expression, and literary works, to name a few. Although these are the easiest to observe, they are the ‘tip of the iceberg’. These characteristics that are primarily in awareness comprise approximately one tenth of one’s culture.³

The underlying values which shape a particular culture, the glue that holds groups together, is for the most part unseen by observers and primarily out of awareness for the members of a culture, and rarely solicits direct attention as the more obvious traits do. These values, assumptions, and processes become part of the air that we breathe, as we grow up in any particular culture. A good analogy is the water that a fish swims in; the culture of a person is the totality of what life is, the discourses that are taken for granted, and the ideals that one normally would just absorb without questioning or considering the possibility of any other way, as what is, is seen as ‘normal’ by everyone operating from this common culture. These unseen attributes are rarely articulated or taught directly;

³ See Appendix A for a visual representation of the iceberg conception of the nature of culture
avert their eyes as I speak to them, and look them directly in the eye. I am now in a culture that has taught children not to look into adult’s eyes as that would be a sign of aggressiveness, and would be seen as challenging their authority and being disrespectful. My initial reaction is to respond from my cultural background, and to infer that these children are rude, or disrespectful, or perhaps that their parents have done a poor job of socializing their children. It is not until undergoing repeated experiences of this kind, and asking questions to Korean adults, that it will become clear to me that the expectation of direct eye-contact, although part of my culture, is not necessarily a part of the Korean culture. This clash of cultures offers opportunities for learning for me, as well as those within the culture I am now living. The children that I teach, and the colleagues I work with, will have an opportunity to figuratively ‘step out of their culture’ as they interact with me, and see my reactions to what they have up until this point seen as normal, and just they way it is. What previously had unconsciously been taken for granted now prompted an insight, on both sides, of how the interpretation of eye contact reveals one example of how these two cultures are different.

Had I stayed in America, and continued to live with and teach those only within my culture, I may have had the opportunity to teach and learn about Korea, as part of my desire to make my classroom more multicultural. However, as is common for many teachers, I would have been tempted to focus my attention on the more obvious cultural attributes (those parts of the iceberg that are above the water line), such as food, dress, holidays, etc. learning very little about the actual people, as people, of that culture.

**Realizing the shortfalls of more limited definitions**

Enid Lee discusses this ‘tourist approach’, describing it as one of the potential ‘traps’ educators can easily fall into. The problem with this type of multicultural education is that since we never really step out of our own culture and meaningfully engage with another, it reinforces an us/Them mentality whereby ‘we’ become the norm against which all other cultures are compared.
Confirming the biblical stance on diversity

God’s appreciation of diversity is obvious. He created thousands of variations of most of his creation, from insects to flowers. He made sure that each one of us, as humans, is unique. The bible tells us that He knew each one of us before we were born (????), and that the hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). A God that ensured created each and every of the 5 billion thumbprints is different is a God that appreciates diversity, while expecting unity.

In What Color is Your God? Multicultural Education in the Church, Breckenridge (1995) advocates for Christians to educate themselves about other cultural groups and allow these groups to respond to the Christian message in their own culturally distinctive manners, rather than the ‘cultural container’ that each of us experience Christianity in. He offers a Christian view of multiculturalism: “the influence of the living Christ, as perceived through the text of the Holy Scripture, upon the language, art, music, and social mandates of the culture which receives Him.” (p. 26) He warns of the danger, on the part of the dominant culture, not to see the degree to which its understanding of the faith is itself, culturally conditioned. He asserts that it is possible to oppress people culturally, by forcing private views upon others or failing to act in a positive and affirming way toward minorities.

Referring to the work of David Lyon (p.37), Breckenridge sets forth four responses that the church can have as it grapples with issues of multiculturalism.

1. Escapism. This option avoids human relationship issues by retreating to the world of theology. People who choose this approach are like those who do not see the elephant in the middle of the room.
2. Compartamentalize. This option creates an artificial division between life and practice by labeling social issues as secular, therefore not applicable to church involvement. People who opt for this approach deny God’s purpose for our lives – that of redressing the wrongs of a fallen society, a matter of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19)
3. Acceptance of sociology as a “superior” worldview – Social sciences reign over theology so that the gospel is diminished in its value as a worldview.
and finally part of common humanity. A look at the Identity Triangle\(^4\) (figure 1) is helpful to illustrate how personalities are multidimensional, as well as the need to consider all three parts equally.

![Identity Triangle](image)

Figure 1

As people, our identity is derived from these three levels of identity, and seeks to unify us with as well as differentiate us from others. As educators it is important for us to consider each of the three parts equally, especially when seeking to know our students. Problems occur when any one of the three dimensions of a person’s identity is accentuated, at the expense of the other two, which are given less importance.

Take for example ‘isms’. ‘Isms’ is the blanket term for racism, sexism, classism, linguistics, ethnocentrism, etc. ‘Isms’ occur when one of the person’s group memberships is singled out and given priority in a negative light. No longer is a person seen as the multidimensional person that they are, but rather, with one characteristic exaggerated, they are treated differently because they are, for example, a ‘poor’ person. Poor, or black, or paralyzed becomes who they are, rather than one small piece of their unique whole. Since they are ‘poor’, a host of assumptions and stereotypes can be attributed to that person without thought given to consciously recognize their unique character traits. Likewise their common humanity is diminished and they are not as

\(^4\) The Identity triangle comes from the work of Schein.
Sonia Nieto, in *Affirming Diversity*, refers to the 'myth of meritocracy' that so permeates our American culture. The thinking underlying this 'myth' is that people either 'make it' or don't in this society based on their effort, and that there is a direct connection between working hard and succeeding. The puritan work ethic is perhaps one of the roots that have held this idea so firmly entrenched in our society even today. This can be seen in the classroom by teachers who label low 'achievers' as either lazy, or having a lower IQ, without acknowledging the impact that poverty and/or oppression can have on these children. Teachers focusing on the individual dimension are not taking into consideration what it means, in our biased society, to be part of the groups that these children belong to.

The last group of people who put more weight on one dimension than the other are those who focus on the bottom third, the common humanity (see figure 5). These are the people who can only see similarities and deny differences, as we are all part of humanity. A statement from someone who over accentuates this dimension could be "I don't see color, we're all alike". Although our common humanity should help to increase unity among us, it is also important to remember that our differences do exist and, in the absence of judgment, they are not a problem. Being unable or unwilling to see the other dimensions of personalities such as group memberships and individual preferences that also define who people are, is to once again see others superficially, and scratch the surface.

**Addressing the fact that diversity does matter – both positively and negatively**

Ellen Wolport, in *Start Seeing Diversity*, urges educators to resist the temptation to be colorblind, a situation where we pretend that we do not notice differences. This stops us from analyzing three important things:

1. How these differences affect our lives and offer advantages to some and disadvantages to others,
2. In what ways this is fair and unfair,
3. What can we do to change these conditions to make them fairer and better

In their effort to treat everyone 'equal', inequitable practices may result as due consideration has not been given to the other dimensions that affect how others are
Nieto refers to multicultural education as having seven components (see figure 5). In *Affirming Diversity*, Nieto calls for educators to make the history of all groups visible in our curriculum, instruction, and schooling by affirming all languages and cultures. Instead of giving preferential bias toward the dominant eurocentric culture, which alienates and perpetuates the disenfranchisement of those from other cultures within the schools, teachers must seek to level the playing field of all students, by addressing inequalities based on lines of diversity (gender, class, religion, ability levels, race, ethnicity, language, etc.). Her text deals specifically with the effects of race, ethnicity, and language, encouraging teachers to examine their classrooms for bias, as they look for ways to increase their understanding of those different from themselves, and help children to acknowledge this difference in a positive way. She goes further to state that multicultural education needs to “confront issues of power and privilege in society….. challenging racism and other biases as well as the Structures, policies, and practices of schools” (Nieto p 4) For Nieto, multicultural education is focused on restructuring the American educational system - schools, classrooms, teachers, and children - so that all children can succeed, and learn to value themselves without devaluing others.

Nieto believes that there are four levels of support in multicultural programs for embracing pluralism and cultivating an openness to diversity: tolerance, acceptance, respect, and affirmation. Theological assumptions, such as the scriptural expectation that God’s people are “to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly” (Micah 6:8), are the foundation for such curriculum goals.

Martin Palmer (1991) in, *What Should We Teach? Christians and Education in a Pluralist World*, summarized the findings of a four-year World council of churches study
Culturally Sensitive Child Care. Essential Connections: 10 Keys to Culturally Sensitive Child Care

1. Provide cultural consistency
2. Work toward representative staffing.
3. Create Small Groups
4. Use home language.
5. Make environments culturally relevant
6. Uncover your cultural beliefs
7. Be open to the Perspectives of others
8. Seek out cultural and family information
9. Clarify Values
10. Negotiate cultural conflicts

Figure 7

Relevant for early childhood educators is the notion that the younger the child, the purpose for multicultural education is to teach children in a culturally consistent context, rather than to teach culture explicitly to children. Children need to receive messages that support their cultural identity, affirming who they are and learning how to respect and relate positively with others. The video, Culturally Sensitive Child Care, stresses the importance of the home school connection as teachers and parents work together to help the child develop a positive sense of identity and self-worth. Consistent with ideals of quality childcare and affirming diversity, healthy self-esteem is encouraged by a high degree of consistency between the culture of the home and school.

The sensitivity that toddler caregivers display is parallel to expectations for teachers working with older children. Understanding Multicultural Education in Early Childhood Education states: "Skills teachers need to develop include: knowing how to reinforce home culture, knowing how to adapt curriculum materials to make them more relevant, knowing how to build a curriculum based on children's lives and language experiences and knowing how to involve parents in the educational experience" (Saracho, 1983, p.9). Teachers need to accept and use student’s cultural and linguistic experiences in establishing educational goals. One function of the school is enhancing the cultural background of children. Teaching them the 'new as necessary' without the repression of the old and familiar is paramount to supporting cultural and linguistic flexibility in children.
Banks notes that lower level approaches are the easiest for teachers to implement, but that also they have the most limitations to the benefits children will realize by them. With the contributions approach, for example, children do not develop an inclusive view of the role of particular ethnic and cultural groups in US Society, and see ethnic events and issues as an addition to the curriculum, or an ‘appendage to the main story’ of the development of our nation. Additionally this approach can be diminished into studying the odd and exotic parts of ethnic cultures, reinforcing the stereotypes and misconceptions people already hold.
society. One can easily see the influence of Dewey, as children are challenged to put our democratic ideals into action in order to improve our society.

As a contribution to the field, Bennett has identified six goals of a multicultural lesson, to guide teachers as they plan meaningful curriculum. (see Figure 9). This framework supports other professionals in the field who advocate for multicultural education to go beyond just exposure to others, and to seek ways to actively challenge and change negative messages children already hold about others who are different from themselves. Bennett also speaks to the need for children to be exposed to the global nature of our world, articulated via goal number five which deals with knowledge of the prevailing world condition, trends, and developments as a highly interrelated ecosystem.

In *Multicultural Religious Education*, Barbara Wilkerson (1997) discusses four theoretical approaches: liberationist, community of faith, public church, and social science. Liberationists, such as the great revolutionary Christian educators such as Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, stress the empowerment and contribution of oppressed peoples. Those who approach the topic from the community of faith perspective foster identity in its Christian and cultural manifestations. Those more concerned with the Public-church approach engage disciples and society in the search for social justice. The social-science approach makes available effective foundations for multiculturalism in any religious context. Wilkerson speaks to the need for the modern day church to be culturally relevant, and respectful of diversity as it strives for unity,

What must emerge is a framework for religious education in a new millennium, one in which the task of Christian religious education will be to proclaim Christ in a world different from what it has ever been - a world in which groups once distant and foreign are now near neighbors; a world of interdependent but distinct peoples, whose identities resist submersion and instinctively refuse to melt into a new culture, even while embracing aspects of it. That drive to maintain identity is
education. Theology has much to say regarding our responsibilities in this area, while the state of our world today also gives compelling evidence as to why the inclusion of multicultural education is so critical.
valuing one culture, at the expense of others, we must develop the ability to see and appreciate the image of God in all humanity.

Lewis, Cram, and Lee (1997) in *Curriculum and Multicultural Religious Education*, explain further why the metaphor of the mosaic is superior to that of the melting pot,

The good multicultural religious-education curriculum does not attempt to take ethnic or racial or cultural or religious groups and put them into a melting pot where all differences are eradicated. The melting pot destroys the distinctive qualities of various groups that give vitality, freshness, and new imitations of the divine, which each and every group possesses. Rather, a good multicultural religious-education curriculum proceeds along the lines of a mosaic in which every ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious group will be encouraged to place its distinctive contributions on the altar of the Almighty so that all other group can be thereby enriched...It is love, it is a sharing of gifts, it is standing in wonder and admiration of what God has bestowed on other groups that is the thrust of a good multicultural religious-education curriculum. (p 385)

Stanley Inouye views our society as a broken mirror, with each fragment reflecting a valid but distorted image of what should have been. He believes that unity is prevented in our tendency to define belonging as sameness. Rather than seeing the way diversity can promote unity, people can sometimes get stuck by reserving a sense of comradery for only those who are on ‘our team’ (religious, ethnic, racial, etc.) forgetting that under God we are all on the same human team.

God makes it clear in the bible that we are all the same. Our common humanity is evident in scriptures such as Romans 3:23, which reminds us, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Galatians 3:28 also supports this notion of equity between all peoples: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. Colossians 3:11 echoes similar sentiments, “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” Thus under divinity, God sees us as all the same, and all equally valuable.

As Christians look forward to eternal life with our creator, we are reminded that people from all humanity will be part of this celebration. Unlike old testament times, where the
All children deserve and need to develop a positive and healthy self-identities
One of the formative tasks of early childhood is in forming a sense of identity. Young children form ideas about who they are, and their value, by interacting with the world and those around them. Children absorb direct and indirect messages, either affirming or devaluing who they are, from parents, teachers, other children, and other adults in their lives. Aside for individual influences on a child’s identity development, there are also institutional factors that offer messages of self worth to our children. Children simultaneously encounter three levels of oppression that dramatically affect perceptions of themselves and others. These are individual, cultural, and institutional. Since oppression exists, it works against the healthy identity development of all children; some children receive erroneous messages of inferiority, while other children receive equally erroneous messages of superiority. Thus multicultural education is needed to combat development of both the sense of superiority for those belonging to privileged groups, as well as inferiority for those from marginalized groups within our society.

Beverlee Tatum, a psychologist who addresses the development of racial identity in “Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” clearly differentiates between active racism, passive racism, and active antiracism. Her ideas related to racial identity development could also be applied along other lines of diversity (class, sex, ethnicity, language, etc) as we think about children’s identity development.

Active racism includes blatant acts of racial bigotry and discrimination, whereas passive racism is more subtle, such as laughing at a racist joke, letting exclusionary hiring practices go unchallenged, accepting as appropriate omissions of people of color from the curriculum, and avoiding discussions of difficult race related issues. Although most teachers, and certainly Christian educators, would probably agree that active racism is wrong, and therefore not knowingly engage in it, the same cannot be true of passive racism. This is often the ‘smog we breathe’ that we do not even notice as it is what we have always known, growing up in a society founded on racial (and other) inequalities. Although active racism is easier to see, passive racism is equally damaging in that it is often invisible to many, especially those from the dominant culture. Children are
Children notice difference and the value our society places on that difference

Children are developing ideas and attitudes about themselves and others, from a very young age, unknowingly absorbing many cultural biases along the way. It is the teacher’s role to help children when they are misinformed, or have inaccurate information. Take for example, preschoolers normal intellectual development as described by Piaget. Young children are in the pre-operational stage of development, busy assimilating new information into their cognitive structures (schemata). When a piece of new information doesn’t fit, they must expand or change their mental categories to allow for new understandings to make sense.

A simple example can illustrate how this understanding is related to the potential development of generalizations and stereotypes. David is a preshooler, whose father is a doctor, and whose pediatrician is a man. He is playing hospital with other children in the dramatic play area. When children are selecting the parts they would like to play, Jenny decides she will be the doctor. David protests, “Doctors are boys!” For David, he is not being prejudiced or sexist, rather he is responding sincerely, from what he knows. His experience thus far in life has helped him to form a mental construction (doctor = man), since every doctor he has known thus far has been a man, he keeps assimilating new experiences into this schema, continuously reinforcing this understanding of doctors being men. It is not until Jenny decides that she wants to play the part of doctor, and the others in the group affirm its legitimacy, that David’s construct is being challenged; David now needs to reexamine his concept of doctor, in the light of this new assertion that there are doctors who are women. This new information cannot simply be assimilated into David’s existing schema, and thus he must accommodate his mental constructs and change the schema so that it can include this new information (doctor = man or woman). Inviting a doctor into the classroom, or going on a field trip to a local clinic where there are many women doctors, will help David, and others, to learn more accurate information about the world.

That is the role of the early childhood educator – to set up experiences that help children to learn about the world in which we live, to be successful in it, and how to affect that
Children also need accurate information regarding people with physical (and other) disabilities. Assistive technologies available to those with disabilities invite young children’s questions as they try to understand why some people use such equipment. It is only by open discussion of people having different abilities that young children will feel safe enough to speak out about their apprehensions. Young children may, for example, think that if they sit in a wheelchair, their legs will stop working. Listening to children’s misconceptions and reading between the lines to determine the thoughts that may have led to these, is critical for teachers who want to respond to children in a nonjudgmental and supportive way.

Teachers need to help young children to move from developmentally appropriate simplistic thinking that can form the basis for generalizing and stereotyping, to more complex thinking in which differences within groups, and similarities between groups are noticed. Differences and similarities need to be purposefully acknowledged and celebrated as we relate the concept that each and every one of us is made in the image of our God (Genesis1:26-27). Incorrect information, derived from age appropriate simplistic thinking, left unchallenged, can easily turn into stereotypes. Additionally, children need to be helped to see the totality of people and resist the urge to magnify the importance of the difference, while minimizing the commonalities we share with others.

The culture of silence undermines children’s understanding of themselves and others as valuable and unique individuals who contribute to a meaningful whole
One aspect of our culture which makes it difficult for children to gain an accurate understanding of some of the misconceptions they hold is, what Tatum calls, the culture of ‘shh’ which silences the child who notices and gives voice to a difference that an adult is uncomfortable or embarrassed to talk about. This reaction teaches children not to talk about difference, associating it with shame or negativity, as adults do not deal with children’s questions, or explain why they do not want to talk about these questions. It is important to remember that children’s questions don’t go away; they just learn to stop asking. Children who are continuously ‘shhh’d’ interpret this as there is something wrong with the person, that is so bad, it can not be talked about. Children internalize this
Teachers need to protect children and teach them how to protect themselves

Teachers wear many hats, one of the most important ones is protector. We protect children directly as we give children the tools to take care of themselves and stay safe. Under the guise of precaution and in the name of safety, we teach children how to look left and right before crossing the road, commit phone numbers to private memory, avoid stranger -danger, stop, drop, and roll, and the list of precautions to guard children from the potential hazards of life goes on. Likewise, since we live in a society that favors some at the expense of others, all children need strategies on how to navigate this sea of inequity. Teachers can help children to notice and act on discriminatory attitudes and practices. “Learning to spot ‘that stuff’ — racism, sexism, classism — is an important skill for children to develop. We are better able to resist the negative impact of oppressive messages when we see them coming than when they are invisible to us.” (Tatum, p )

Today, most teachers do not question the importance of preventing sexual abuse, and use strategies such as labeling body parts with anatomically correct terminology, encouraging children to respect private areas of themselves and others, and informing children about good touch/bad touch, as age appropriate measures in an effort to protect children from becoming victims of sexual abuse. Our society’s willingness to acknowledge the alarmingly high rates of sexual abuse of children has enabled teachers to advocate for children on this level. However, it was not always this way. Years ago, sexual abuse also suffered under the shroud of silence, and as the topic was avoided by all, children were not given skills for self-protection, and the practice went on unabated. It wasn’t until our society acknowledged the problem, and the need for intervention, that it could be dealt with sincerely and purposefully by parents and educators alike.

In a similar vein, it will take our society’s willingness to acknowledge that oppression exists, that certain people are being systematically disadvantaged, and all people are damaged by this system in order to put in place strategies to protect the children entrusted in our care.
privileges go unnoticed by whites, while the absence of these for people of color makes them extremely visible to this group.

Tatum claims that many white people are at a disadvantage in adulthood as many have yet to discover their racial (and other) features of their identity and what part that contributes to their success and acceptance within society. Tatum refers to the work of Janet Helms, as outlined in her book, *Black and White Racial Identity Development: Theory, Research, Practice* (see table next page). Helms explains that the task for people of color is to resist negative societal messages and develop empowered sense of self, while the task for whites is to develop a positive white identity based in reality, not on assumed superiority. Thus there is a need for all teachers to become aware of their complete identity, in all of its dimensions, so that we can acknowledge how each, has influenced who we are today.

Understanding bias and inequality is a long-term process that can be difficult as well as eye-opening. It involves a commitment to critical inquiry and self-reflection. One of the tasks of the holy spirit is to help us to see attitudes within ourselves that need to be brought into the light so that they can be put under the blood. Biases and negative attitudes toward others is one area that God desires to heal in our journey to be more Christ like.

Only by consciously reexamining and reeducating ourselves personally, can we be in a position to reflect a healthier, more balanced self-image, and serve as the role models of acceptance and love God desires and children need.
If we do not, many children from marginalized groups will continue to be at undue disadvantage in our classrooms and schools, continuing the cycle of inequity into the next generation.

For many children the shift from home to school is not easy; it represents a major break. Language patterns, social interaction, and the manifestation of values and culture may be unfamiliar to these children. Those with a different mother tongue need to learn to be competent in an alien language and culture, while being denied the opportunity to express themselves fluently, which so easily happens in their home language. School policies that restrict the use of other languages often make children feel that they have to reject their own language and culture and adopt the dominant one of the school. This leads to a sense of rejection, bewilderment, and loss if ethnic identity (Saracho, 1983). These children are at risk for falling behind other children academically and suffering from lower self-esteem.

When culturally defined practices for satisfying human needs are presented positively, the child from a cultural minority group can develop and maintain cultural identity with pride and the majority child can place his or her culture in context with others. In this way all children develop an understanding of and respect for diversity. When presented in a positive climate, exploration of the ways people differ can promote acceptance of diversity. (Saracho, 1983, p.79).

As stated before the prevalence of myths, distortions, and omissions within the broader society as well as classrooms causes children from the minority groups to feel devalued, as who they are is continuously either not reflected back to them or the picture they are given is an inaccurate one. The more the discontinuity between the home and the school, the greater the likelihood that children will have difficulty succeeding academically.

Nieto (2000) refers to several reviews that have documented that “socially and politically dominated groups have experienced the most severe academic disadvantage” (p 239) Teacher expectations, the culture of silence around issues of racism and discrimination, culturally inappropriate curriculum, and schools mirroring and perpetuating the inequalities found in the greater society all widen the achievement gap of students who more closely resemble the dominantly culture and those who are increasingly different from it. Structural and organizational issues in schools, such as tracking, standardized
ethnocentrism hurts those from the majority culture; oppression hurts everyone. Ethnocentrism, or cultural pride that reinforces notions of superiority and normalizes privilege, is a force that need to be actively mitigated against in a society such as ours that frequently gives preference to those from the dominant culture of power.

Lewis, Cram, and Lee, (1997) in *Curriculum and Multicultural Religious Education*, reaffirm Nieto’s point that multicultural education is about all people, so it is for all people. Unfortunately, they say, this field of education has been structurally marginalized from core-subjects through the standardization of curriculum. Multicultural education is also geographically marginalized, which is evidenced by the

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*From Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant’s review of literature (Lewis, 1997, p.349)*

positive correlation between high numbers of minorities and the increased presence of multicultural activities. White suburban schools often give this field little attention. Quoting Carlson, who argues that it is white, middle class learners who most need multicultural education in order to “begin thinking beyond the notion of a dominant eurocentric culture that ‘allows’ various other subcultures to exist at the margins” (p 358).

Figure 10

Jenkins and Kratt, in *Sociological Foundations* (1997), point out that English monolinguism became closely tied to Americanism. Efforts to rid people of their native language and culture, in an effort to make them fit into an increasingly constricted definition of American, are the roots of the bilingual debate which still elicits such strong feelings from those involved in education even today. “English monolinguism, democracy and capitalism become the visible means by which our relatively new country forged a national identity”. (p 84)
Ezekiel 18:5-20 illustrates that God views righteousness as incompatible with oppression. “Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right…..He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked…” A few chapters earlier in the same book we see that injustice is equated with sin: ‘He answered me, “The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice”’ (Ezekiel 9:9) This sentiment is again echoed in Proverbs: ‘Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully’ (28:5) And again in Jeremiah: ‘The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly’ (23:10b).

God’s heart towards those who are oppressed is evident throughout scripture. Psalm 103:6 reminds us, ‘The lord works righteousness and justice for the oppressed’. Our biblical responsibility toward those in our human family, reflects an ideology that is based on care, compassion, interdependence and equity, as opposed to the world systems that promote competition, independence, separation and greed. ‘He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.’ (Proverbs 14:31)

**Those that have, have a responsibility to those that do not**

The Lord continuously affirms his desire for his people to use their power to serve others, and for those who have to provide for those who do not. He makes it clear that as children of God, it is one of our key responsibilities. ‘O House of David, this is what the Lord says: Administer justice every morning. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn them like fire’ (Jeremiah 21:12). Chapter 1 of Isaiah clearly states the consequences God has laid out, when we do not take our responsibilities seriously in this area:

‘I will hide my eyes from you, even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen…..Learn to do right. Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow….Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves. They all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless. The widows case does not come before them’ (Isaiah 1:15…..17…23)
A biblical example of multicultural religious curriculum

Lewis, Cram, and Lee, in *Curriculum and Multicultural Religious Education*, examine scripture and discover a theological rationale which informs and defines the crucial dimensions of contemporary curriculum developed for multicultural religious education. In Acts 10:1 – 11:18, the Bible tells the story of a cross-cultural encounter between Peter (a Jewish-Christian) and Cornelius (a devout gentile). This multicultural text in action models an exchange between two men who eventually come to realize God’s vision for their shared life together as Jew and Gentile – one in Christ.

Throughout their detailed analysis, they describe how Peter was reluctant to pursue a gentile mission close to home due to a cultural and religious prejudice against these people, who he regarded as unclean. This analysis highlights six significant characteristics of a multicultural curriculum for religious education today. A listing of these and synopsis of each is as follows:

1. **Incomplete personal visions:** Cross cultural experiences are a requirement for interdependent learning. Each person is dependent on the response and perspectives of the other to fully understand what God intends.

2. **Openness to the cultural other:** Each person is required to take a journey beyond their own self, and the incomplete understanding of God’s intentions. Cross-cultural boundaries transcend private experience into public discourse before a gathered community.

3. **Face to face encounter:** The initial actions of both parties go against the norms of the culture that each person represents, while the religious and cultural laws are broken. Peter is humbled, and the theological foundation is laid for multicultural religious education, as he comes to the realization that Cornelius was not unclean or profane in God’s sight – but fully human. This encounter required that the group undertake the join task of shaping a new shared perspective on the relationship with each other and God, shaping new attitudes and behaviors. This is one important task of multicultural religious education: to assist learners to navigate successfully the border crossings of their multiple worlds (family, ethnic, racial, etc.) so that their faith lives may become broader and less provincial.
Chapter Three

HOW DO WE INCREASE MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION WITHIN OUR CHRISTIAN, EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS?

Louise Derman-Sparks speaks to the need for teachers to increase their ability to be anti-bias practitioners by engaging in an ongoing process that looks at children, themselves, and the environments they create for children. Teachers need to have a firm understanding of child development and how kids develop identity, as well as negative attitudes, biases and stereotypes. Additionally examining their own attitudes, biases, and discomforts is critical for teachers to be able to do this work effectively. According to Sparks, forming or finding a support group where teachers can commit to learning more about multicultural issues and developing skills in implementing an anti-bias curriculum is a necessary part of professional development. Through active exploration teachers can discover attitudes that inhibit them from discussing these issues.

Within the Christian early childhood setting it is important to integrate an anti-bias approach into all parts of the program: administrative policies, written materials,
changes into daily practice, so that all learners can be supported in culturally sensitive ways.

There is much literature available that gives practical insights into the specific cultures of each of the predominant ethnic groups listed above and the implications for working with members from these groups in both the church (Wilkerson, Breckenridge) as well as the classroom (Nieto, Mallory, Springs). Although each of the authors cited often devote entire chapters to describe cultural preferences, expectations, preferences, and variations, I have found it most helpful to recognize each of the variations related to cultural diversity along continuums. For example, the field dependence/independence continuum can be used to illustrate the range of degree to which learners are aware of, influenced by, and dependent upon their immediate environment (people, furniture, noise level, etc) during a learning situation. Those who are more to the left of the continuum (or those who are more field dependent) are more aware, influenced and dependent, while those further to the right of the continuum are more oblivious to their surroundings, more able to block environmental factors from their conscious awareness, and more able to focus on the task regardless of the other influences in their immediate environment. Children who are more field dependent also tend to be more relational, versus those who are more filed independent who frequently prefer learning opportunities that require analytical and independent thinking. Whether learners focus more on the affective or the cognitive domains also has implications for teacher who wish to plan effective motivational strategies, organize the most relevant learning situations, implement an effective classroom management system, and support the active engagement of all learners.

The following page highlights a few of the key continuums that characterize the diverse learning landscape. Teachers must search for instructional methods that take into consideration, and further support the ways in which children have learned to learn in their individual cultures. Since there has been such a pervasive and strong tendency to support more euro-American preferences, teachers need to make conscientious effort to consider those more consistent with ethnic minorities. The listing is organized into preferences more consistent with non-western cultures on the left, balanced by those most
Four Goals for Teachers

Ellen Wolport offers four goals for teachers who seek to increase their appreciation of and affirmation for diversity, the first of which directly relates to the identity triangle theory explained earlier. First, teachers need to nurture the construction of a knowledgeable and confident identity for each child, as an individual and as a member of multiple cultural groups (based on their gender, race, ethnicity, class, language, etc.) Children need to develop a healthy self-esteem and like who they are without feeling superior or inferior. Since many biases have already been learned by early childhood, teachers need to take an active stance to combat these. Both internalized oppression (negative biases against the self that children have subconsciously absorbed and start believing) for those outside of the dominant culture, and internalized superiority (a false sense of self worth based on the belief of the superiority of who oneself is, combined with the inferiority of who others are) for those from within the dominant culture need to be proactively opposed through clear and direct instructional strategies, and not left to chance waiting for a single opportune moment for the topic to arise naturally. Implementing multicultural education requires planning and organizing activities so that new information and concepts of culture can be presented to children as catalysts for positive attitude formation, and the scaffolding of learning regarding important issues of social justice.

Second, teachers need to promote comfortable, empathetic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds and guide children’s developing awareness of difference in a way that fosters interest in and empathy with difference, rather than fear or judgment of it. Common humanity is acknowledged as teacher’s help all children adapt to difference while simultaneously recognizing commonalities all people share. Teachers need to provide activities that help children to understand the humanness of each individual. People throughout the world share the same biological and social needs. Values, customs, beliefs, taken together as culture, determine how those ends are met.

Third, teachers need to foster each child’s ability to recognize bias and injustice. Helping kids to develop knowledge and analytic skills to identify unfair and untrue images
to learn about the child’s home environment shows respect for the first and most important teachers of young children – the family. Investing heavily in a home-school partnership from an early age promotes a child’s success throughout the primary years.

In order to support children’s positive self-identity development it is necessary to examine the materials used in the classroom, to ensure that they reflect the many identities of the children present in the room. There should be materials available for children in each of the languages that are spoken in the room. The human images in room decorations, teaching aids, and materials such as puzzles and stories should reflect the children’s racial and ethnic groups, as well as ability levels. There are currently many companies who offer more diverse materials. Teachers can make their own materials when commercially produced materials are not an option. Derman-Sparks suggests that teachers keep picture files, with pictures of diverse people doing diverse things, cut from discarded magazines.

For example, following the model of the book, *Brown Bear brown Bear, What do you see?* by Eric Carle, teachers can make a class book for the children to read in the story corner. Teachers take pictures of each child in the class (or use ones from picture day) and follow the story line with each child looking at each other, and then the teacher, and ending with the teacher looking at the class.

Another activity to connect home and school, while supporting children’s positive self-concept development, is to create family trees. This is a long-term project, in which children are asked to bring in a picture of their family, as well as each member individually if possible. Pictures of extended family members and others who are nearly ‘part of the family’ can also be solicited for older children. If families do not have these available the teacher can include picture taking in her home visit. The teacher then helps children to cut out trees with branches for each family member. The family picture is then pasted in the center of the trunk, with all of the family name written underneath. The individual pictures are them placed in each of the main branches, with names, and the additional extended family members are included in the outer branches of the tree.
number of naturally occurring windows that teachers can make use of. Likewise, the
more teachers deliberately set up their environment to reflect the diverse nature of the
greater world, the more windows they are offering children. This is an incredibly
important role for teachers as most young children have two disadvantages making this
type of learning difficult at best: their egocentric nature, and their dependence on adults
who monitor and create the experiences children are exposed to. If teachers do not
provide insight and experiences into how others live their lives, children might otherwise
miss out on opportunities to learn about the many ways of being in the world. There is
great need for teachers to rethink curriculum from a global, rather than exclusively
western European perspective.

In an effort to offer more mirrors to children, that reflect more of their culture back to
them within the classroom is for teachers to make use of the picture files described earlier.
Teachers can collect pictures (from magazines, books, the web, or photographs) of people
consistent with the cultural makeup of the classroom (or the world, for classrooms less
diverse along racial and ethnic lines) and use these pictures to make a variety of teacher
made materials. Pictures can be glued onto cardboard and attached to toilet paper or
paper towel tubes to make puppets for the dramatic play area or props for the block area.
Other pictures can be used to create attractive posters for the classroom, decorating
songs, scripture verses, or even classroom rules posters (see appendix).

Teachers can also use mounted pictures to reinforce mathematical concepts such as
numerical identification, matching, seriation, ordinal numbers, and many others. Many
different pictures of families, with various numbers of members, can be made for
children to sort numerically, order (most to least) or place on top of a number line.
Double pictures can be used to create matching games, while multiple pictures could be
used to create lotto games. Sequencing activities can also be introduced by having
pictures of children that can be ordered in various ways: young, younger, youngest; old,
older, oldest; dark, darker, darkest; light, lighter, lightest; tall, taller, tallest; thin, thinner,
thinnest; etc. School photographs of children themselves can be used to illustrate
Other books affirm group identities such as particular ethnic groups, races, disabilities, or languages. *I'm a Girl* by Lila Jukes celebrates what it means to be a girl. *Brown sugar babies* by Charles Smith, and *Bright Eyes, Brown Skin* by Cheryl Hudson are wonderful picture book dedicated to showing diversity within children of African descent. *K is for Kwanzaa* by Juwanda Ford is an alphabet book that introduces children to this African American holiday. There are a number of picture books that bring awareness to varying ability levels. *Taking Cerebral Palsy to School* by Mary Anderson is one of a series of books that deals with children having specific disabilities.

There are a number of books available to support language learning for those children who are bilingual. Not only is it a good idea to have picture books available that offer texts concurrently in both languages, but it is also important to make books written entirely in the child's home language available. For teachers who are not yet able to read in the children's home languages, they can invite parents or older students into their classroom for this purpose. Affirming language diversity also calls for teachers to bring stories written with various dialects into the classroom. *Being with You this Way* by W. Nikola-Lisa and *She Come Bringin' me that Baby Girl* are examples of such books that can expose children to language patterns not usually included in children's literature.

Again, it is important to bring books written in various languages into the classroom, using this as a window so that children from less diverse environments do not spend years thinking that their language is the only one or the most important one that all other languages are translated from.

Selecting books that reflect the children in the classroom requires more energy and time than simply reading the same stories one has always read. Picture books are such an excellent part of the curriculum because teachers can use them as discussion starters, extend them with reading and writing lessons, and even use them as the basis for performing a drama to illustrate specific points. Since books, cassettes, and matching sets are available at public libraries, use of this resource will allow the inclusion of diverse literature to remain affordable for teachers. Likewise, as teachers gain familiarity
present in our human family is reflected in our classrooms, teachers need to make extra effort to bring in supplementary materials in order to expose children to differences.

As teachers combat the culture of silence and denial that so often accompanies noticing and openly discussing differences, they also need to help them learn to value these differences, rather than be afraid of them. Differences can be presented in a light which affirms them as strengths and unifying forces, rather than as hindrances to be overcome that separate us. Teachers need to continuously evaluate their environments (pictures on the walls, toys on the shelves, etc.) for stereotypes, as they work toward including those that reflect true diversity closest to the regular lives of others children can relate to, rather than tokenism or ceremonialism.

Teachers need to promote comfortable interactions with diverse people while guiding children’s developing awareness of difference in a way that reduces fear and promotes acceptance. This can be done through both direct teaching around explicit topics as well as more indirectly by encouraging children to move beyond their circles of familiarity and meet new people and try new experiences.

As an ongoing part of morning meeting, many classrooms have a question for the day or morning message that children read with the teacher. A related idea is to have a word of the week that children help to define, give examples or, offer synonyms for, use in sentences, etc. As well as having these words of the week relate directly to particular themes the class is learning about, it is also possible to intermittently bring in words related to the goals of multicultural education. Examples of words for the week could be ‘stereotype’, ‘fair’, ‘teasing’, ‘gender’, ‘race’, ‘prejudice’, ‘ally’, ‘resistance’, ‘access’, ‘equity’ etc. Teachers can introduce the word on Monday, have kids discuss their ideas around the word as they try to define it, while the teacher records children’s ideas on a chart, using the language experience approach to writing technique. As the week goes on the teacher could select a few stories that give more information to children about that word. In a grade one class, the word for the week was ‘stereotype’ and children spent one circle time discussing the accuracy examples of stereotypes they had heard regarding
**Bringing the outside world into the classroom**

Another technique that teachers can use to directly teach about difference is to study certain groups as in depth as possible. In older grades this approach is known as ethnic studies where students learn about a particular ethnic group, by studying the many different aspects of culture usually associated with that group. For young children the goals of familiarizing one with the unknown is the same, but the methods would be a bit different. Since young children learn best by concrete experiences, closely related to their own, it is best if each group being studied could be attached to real people the child can interact with. Teachers often need to find local resources within their communities in order to bring more diversity into their classrooms. Locating community members who are from or have lived in other cultures, or among those who are ‘different’ in one way or another, can be invited into the class to talk with children. Artifacts, photos, video clips, children’s stories, phrases in another language, and even foreign money can be shared with children as the teacher leads the discussion which focuses on our common humanity as well as appreciating some of the cultural differences that make people unique.

The dramatic play area, also offers many possibilities for teachers to bring elements of diversity onto the classroom. The pretend house and kitchen can be changed throughout the year to reflect various ethnic groups. By changing the props available for children to those more likely found in different kinds of homes, it allows all children to try on various roles and use items that they may not be familiar with. Children can select items from a picture menu that shows various culinary choices typical for that ethnic group, read the character writing on the signs on the wall of the restaurant, watch the can cooks preparing the meal using a wok, eat the food with chopsticks, and listen to Korean music playing in the background as a way to learn about others. The dramatic play also offer children an opportunity to try out wheelchairs, crutches, braces, and other tools that teachers can borrow from hospitals in an attempt to demystify these assistive devices for children.
difference in a way that will help visitors to feel welcome, accepted and valuable. As children see their teachers embrace others who are different, displaying mannerisms that encourage others to open up and share important parts of who they are with the class, children will learn respect for others. As with everything, children learn more from what they see than what they hear; actions speak louder than words.

Like Nieto, Sparks advises teachers not to add sporadic and disconnected multicultural lessons onto their existing curriculum (such as a day to celebrate Chinese new year, or Martin Luther King) but rather integrate and infuse anti-bias principles throughout the entire curriculum as ‘an ongoing and sequential process to help children learn respect for differences in others and the value and dignity our common humanity entitles us to.’

**Creating a World Wall**

One idea for a year-long project is to dedicate on wall of the classroom to “God’s Wonderful World”. In the beginning of the year, teachers put up a map of the world and explain to children that they, as a class, are going to be busy throughout the year adding details to this map as they learn more about the world in which we live. As children visit relatives, take vacations, or have parents that travel these trips can be documented on the map by sentence clouds that are displayed around the map with yarn attaching each cloud to the place on the map that it refers to. Places that class visitors share about, missionaries that children know, news items the children are discussing, and even stories and songs shared in the classroom that come from particular places can also be added to the God’s world wall. This project continues throughout the year, as more and more information is added to broaden children’s understanding of the world in concrete ways.

Another long term project that the class can engage in throughout the year is one built on language diversity. An excellent way to introduce this learning activity is with a general lesson on where our many languages originated from. *Tomie dePaola’s Book of Bible Stories* is an excellent resource for this lesson. The story of the Tower of Babel is on one page opposite the illustration. In simple language this story retells the biblical story of how God confused the language of people when they had originally had only one, and
*Jenny* by Sandy Eisenberg. The books in this series are self-proclaimed to be multicultural.

Although more limited, there are a few picture books that deal with the topic of class and income levels. *How We Live* and *How We Work* by Anita Harper and Christine Roche, and *My Mommy Can't Read* offer children a chance to learn about real situations facing real people.

The "A First Look at...Book" series has two titles that deal directly with relevant topics: *The Skin I'm In, a First Look at Racism* and *Don't Call Me Special, a First Look at Disability* both written by Pat Thomas. JayJo Books, whose motto is publishing special books for special kids, also has a series of titles, each dealing with a specific disability, such as *Taking Cystic Fibrosis to School* by Cynthia S. Henry, and *Taking Cerebral Palsy to School* by Mary Anderson. *Princess Pooh* is a story of a girl who has a sister in a wheelchair.

Second, teachers need to include stories and share picture reference books, which show people groups realistically to counter the stereotypical and distorted information children have been exposed to. For example, picture books that portray Native Americans in fairly realistic ways counter the widely held (although incorrect) notion that this people group lived a long time ago and always wore headdresses. Engaging children in critical literacy, where distortions and omissions are pointed out, discussed, and challenged is another way teachers put into practice anti-bias principles. One excellent resource for this type of experience within a Christian environment is for children to examine various pictures of Jesus, in children's devotionals, bible story books, and even pictures on display in churches. Comparing these images with contemporary photographs of people who come from the same part of the world that Jesus lived in years ago, reveal how frequently the ethnic/racial portrayal of Jesus does not reflect a realistic or accurate representation of the kind of person he truly was. It is important for young children to begin to learn that not everything that is found in books, or in our world, is accurate or real. Children need to be explicitly taught that part of our job as learners is to critically
resource for teachers to introduce this topic to the class. Appendix B is a more extensive booklist for teachers to use as a reference.

#3 + #4 - Fostering children’s ability to recognize and stand against bias and injustice: taking action to make the world better

The final two goals of the multicultural curriculum affirm children’s ability to notice injustice, bias, and discrimination, while empowering them to act to change what they see in an effort to make it more fair. Young children want things to be fair, and they are usually the first to point out to adults when things (that affect them) are not fair. Teachers can tap into this existing reservoir to encourage children to spot more subtle, yet still powerful biases that affect others and their social responsibility to become involved. By engaging children in discussions of fairness, teachers help children to see where situations are not equitable.

Teachers could use the story of the good samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) to introduce this concept in biblical terms the children can easily understand. Although the good samaritan wasn’t responsible for the hurt inflicted on the traveler, he was the only one not too busy or important to help. The good samaritan’s willingness to go out of his way to help the stranger, and how this act of kindness and love blessed God’s heart, illuminate the concepts of social responsibility, and how we are all called to help each other’s when they are down.

Helping children recognize unfair behavior and empathize with the recipient.

Children need to be taught directly how to respond to injustice targeted at themselves and others, while learning about what it means to become an ally, standing with others to oppose what is hurtful ultimately, to all. Teachers need to be diligent, in the classroom, on the playground, in the lunchroom, and even in the bathrooms, affirming to children that mean words and actions hurt both the speaker and the listener, and that violence such as this will not be tolerated.
accurate, as well as how to look critically at the images and messages in our world to evaluate their validity is all part of this process.

Children also need to be given opportunities to learn about historical events, holidays, and even current events through many sets of eyes. Teachers need to help children to understand that stories and knowledge, told by a particular perspective, can be retold by other perspectives and sound quite different. Children are familiar with this concept in their own lives, as they frequently need to tell their side of the story, which varies considerably from the other version.

Since Columbus Day is a national holiday, many children learn about Columbus’s ships the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria, as well as the date - 1492 – that Columbus Discovered America. Seeking to present a less euro centric and more comprehensive picture of this event would involve sharing how it was perceived from a number of perspectives, looking at how the Tiano Indian culture viewed the arrival of the Europeans, and how it was possible for something that had belonged to one group could be taken over by another. A simple way to introduce this point with children is to have a teacher from another room, all of a sudden barge into the class and claim to have discovered the classroom and decide to claim it for themselves and their class. They could symbolically plant their class flag in the center, and start telling the members of the class what to do, where to go, what they need, and reorder their world. After a few moments of this simulation, the teachers could then stop the drama and have kids talk about what just happened, how they felt as it was happening, and the explorers could be invited to give their version of the account.

Children can also critique children’s literature that contains obvious biases, stereotypes, distortions and omissions. Teachers can bring in activities, such as video clips of some of the movies that are popular with children specifically for the purpose of exposing bias in popular media, comparing stereotypes with reality. Media literacy is the term used for giving children skills to be critical consumers, as opposed to passive sponges, to the messages that television and other forms of media expose them to. Although Media
would face, and took proactive steps by building a ramp themselves so that the invited guest could join the class.

Noticing the lack of a handicapped parking space in their lot, one preschool classroom, decided to make their own. Children discussed the issue during circle-time, examining how special accommodations needed to be made for those with disabilities, to make the parking situation more fair. Children then painted a handicapped parking spot, ordered a sign, and even policed the area and issued tickets to those who disregarded the newly created handicapped parking spot. Children expressed their ideas, as teachers captured their words on the tickets, and they went together to place tickets on windscreens.

The examples of multiculturalism in action cited above helped to empower children and advance their social action skills, teaching them how to counter and improve situations they aren’t the way they should be. This last step is crucial, as we consider goals of growing responsible and active citizens of tomorrow. Children need to be given skills to identify injustice, name it, and take action to change it. It is only through adults that take the time to seek out opportunities, and provide viable experiences, that children will be able to grow in this important area.

It is important for teachers to inform, include, and involve parents in their program as much as possible. This is true for all early childhood settings, and especially those that seek to support the goals of multicultural education.
Appendix B

Books that Affirm Identities and Celebrate Diversity and Difference

Books that affirm identity for all children
* *Designed by God so I must be Special* by Bonnie Sose (looks at the senses and body parts the Lord has blessed us with)
* *I am Me!* by Alexa Brandenberg (A simple picture book that looks at all the (nonstereotypical) roles diverse children can grow into and looks at what they will do now to prepare)
* *I hate my name* by Eva Grant (A girl who has a name that is difficult to pronounce and prompts teasing by other children)
* *I Love my Hair* (An African American girl speaks the many praises of her hair) and *Bippity Bop Barbershop* (An African American father takes his son to get his first haircut) by Natasha Tarplay
* *Next Year I’ll Be Special* by Patricia Giff (A first grader fantasizes about how wonderful life will be, when she will be special, with a new teacher and children that see her that way)
* *I’m a Girl* by Lila Jukes

Books that Celebrate Difference and Diversity in General
* *All the Colors of the Earth* by Sheila Hamanka (celebrating racial diversity)
* *All Kinds of Children* by Norma Simon
* *Shades of Black* by Sandra Pinkney (celebrating the many colors of people)
* *It’s Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr (Excellent and simple book that lists ways it’s okay to be different)
* *Fat Fat Rosemarie* by Lisa Passen (a girl named Claire, who is noticeably different due to her red hair and freckles, befriends the new girl, who gets teased because she is big)
* *Otto is different* by Franz Brandenberg (an octopus who initially doesn’t want to be different)
* *Lots of Moms* by Shelley Rotner (a wonderful book with actual photos and simple text celebrating the many ways lots of different moms are the same)
* *Leo the Late Bloomer* by Robert Kraus (a tiger worries his parents when he doesn’t develop as quickly as his peers, until the day comes that Leo catches up and blooms)
* *How We Work* by Anita Harper (shows the many different types of work)
* *How We Live* by Anita Harper (Shows the many different types of homes people have and even those that have none)
* *A chair for my mother* by Vera Williams (working class family who loses everything in a fire. The mother finally saves enough from her waitressing job to buy a new chair)
* *Country Kid, City Kid* by Julie Cummins (Ben from the country and Jody from the country compare their lives and find many similarires among the differences)
* When this world was new by D.H. Figueroedo (Danilito has moved from the Caribbean to New York City and finds his new life very different)

**Books with African Americans**
Stories by Ezra Jack Keats, Ann Grifalconi, John Steptoe, Eloise Greenfield, Angela Johnson

* Brown Sugar Babies by Charles Smith Jr.
* Bright Eyes, Brown Skin by Cheryl Hudson & Bernette Ford (simple story affirming the physical characteristics of people of color)
* Cornrows by Camille Yarbrough
* Jamaica and the Substitute Teacher by Juanita Havill
* The quilt by Ann Jonas (A girl sleeps with, and gets lost in, the quilt her parents made)
* Golden Bear by Ruth Young (Simple rhyming book of a boy with his stuffed bear)
* Faraway Drums by Virginia Kroll
* Bein' with You This Way by W. Nikola-Lisa (Celebrating the beauty of people the wonder of childhood)
* Johnathan and His Mommy by Irene Smalls-Hector
* Boundless Grace by Mary Hoffman

**Folk Tales**

* Sumorella, a Hawaii Cinderella Story by Sandi Takayama
* Anansi the Spider by Gerald McDermott (Ghanaian story of how Anansi and his six brave sons helped place the moon in the sky)
* Bouki Dances the Kokioko by Diane Wolkstein (A story from Haiti – clever Malice and foolish Bouki plan a trick to win the king’s money by learning a dance)
* The Trial of the Stone by Richardo Keens-Douglas (folktale found in parts of Asia and So. America – a boy loses his pennies under a stone and the chief helps him get more)
* The Song of el Coqui and other tales of Puerto Rico by Nicholas Mohr (three stories, one of the indigenous Tiosnos, one the African population and one of the Spaniards)
* Head, body, legs A Story from Liberia by Won-Ldy Paye (creation story from Liberia)

**Books that illustrate multiple perspectives**

* Seven Blind Mice by Ed Young (6 mice all explore parts of an elephant and argue about what they have each identified it to be until the 7th mouse examines the entire elephant to affirm all of their ideas and integrate them into one unified explanation)
* The First Bear in Africa
* When Africa was home by Karen Williams (A story about Peter, the son of European Americans, who had grown up in a village in Africa and later had difficulty adjusting when his family moved back to America)
Religious Diversity

* God In Between, God's Paintbrush, In God's Name, But God remembered, a Prayer for the Earth all by Sally Sasso. These stories are proclaimed to be multicultural and nonsectarian as they have been endorsed by Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders
* K is for Kwanzaa, A Kwanzaa Alphabet Book by Juwanda Ford
* The World's Birthday Barbara Goldin (Rosh Hashanah – Jewish holiday)
* A Kwanzaa Miracle by Sharon Gayle
* Seven Spools of Thread A Kwanzaa Story by Angela Medearis (Seven brothers pull together, by using the principles of Kwanzaa, to turn thread into gold to secure their inheritance)
* Hanukkah by Roni Schotter
* Potato Pancakes All Around A Hanukkah Tale by Marilyn Hirsh
* Toby Belfer Never had a Christmas Tree by Judith Hierstein (a story of a Jewish girl)
* Religions of the World Series by the Rosen Publishing Group’s Power Kids Press, NY


