THE RESEARCH GUIDE

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN A WORLD FULL OF BIAS

LET'S GO OVER THE BOULDER:

HOW DO I TALK ABOUT BIAS WITH MY LITTLE ONES?

HOW CAN I INFORM MY CHILDREN ABOUT OTHER CULTURES?

Presented to you by the Alpha Epsilon Phi Chapter

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> "It is time for parents to teach young people early that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."
> - Maya Angelou

What is the importance of our Research?

A perspective analyzing
Child Development

Most of us have asked ourselves the following questions at some point: How do I talk about bias with my little ones? How can I inform my children about other cultures and make them aware of the incredible amount of diversity our world truly exhibits? What if I do not know enough about other cultures? How can I naturally approach this topic?

The Alpha Epsilon Phi Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society has put together this research guide based on our conducted research in child brain development, implicit bias among children and adults, and the impact of multicultural methods attempted in the past among elementary school students.

A few very important conclusions based on scientific research and studies can be used to help us navigate the world of Multicultural education and not only prevent unwanted biased, but also review our own implicit biases to set an example for them.

The inheritance of knowledge and the examples we set for our children will determine the outcome of our future society: What legacy can we leave behind?

In this Research guide, we will focus on FIVE facts well observed through experiments conducted by reputed specialists and help you learn more about how to apply them in your daily life and how to pass it on to your children.

Table of context

Acknowledging Implicit Biases.

Before diving into the management of existing biases, it is very important to understand what the difference is between explicit and implicit bias. Explicit bias involves intentional behavior and actions which are directly influenced by conscious discrimination. However, implicit bias is manifested by unintentional behavior and unconscious thought, which can both be influenced by structural discrimination and automatic cognitive processes. In this section, we will be focusing on the second one and learning ways to identify biased attitudes in our daily routine, as well as finding solutions that promote the reduction of those biases.

As studies show, children can develop biases when they are as young as one year old. The biases developed implicitly from our childhood, and which can be developed throughout the years, are often connected to our cognitive senses. Through the perceptions captured by our senses, our minds unconsciously connect traits with social identities. This unintended association leads to deceiving perspectives that can deeply affect our social interactions, and which can be passed on to our children.

Therefore, here are some important steps to take to identify implicit biases and reduce them:

1 - Breathe. Recognize the need for self-evaluation and understand that having biases does not mean you are a terrible person; it simply means you are a human who has not yet been able to recognize them but will take steps to do so and become a better version of yourself and make society better.

2 - Introspect. Take a look at simple interactions you have daily and in what ways they can be affected by your biases. Another great tool is the use of Implicit biases tests. There are different options of tests that measure biases on different diversities and which can be completed anonymously. (click here to take the test).

3 - Listen. Look for stories that are told from the perspective of the minorities. Their experiences can not only help you identify biased behavior you were not even aware of but they also give the voice to the ones who know the consequences of both explicit and implicit biases better than many writers.

4 - Talk. Feel comfortable talking about the subject and asking questions. That will bring you more enlightenment on the topic and take it from articles out into your reality. However, be mindful enough to be in the position of the student, not the teacher.

5 - Live what you learned. Apply the acquired learnings into your life and pass them on. Change is not an overnight process, it takes time; therefore, make sure to not let your awareness fade away. Often analyze your interactions and always target to treat people as the unique individuals they are but remember that empathy is different from pity, and the second one is never helpful.

As previously mentioned, changes do not happen overnight. Nevertheless, all your effort will be worth it because you are not only making the world a better place for your children but also for someone else's children who will not have to go through the challenges you wish the ones you love never had to experience.

Windows of Opportunity for Intervention: Pt 1

Finding the best point of intervention may present itself as a complex issue. Before we delve into the specific intervention periods and the cognitive/emotional milestones of a child, we must first understand the windows of opportunity. The comprehension of scientific and psychological aspects behind raising a child is extremely valuable. In this section, we break down the importance of neuron development as simply as possible. Neurons are responsible for a child's learning capacity and essentially, personality traits. Through a concept called the "Windows of Opportunity", our research showed that there are "critical brain periods", which are fundamentally the building blocks to a better life for a child.

What's the Science behind the "Windows of Opportunity"?

The window of opportunity for mass learning occurs from infantry to age five. The early experiences of life are the most powerful moments for a child. The brain is made up of billions and billions of nerve cells called neurons. The responsibility of neurons includes control of breathing, managing heartbeat, regulating temperature, producing reflexes, and many more responsibilities. Even with all these core functions, there are trillions of neurons that go unused. The more neurons are used, the more they become integrated within the circuitry of the brain (and stay functioning), the neurons that are NOT used may die. According to the source "Child's Brain", the experiences of infancy and early childhood determine which neurons are used.

What is the importance of having these neurons connected?

The development of these neurons are responsible for the outcome of a child's learning capacity and personality traits. Genes determine the brain's main circuits, but the trillions of other connections are determined by the experiences of the child. Nature Vs. Nurture is split right down the middle.

Quote:

"There are two broad stages of brain wiring: an early period when experience is not required, and a later one, when it is" (Carla Shatz, 1996, University of California in Nash 1997). Yet, once wired, there are time limits to the brain's ability to create itself. Called "critical periods," "they are the windows of opportunity that nature flings open, starting before birth, and then slams shut, one by one, with every additional year."

Windows of Opportunity for Intervention: Pt 2

The Intervention. Knowing the emotional and cognitive milestones of a child determines the best points of intervention. Every child is unique; approaches may change depending on the living conditions of a child. However, generally speaking, the milestones children experience are more often than not, the same. Cognitive milestones in children begin the moment they are born.

Curiosity: By age four, curiosity among children begins to flourish at a rapid rate. "What, why, how" becomes a huge part of a child's vocabulary. Addressing these curiosity questions can greatly impact how a child will develop a certain perception upon their answered questions.

Cooperative Play: Children generally begin to operate in cooperative play at age four. Prior to this stage, though kids may be in the same room, they tend to focus on their individual play and toys. Now, they start to engage with other children. This phase is very important. Creating a sharing habit with others and communication skills begin to develop through this age. Parent involvement in this milestone is vital and encouraged.

Communication: Children begin to verbalize what they like or don't like. By this point, they've generally learned around 1,000 words, and are capable of conveying their interests and expressing their opinions. It is encouraged that communication with a child is active and positive, allowing them to voice their thoughts and concerns. This is also the best time to analyze what kind of thoughts a child has.

The You/Me Concept: Through ages four and five, children begin to understand the conceptualization of being their own individual. From this point on, children are likely to develop deeper emotions and

perceptions of the world. This perfectly introduces the emotional milestones a child transitions into when moving up from preschool to grade school.

By the time a child reaches age seven, they are internalizing everything they see; building a perception of the world and structuring their own character, experience after experience.

Cognitive Milestones: Not only is there a shift in the physical classroom setting, but the rate at which children process information becomes much greater. Reseasoning skills and longer attention spans are developed. By ages six and seven, children are beginning to use logic and language unlike ever before.

Emotional Milestones: Because children are entering a new phase in their life, they can be susceptible to a lot of things: sensitivity, low self-esteem, and strong emotional feelings are among them. Children around this age are generally eager to be liked by all and can easily hurt by criticism. This becomes a huge factor when considering the effects of bullying, peer pressure, and implicit bias.

Ages four to seven are one of the most overwhelming periods for the brain and the child. With the entire world being introduced to them for the first time; implicit bias can unwantedly occur. The best way to intervene or encourage impartiality during this time includes active parent/caregiver participation during the child's learning process, as well as the introduction to a variety of community differences. Ages four to seven is the best time to begin the introduction of multicultural education as it will leave a long-lasting, positive impact on the child's perception of a community. This moment is crucial for all children and parents.

Additional video resources that may help you understand the importance of child brain development.
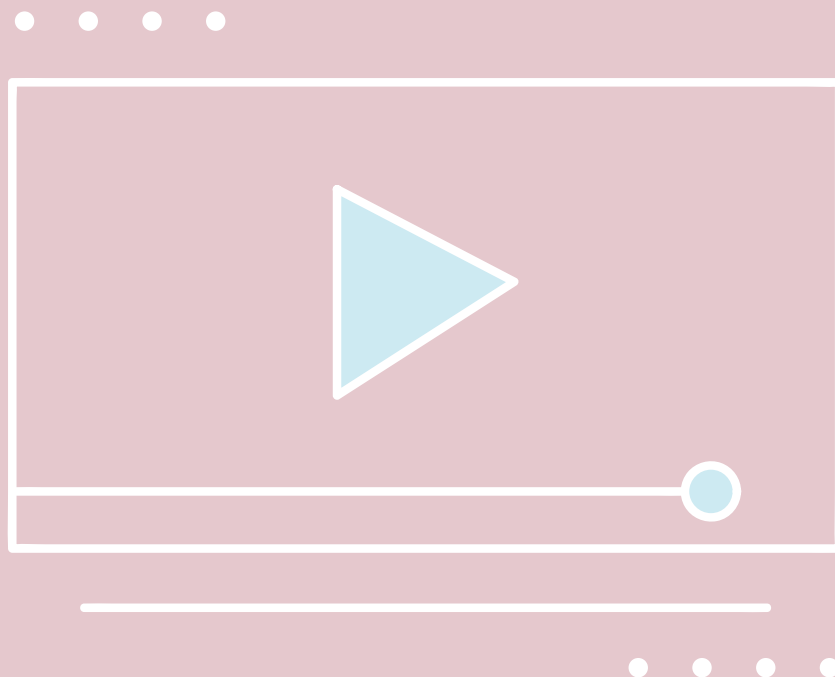
Video: <u>How a child's brain develops through early experiences</u>

Video: <u>Experiences Build Brain Architecture</u>

Video: <u>Developmental Milestones of a 4 Year Old</u>

Video: <u>The Seven-Year Cycles of Child Development</u>

Video: <u>Child Development Emotional Milestones</u>

Video: <u>Age 6 & Age 7 Cognitive Milestones</u>

Exposure.

Around the age of two, toddlers start noticing different traits among the ones around them and consequently start developing responses to those differences. That is a critical phase, as they will reproduce the behavior they notice in adults, who work as role models in their development. Studies show that constant exposure to diversity and good examples of reaction to those differences are essential.

Children learn better by experience and by the stimulation of their cognitive senses; therefore, after taking the previous steps into account, consider bringing more books and other visual representations of diversity, through media, for example. That will spark conversation and curiosity and also introduce the opportunity to teach values of respect and appreciation for differences.

Color-Blind vs Color-Conscious?

When the discussion of diversity sparks, there are many different approaches to solving the prejudice and lack of equity and multicultural awareness in society. The two major classifications of approaches are the color-blind and color-conscious approaches, which present very different core beliefs and divide opinions. The color-blind approach consists of avoiding biased behavior by encouraging the idea of ignoring race and being "blind" towards it. On the other hand, the color-conscious approach consists of taking action to reduce prejudice and increase awareness by acknowledging the difference in races and the challenges faced by minorities. Both approaches attempt to target positive goals; however, studies have shown that the color-blind approach lacks effectiveness and can make diversity even harder to achieve.

Specialists explain that ignoring races leads to ignoring the problems deriving from the lack of awareness and respect towards minorities; therefore, it can be more prejudicial to minorities and society as a whole than the color-conscious approach. It is also explained that color-evasion promotes power-evasion, which denies racism and its effects on minorities' opportunities for upward mobility, consequently considering meritocracy as the reason for the racial status quo. Hence, despite the attempt for a positive outcome, the color-blind approach can increase biases and stereotypes, showing inefficiency in delivering such an outcome. In contrast, the color-conscious approach has shown effectiveness in reducing social inequity and promoting a positive perspective on Multiculturalism. Studies show that the discussion of racial biases leads to a better understanding of the minorities' perspectives and challenges and the acknowledging of discrimination, creating more opportunities for it to be corrected.

It is important to understand that no approach is immune to flaws. The color-conscious approach also has its challenges, like the possible feeling of alienation of majorities from multiculturalism. Still, specialists point out that education has been classified as the best solution for biased behavior in children and adults, and the best possibility to solve racial inequality.

Start Engaging Your Children Today!

Read "Mr. Lee's Virtual Class" with your children and use our Parent Interactive Guide as a source for strategies on how to make the reading more effective.
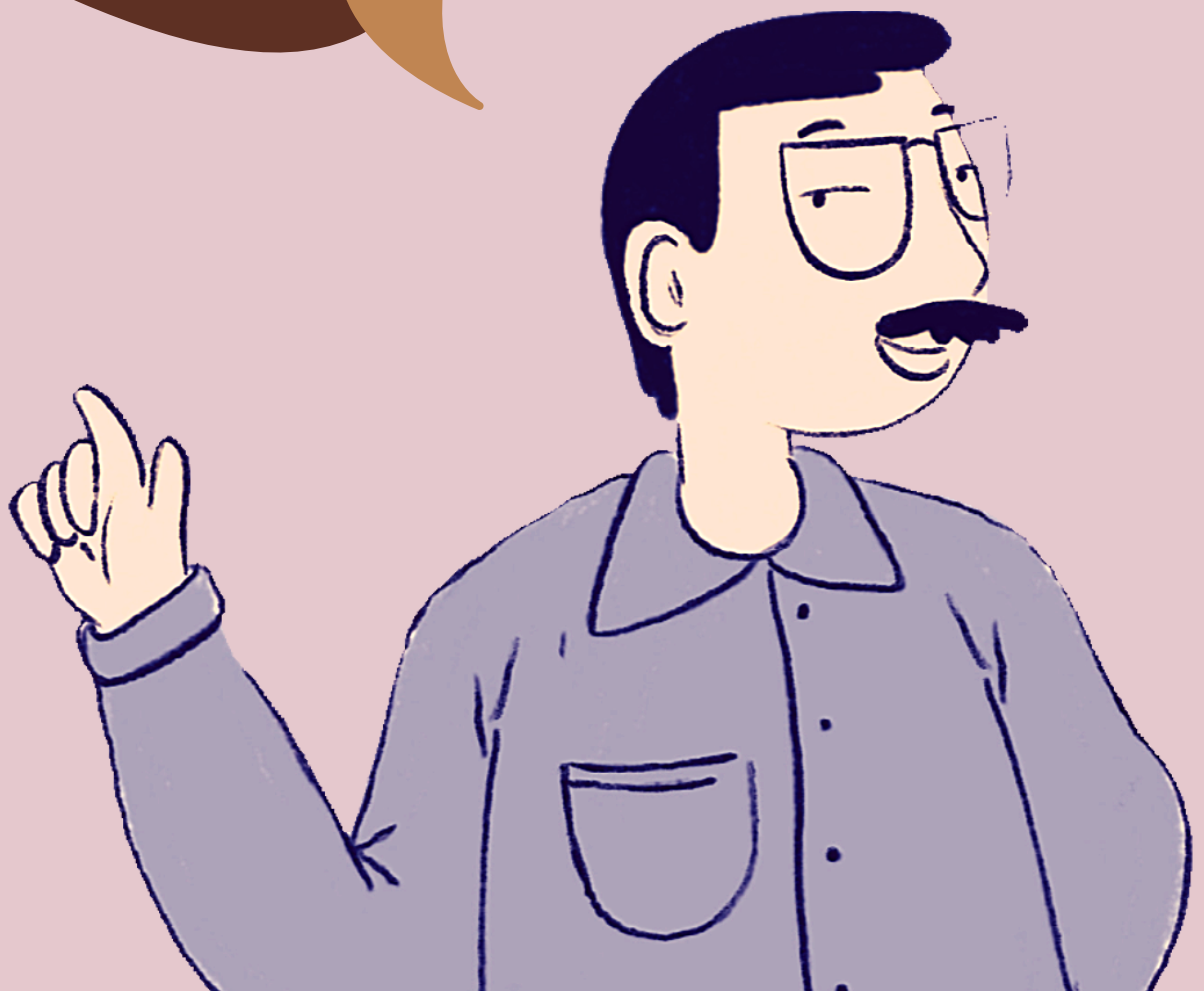

click here to view story time video!

VISIT:

WWW.THEHEIRSOFOURWAYS.COM

FOR MORE RESOURCES AND DOWNLOADS

Click the links above to access other interesting sources on efficient strategies to develop Multiculturalism in your home:

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