

Sharing Stories, Changing Lives:
Powerful tools to support children to
value who they are, care about others
and stand up to teasing and bullying

National Indian Head Start Directors
2014



Head Start Performance Standards

- Provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition;
- Supporting and respecting the home language, culture, and family composition of each child in ways that support the child's health and well-being;
- Encouraging respect for the feelings and rights of others;



Take Aways

- *Children notice differences like race, gender, language and different kinds of families.*
- *They are developmentally vulnerable to stereotypes and biases during their early years.*
- *Open, honest conversations with caring adults help children sort out those stereotypes and biases and avoid taking them in.*
- *Many adults struggle to start those conversations, but with support and good information, we can do it!*



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That's ME!



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Examples



- Children begin to notice differences when they are babies
- Children are very tuned-in to emotions around them. They also pay more attention to non verbal cues than to verbal ones
- As early as 3 or 4, we see children beginning to tease or leave other children out (exclude) based on differences and biases.

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Examples



- During the pre-school years, children are extremely vulnerable to stereotypes, because they are focused on learning to categorize.
- Children of all ages do most of their teasing, exclusion, and bullying, including about things like race and gender, out of earshot of adults.

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Examples

- Open and honest conversations about race and other human differences are important for helping children understand and value differences
- Adults don't tend to be very comfortable talking with children about differences

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Eager curiosity



As early as 6 months, children begin to notice differences
By age 2, they may begin to develop racial preferences (Katz 1976)

Empathetic

Children pick up on adult emotions. They also pay more attention to our non verbal cues than to what we say.



Stereotypes



Young children are vulnerable to stereotypes because their minds are primed for categorization.

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During the preschool years, children begin to experiment with acting out biases, usually away from adults.



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Think

- How and where are children exposed to adult biases?



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We can make a difference!

As little as 6 weeks of intervention can result in significant changes to children's bias levels



It has to be Explicit!

Statements such as “we are all the same inside” have little or no effect unless they are accompanied by clear and direct discussions of race and differences (Hawkins 2007)



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Goals of anti-bias work with children

- Help children develop a knowledgeable, confident self identity (not based in superiority)
- Help children develop empathetic, knowledgeable interactions with people different from themselves.
- Help children develop critical thinking about bias
- Help children develop tools to stand up for themselves and others in the face of bias

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Persona dolls or puppets



Making it work!

- Turn to a neighbor. Pick a goal. Think of a way to meet your goal with a group of children. How could you use what we've talked about today with the children in your care?



Questions?

