

Conversations on Diversity:
Re-imagining how we think
about diversity with
ECE students

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Agenda

- Introduction
- What frames this conversation
- Examining different approaches
- Space for sharing and reflection
- Final thoughts

The 'traditional' approach

- Typically 'teaching diversity' lives in one course
- Professor builds a compelling case for the importance of diversity and equity in the program
- Students are provided with a number of strategies for representing diversity in the program (recipe)
- Students are evaluated on their ability to represent diversity within the program during their field placements

Building on the traditional approach

- Professors and students engage in conversations related to “*culturally relevant*” pedagogy
- Each course includes discussions related to respecting and responsiveness to cultural differences
- Students are encouraged to examine their own values and beliefs
- Students are supported to consider methods for creating inclusive settings and creating equity

Student Initiative

Critical Discussions on Diversity

- A student generated and student led discussion group
- Themes that surfaced in every meeting
 - Creating space for conversation
 - Questions of representation
 - The challenge of: doing diversity or 'diversity activities' and how to move away from a focus on materials
 - Our childhood stories, our bias, our teaching

Thoughts from students ...

“The group provided me with a space to constructively generate ongoing conversations on how we as Early Childhood Educators could make our learning communities places where children and families felt a strong sense of connectedness.”

“The group helped me to challenge my biases, become more reflective as an educator and gave me a voice to advocate for the diverse communities that I belong to as an individual.”

Thoughts from students ...

“The nature of a group like this - being academic yet informal, peer-led yet critical, has provided the kind of space that fosters effective discussion and learning. This group has really helped me to unpack my own experiences and expand my ideas by listening to the experiences of others.”

“This group has been such an insight for me. Being able to discuss things in a space freely is not something one comes across often. I enjoy having these conversations. I am a firm believer that they need to happen, and happen more often. This has not only benefited my experiences in the field, but also in my day-to-day. Being a part of this group and these conversations, has enriched my experience in class, placements, and my relationships with other students, professors, ECEs.”

Space for Sharing and Reflection

Final Thoughts & Ideas from students ...

- Paying attention to Representation
- Making Meaningful Connections
- Developing Critical Thinking
 - Is it meaningful? Is it relevant? Is it inclusive?