

Our Culturally Responsive Approach

Our goal with families is to meet them where they are and strengthen our relationships. This is ongoing work that continues even after children leave the building. We acknowledge the fears and anxieties involved in this work, and we strive to support one another and lean into the discomfort together. This work is part of being human, and we must tend to our relationships as we heal with one another through love, an open heart, and empathy.

Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist Education

Anti-bias and anti-racist education are woven and embedded into every part of our curriculum and our lived experiences with children. As educators, we set the stage and create a safe environment for children to engage in meaningful conversations with each other and the people in their lives. We ask educators and families to be vulnerable, lean into discomfort, and learn imperfectly together to create a space for children to do the same. We want to ensure that nothing is taboo so that children feel comfortable and safe having critical conversations.

Our faculty strive to model and foster the four goals of anti-bias and anti-racist education:



Nurture the development of a positive identity in each child.



Promote each child's ability to interact with people who are different from themselves.



Foster each child's critical thinking about bias.



Cultivate each child's ability to stand up for themselves and for others in the face of bias.

Children are constantly building theories about the world around them. Research shows that children start developing biases as early as six months old and solidify their biases and ideas about the world around them as early as age seven. This research proves the importance of doing this work with children because they will construct and solidify their ideas about the world whether we choose to engage in conversation with them or not.

Knowing this, we carefully listen to children's conversations and observe their play, which reflects the theories they are constructing. As educators, we reflect on how to respond to these conversations in the moment and develop intentional, thought-out plans to dive deeper with children. We know that children are capable of deep and meaningful conversations around identity and race. We encourage sharing different perspectives and respectful conversation. We also pay attention to what children might not be talking about so that we can share new perspectives from our community.

Social Justice Education

In the classroom, educators address, discuss, and acknowledge dimensions such as discrimination, equity, oppression, power and privilege, race, cultural diversity, ability/disability, age biases, socio-economic class, family structures, gender roles, immigrants/refugees, spirituality, inclusion, homelessness, language, nationality, prejudice, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of diversity. All dimensions are discussed in developmentally appropriate ways for each age group.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

We support multilingual children and families, inviting those families to teach words from their home language to educators and classmates. For English Language Learners (ELL), we offer support in the context of social play and classroom activities that encourage them to maintain their first language while learning English.

Multicultural Education is:

- **Basic diversity education:** Teaching children about diversity within and between cultural groups.
- **Education for social justice:** Teaching about equality and equity between cultures, genders, and races.
- **Important for all children:** Teaching children to preserve, respect, and value their own and each other's beliefs, cultures, languages, perspectives, traditions, and ways of being.
- **Every day and everywhere:** Omnipresent.
- **A never-ending process:** Emphasizing reflective practice and critical self-awareness.
- **Critical pedagogy:** Scrutinizing learning materials to identify potentially prejudicial or biased content, analyzing cultural assumptions, and discussing how learning content, teaching practices, and program policies reflect cultural bias, and how they are changed to eradicate disparities.
- **Supporting antiracist and resistant education:** Teaching children that knowledge and race are socially constructed and reflect researchers' personal experiences as well as the economic, political, and social contexts in which they live and work.
- **Being inclusive:** Incorporating beliefs, histories, perspectives, texts, and values of people from ethnically diverse cultural backgrounds and making curriculum and teaching practices accessible to students in all cultural groups.
- **About reforming processes:** Undoing cultural, individual, institutional, structural, and systemic racisms.

Family Traditions

From the start of our enrollment process, our goal is to get to know families and learn more about them so that we can build culturally relevant learning environments where children can see their home lives reflected and celebrated. We learn from one another, seeking different perspectives to guide our thinking and responses with the children. We engage in discussions and conversations as a community to expand our thinking and best support our learning community. We stand firm in our values and see this work as a non-negotiable part of early learning education. We expect anyone who enters our facilities to be in alignment with our vision, mission, and values.

Celebrations

Rituals and celebrations are an important part of many families and cultures. These traditions can be wonderful opportunities for children to learn about the beliefs and values that are cherished parts of people's lives. We believe that decisions about what holidays to celebrate are best made together by educators, families, and children in the classroom.

We encourage family participation in the classrooms, and many families enjoy sharing specific cultural celebrations with the children. Families shared cooking activities, music, dance, and stories in our classrooms. The children themselves may initiate these kinds of activities in the classroom because they are relevant to what is happening in their home at the time.

In addition, educators often plan celebrations of classroom events, such as a chick hatching on the canal party, a rare snow celebration, or a special celebration like the birth of a sibling. These events celebrate the classroom community rather than any specific tradition or culture, helping children develop respect for differences and excitement about diversity.

If families wish to celebrate their child's birthday or other occasions, we encourage them to keep these celebrations simple and creative.

Raising Voices

Our goal is to create a safe space for children to share their voices and to empower others to do the same, especially for our faculty and families of color, for whom this is not a choice but a daily lived experience. We want to empower children to notice injustice, stand up and speak out, and empower those affected. We encourage children to see differences as an asset, not a deficit. We challenge children's thinking to support them in seeing and seeking new perspectives. We provide children and families with the vocabulary to have conversations about race, injustice, and implicit biases. We encourage children to take these ideas into action, standing up for what they believe. We acknowledge that this work is imperfect and continuously evolving, so we offer ongoing professional development to educators and encourage families to continue learning together in this work.