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INTERPROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

BETTER TOGETHER: EXPANDING IDEAS OF ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION THROUGH
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Better Together: Expanding Ideas of Anti-Bias Education through Early Childhood Educator Professional Development

Children begin forming ideas about race and difference at a very young age. In their review of field literature, Gaias, Gal-Szabo, Shivers, and Kiche (2021) share that “Children’s racial prejudice and awareness of racial categories has been found to emerge around age 3.” (p.273). With this in mind, ECE is an important time to address topics of difference and bias with young children. Anti-bias education (formerly known as the Anti-Bias curriculum) is a framework created by Louise Derman Sparks (1989/2020) that has been utilized in Early Childhood spaces to address bias among young children and adults.

This qualitative research study examined teachers' perceptions of anti-bias education and the ways that they utilized anti-bias education within their classrooms. It also explores the impact of professional development on those perceptions and practices. The theoretical framework and design for this study were both centered around social constructivism. This research utilized a two-part professional development experience that consisted of participants completing four online modules centered around ABE and one Focus Group session with other participants. A pre-survey was administered to participants prior to their participation in the study. One post-survey was administered to participants directly following the focus group session; the other was administered two months later.

Within this study, teachers valued the space to connect with other educators to engage in these big conversations. Teachers also grappled with feeling excited by the continued and potential use of ABE within their classrooms but were also nervous about implementing it correctly. Teachers need concrete and actionable steps to implement ABE. Through these responses, the use of children’s literature to facilitate discussions around difference and bias was evident. Discussion of productive professional development experiences led to conversations with the teachers about the administration within their building and their important role in supporting teachers in their pursuits of a diverse curriculum and school environment. These findings indicate a need for teacher support in implementing ABE within their classroom spaces. The findings also indicate a need for teachers to utilize diverse materials within their classrooms.

Keywords: Anti-Bias Education, Professional Development, Teachers