Assumptions about diversity, children, families and communities

Teachers’ assumptions about children and their families are shaped by their histories, interactions, relationships, and personal and professional experiences. As professionals, teachers need to be critically aware of their assumptions and beliefs in order to more effectively engage with families and children from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Complete the following activities and overall reflection to explore assumptions that influence teacher interactions with diverse children and families. If possible, discuss your responses with a colleague/s.

Activity 1: Exploring diversity

1. Read and critically analyse the teacher’s statement below. Then consider the focus question.

   Helping children to learn about diversity just seems too hard! You see, we don’t really have any diversity in our kindergarten. Even the children with Asian backgrounds speak English at home. I guess we would explore diversity if the children initiated conversations about people from a range of cultural heritages, but they don’t, and I believe in following what they are interested in. I know some teachers hold a multicultural day and everyone dresses up and eats foods from various countries. I don’t see how that is relevant or builds an appreciation for diversity. It’s just ‘dressing up’ without any real intention. It’s like saying, I’ll get every child to get dressed up as a ‘doctor’ and then they’ll automatically know more about what doctors do.

   Early years teacher

   Focus question

   - What assumptions may this teacher hold about diversity and her role in promoting children’s understandings of it?

2. Consider your own assumptions about diversity and the advice in Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (QKLG) in relation to your current practice.

   - What are your assumptions about diversity and your role in promoting children’s understandings of it?

   - Review the advice in Appendix 1: Intentional teaching practices, which states that ‘Teachers introduce ideas and make links to children’s ideas in order to support children to discover new possibilities and develop and test hypotheses’ (QKLG, p. 63).

   - Review the intentional teaching ideas on page 45 of the guideline to identify ways to build children’s understandings about diversity.

   - How can you build on existing practice to intentionally develop children’s respect for diversity in ways that are meaningful to them?
Activity 2: Engaging parents

1. Read and critically analyse the teacher’s statement below. Then consider the focus question.

   I try to involve parents, but they just don’t make the time. I know a lot of them work and I don’t want to put pressure on them to come on roster. The parents who could stay mostly speak English as their second language, so I am not sure how comfortable they would feel. I guess as long as the invitation is there for them to stay, that’s all I can do. I do take photos and write up information about what we do in the day, so they can read it, if they actually pick up their child. The pictures are helpful for parents who don’t speak English. As for actually having input into what we do, there is not a lot of opportunity for that if you don’t see the parents.

   Early childhood teacher

Focus question

- What assumptions may this teacher hold about parents and her role in promoting their engagement in supporting children’s learning?

2. Consider your own assumptions about engaging diverse parents and the advice in the QKLG in relation to your current practice.

- What are your assumptions about parents and your role in promoting their engagement in supporting children’s learning?

- Review the advice on page 5 of the QKLG, which states:

  Teachers enhance learning and teaching when they build respectful and trusting relationships with all partners. This involves adopting inclusive practices that enable parents and families to engage in their child’s learning in diverse and meaningful ways.

- Review Building inclusive partnerships on pages 22 and 23 of the QKLG.

- How can you build on existing practice to engage diverse parents in their children’s learning?

Reflection

What opportunities exist for you to:

- help build children’s understandings of diversity

- engage diverse children, families and communities?