WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Pre- PRACTICUM SEMINAR

DIVERSITY & MULTICULTURALISM

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- Welcoming Remarks and Overview – Looking at our own values and biases. Questions to ask yourself about diversity. Defining diversity and multiculturalism.

- People Scavenger Hunt

- The Cheerios Commercial - Thinking about Bias in Education & in the US.

- Critically Examining bias in our world – “What’s in the news?”

- “My Brown Eyes”

- “Unlearning Native American Stereotypes”

- Ten Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Bias. Thinking about books and materials.

- Redefining diversity and multiculturalism.

View a great website with 22 pages of children’s books that reflect special needs and diversity. Each entry includes title, author, diversity type, and a brief explanation of content. http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~pfi/pdfs/diversity_booklist.pdf
Questions to Ask Yourself About Diversity

1. My definition of multicultural education is:

2. How might I have benefited (as a child) from a multicultural approach?

3. Do I know my own biases? Have I made efforts to shed them?

Questions to Ask Yourself During Your Practicum Experience

1. Do I know the ethnic backgrounds of the children in my Practicum setting?

2. Do the materials in the classroom reflect the community, cultures, and interests of the children and families?

3. Do I approach each child physically in the same way?

4. If this were my classroom, what changes would I make to provide a learning experience that is culturally and personally responsive to all the children I teach?

Redefining Multicultural Education

Strasser... Practicum Seminar... Diversity & Multiculturalism
PEOPLE SCAVENGER HUNT

1. ________________ was born or has lived in another country for one or more years.

2. ________________ speaks two (2) or more languages.

3. ________________ has developed a close relationship with someone from a different racial and/or ethnic background in the past 6 months.

4. ________________ has witnessed or been involved in an incident of bias (religious, racial, gender, etc.) on campus or at work.

5. ________________ has spent his/her childhood in the same kind of setting as you (a) urban, (b) suburban, or (c) rural.

6. ________________ has parents or close family from two different cultures.

7. ________________ has the same favorite hobby or leisure activity.
The following survey is taken from a U.S. Postal Service Survey, 1992.

TAking a look within!!!
Understanding diversity begins with understanding how you see yourself, your place in the world—and your own uniqueness.
As a start, complete each statement below.

1. I wear my hair the way I do because

2. In my family, children are expected to

3. I often feel uncomfortable around people who

4. I am proud to be

5. When I hear people speaking another language, I think they’re

6. If a person must chose between work and family, they should

7. I really feel like an outsider when

8. The most important thing in life is

9. My ethnic or cultural heritage is special because

10. I’m often attracted to people whom
Ten Steps for Reviewing Children’s Books

The visual and verbal messages young children absorb from books and other media strongly influence their ideas about themselves and others. Therefore, carefully choosing children’s books is a vital educational task. Here are ten ideas to consider when reviewing children’s books for misinformation and stereotypes.

1. Check the illustrations

Look for stereotypes

A “stereotype” is an oversimplified generalization about a particular group that creates the idea that we know something about an individual person based on the person’s perceived membership in that group.

Stereotypes can objectify or dehumanize, but they usually carry derogatory implications. One good, informative exercise is to quickly list all the stereotypes you know about various groups of people, even if you do not believe them. Doing this helps to call your attention to what the stereotypes look like, and it helps you to think about what the stereotypes mean in your interpretation.

All books should depict people compassionately and as complex human beings. If the books contain stereotypes, either engage the children in critical thinking (e.g., “Do the people in this book look like all the people you know? Who’s missing?”) or eliminate the books from your collection.

Look for tokenism

Regularly seeing only one of any group—either in your book collection (e.g., one story about Mexican Americans among many books about White families) or in a story itself (e.g., one African American child among many White children)—teaches that the token group is less important than the other group(s) featured.

2. Check the story line

Even if a book shows visual diversity, the story line may carry messages of bias that may be obvious or quite subtle. Consider these questions:

• Your book collection needs a balance of different people in “doer” roles. Do the stories typically depict people of color, girls, children from low-income families, and children with disabilities as dependent or passive, while depicting White people, boys, members of the middle-class, and “able-bodied” children in leadership and action roles?

• Who typically causes a problem and who resolves it? Are problems always solved individually, or do some books show a group of children and/or adults working together to solve a problem?

• To gain acceptance and/or approval in the book, does a child of color, a girl, or child with a disability have to exhibit extraordinary qualities? be the one to understand, forgive, or change an injustice?

• Are the achievements of girls and women due to their looks or relationship with boys and men, or are they based on their own initiative and intelligence?
3. Look at the lifestyles
- Do the lives of people of color or people with low income in the story contrast unfavorably with the norm of White, middle-class, suburban life (i.e., the dominant culture in the U.S.)?
- Are negative value judgments implied about cultures different from the dominant culture? Do images and information go beyond the simple and offer genuine insights into the lifestyles of the characters in the story? Does the setting reflect historical assumptions about life but not contemporary life (e.g., multiple books in your collection about Native Americans in the 1800s but none from the present day)?
- Does your book collection depict diversity among people within a specific racial/ethnic group (e.g., range of family structures, living environments, socioeconomic conditions, types of work, and gender roles within the family)?

4. Weigh the relationships between people
- In the book, is there a balance of power among the characters? Who are the central figures, and who serve as the supporting characters?
- In your book collection, is there a balance of what kind of characters play central roles and what kind of characters are supporting? Are family relationships shown with great variety?

5. Note the heroes
- Does your book collection include heroes of color, from low-income families, or with disabilities? When they do appear, are they admired because they are a credit to a particular social identity, or are they admired for the same qualities that have made White individuals famous?
- Ask yourself, “Whose interests is a particular hero really serving?”
- Do some of your books about important people include struggles for justice?

6. Consider the potential effects on a child’s self and social identities
Will all of the children you serve see themselves and their families’ ways of life reflected in your book collection? Consider these questions:
- Will children of color, girls, children from each type of family structure, and children from low-income families see one or more characters with whom they can readily and positively identify?
- Do your books reinforce or counteract messages that teach children to feel inferior or superior because of their skin color, culture, gender, economic class, ability or disability, or type of family structure?

7. Consider the author’s or illustrator’s background and perspective
All authors write from a cultural as well as a personal context. In the past, many children’s books were by authors and illustrators who were White and members of the middle or professional class, so a single cultural and class perspective dominated children’s literature. Today, there are many more books by authors from a range of cultural and personal experiences available.
- Consider the biographical material on the jacket flap or back of the book. What qualifies the author or illustrator to deal with that particular subject? If the book is not about people or events similar to the author or illustrator’s background and experiences, what specifically recommends them as creators of this book?
• What is the author’s attitude toward her or his story characters? Do the images reflect respect and accuracy on the part of the illustrator?

• Do you have a balance of books by authors and illustrators that reflect a range of identities and experiences?

8. Watch for loaded words

A word is “loaded” when it has offensive overtones. Always consider the context in which a word is used and to whom it applies (e.g., be wary of terminology that describes children or families as “ordinary” or “normal”).

• Know common examples of loaded words. Loaded adjectives applied to people of color that carry racist overtones include savage, primitive, backward, inscrutable, and treacherous, among others.

• Look for alternatives. For example, try to avoid the generic use of “man” for humankind or male terms for occupations by using firefighters instead of firemen, ancestors instead of forefathers, chairperson instead of chairman, and so on.

9. Look at the copyright date

Although a recent copyright date is no guarantee of a book’s relevance or sensitivity, copyright dates are useful information. More children’s books began to reflect the reality of multicultural society and nonsexist and nonableist perspectives in the 1970s. Since then, the range of accurate, respectful, and caring books reflecting diversity is increasing. When considering new books for your collection, begin with more recently published materials and then continue with older copyright dates.

10. Always keep in mind the power of books

The words and the images in books have the ability to nurture or undermine children’s sense of self, and they deeply impact children’s attitudes towards others. Keep this in mind as you review books for misinformation and stereotypes.

Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Families in Early Childhood Settings

Tracy Burt, Aimee Gelnaw, and Lee Klinger Lesser

“When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you’re not in it, there’s a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.”

—Adrienne Rich

A MOTHER’S EARS PERK UP when she overhears her 7-year-old daughter say to a friend, “I hate having two moms.” “Why?” asks the friend. “I hate when the teachers say, ‘Take this home to your mom and dad.’” Her mom exhales.

Upon hearing the first part of this story, this mother and most educators would immediately assume the child is talking about a problem within her two-mom family. After hearing the rest of the story, educators should reflect on those immediate thoughts and see where the child’s painful feelings really come from—not from her family but from a teacher’s assumption that every child has a mom and a dad.

Children’s identities and sense of self are inextricably tied to their families. The experience of being welcome or unwelcome, visible or invisible begins in early childhood. Our goal as authors and as early childhood professionals is to ensure that all children and their families are welcomed in early childhood settings and provided with quality care and education. Early childhood settings should recognize, value, and include every child and family they serve. This article addresses four main points: (1) children are being harmed; (2) all educators have a responsibility to make things better for children; (3) educators can take steps and actions that will make a difference; (4) support is available for educators who want to take action.
Breaking the silence and talking about LGBT families in early childhood settings requires understanding, commitment, and concrete tools.

The importance of supporting LGBT families

Extensive research shows that children thrive when their families are involved in their education and when a positive relationship exists between schools and families (Gallinsky & Weissbourd 1992; Redding et al. 2004; Caspe & Lopez 2006; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez 2006). When early childhood settings focus on engaging families, children perform better, both socially and academically, and they have higher self-esteem. Yet, LGBT families are pervasively rendered invisible throughout the early childhood field, from teachers' college training to their classroom practice.

The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct says, “Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code” (NAEYC 2005). All too often, without even realizing it, educators harm children and families through personal assumptions or biases and institutionalized silence. When children never hear words nor see images that reflect their families or themselves in positive ways, they are being harmed.

The impact of invisibility

Brian Silva, a teacher, wrote a story titled “On Being a Gay Five-Year-Old.” In it Brian states, “My parents did not want me to grow up gay. My teachers did not want me to grow up gay. In doing what they felt was in my best interest, denying me the right to grow up positively gay, they each, in their own way, contributed to my feelings of isolation and of being wrong and bad . . . [Teachers] should have stopped homophobic remarks and used them as a springboard to discuss fairness, equality, and the contributions made by gay people so that I could be proud of myself. I should have grown up with their support and love because it was their ethical responsibility to me, a 5-year-old gay boy in their care. (Lesser, Burt, & Gelwass 2005, 111).

Children like Brian, who feel isolated, wrong, or bad because of ridicule or invisibility based on their identity or their families’ identity, compel us to do this work. Without thinking about it, many teachers act on the assumption that all children in their class are or will be heterosexual. And yet we do not know the sexual orientation or gender identity of the children for whom we care so deeply. We do not want any child to grow up in a world that says, “You are not welcome here.” All too often this is exactly the message we are conveying to a child who will grow up to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or to children who have LGBT parents.

As educators begin to realize the impact of invisibility on children’s self-concept and connection to their family, they are moved and inspired to take action. Breaking the silence and talking about LGBT families in early childhood settings requires understanding, commitment, and concrete tools.

The NAECY Code of Ethical Conduct as a foundation for action

Powerful social forces propel the controversy around LGBT families and often lead to the fear and confusion that affect so many early childhood educators. Often, discussions of LGBT families get tangled in issues of sex, religion, or politics. Many educators are afraid to even say the words lesbian or gay. They think talking about or even acknowledging that LGBT parents exist is akin to talking about sex.

When we speak about the parents of a child who has one mother and one father, no one assumes we are talking about sex. Yet, if we speak of a child’s two mommies or two daddies, all of a sudden, the topic of sex often seems to be in the forefront. It is important to examine this discrepancy, explore where it comes from, and understand that in both instances, we are simply speaking about families—the most constant, central, and formative presence in children’s lives. Gay dads and lesbian moms change diapers, make lunches, wash clothes, read bedtime stories, play in the park, and do all the other things straight parents do in caring for their children.

Some religious traditions hold that being LGBT is wrong. Because faith and religion are such a deep and important part of so many people’s lives, it can be very intimidating to do or say anything that might offend or contradict someone else’s beliefs. Many educators are hesitant to offend the religious beliefs of parents or other staff, and fear they may do so by supporting acceptance and visibility for LGBT families in the program. Some may struggle with the tension between their own religious beliefs and their...
commitment to treating all children and their families with respect.

And yet, what happens to a child if we imply, or directly tell them, that their parents are “wrong”? It is not up to teachers to choose who is in a child’s family. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (2005) is very clear about the importance of respecting children within the contexts of their families and provides us with these core values as guidelines for action:

- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect (pp. 1–2)

The Code also states that an ideal (4.1.10) for early childhood programs is:

- To ensure that each child’s culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are recognized and valued in the program.

Used in conjunction with the four goals of anti-bias education (at right), as outlined in the new NAEYC publication Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2010), the Code of Ethical Conduct offers sound guidelines for our work in creating welcoming environments for LGBT people. If we are truly committed to the well-being of children, keeping these goals in mind will guide the decisions we make and the interactions we have with all young children and their families.

Respecting diverse religious viewpoints and fully including LGBT families are both important. Educators’ ethical responsibility to all children is to create a safe space in which they can grow and flourish. No one’s beliefs

The Four Core Goals of Anti-Bias Education

Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.

Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.


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can take precedence over children’s safety and protection. If we do not fulfill this ethical responsibility to children and families, silence, fear, and the power of a topic being taboo overshadow the wholeness of family life. Ultimately this can have dangerous consequences, especially as children move to later grades in which bullying incidents and name-calling are often based on gender or sexual orientation.

As trainers and instructors, we have heard from early childhood educators throughout the country that they can understand the need to address the issue of isolation/inclusion of all children. They “get” that it is inevitable that silence around this issue will have damaging outcomes for children. And yet, they fear raising the issue in their programs for a host of reasons: (1) lack of comfort with their own knowledge of and facility with language regarding issues affecting the LGBT community; (2) personal dissonance regarding their own personal, cultural, or religious beliefs about homosexuality; (3) discomfort resulting from their assumption that if they advocate for engaging LGBT families, people will think they are LGBT; and (4) fear of reprisal from their supervisors, peers, other parents, board members, or others associated with the setting in which they work.

To address these often well-founded fears, early childhood professionals need tools that outline the rationale within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice for engaging and supporting LGBT families. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (2005) Preamble states, “NAEYC recognizes that those who work with young children face many daily decisions that have moral and ethical implications,” and thus sets the stage for guided decision making based on core values (some of which are listed earlier). The code gives educators a foundation from which to approach colleagues and other families and through which we can assess our own actions in protecting and caring for children. There are also practical steps to take.

### Steps to including all families

While we live in a society that surrounds children with negative stereotypes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and families, there are tangible and significant steps educators can take to create an inclusive curriculum. Teachers can make a difference in the self-esteem and safety of a child in simple ways—through the language they use and by including children’s books, matching games, and puzzles that reflect diverse family structures. For example, instead of saying, “Take this home to your mother and father,” we can say “Take this home to your family.”

Many opportunities exist to develop curriculum that includes all families:

- Consider whether your language consistently includes all children. If it excludes any child, it is not the right choice of words.
- Review and choose children’s books that portray many different types of families.
- Celebrate a “Person You Love Day” (see Lewis 1996) or Family Day instead of celebrating Mother’s Day or Father’s Day. This way, all children, in all kinds of families, are included.
- Adapt stories and songs to reflect and include LGBT families.
- Make a display showing “Who lives with you?” for all children and staff.
- Discuss similarities and differences.
- Represent different kinds of family structures with curriculum materials such as posters, puzzles, photos, and dolls.
- Create matching games or puzzles that reflect different family structures.
Change happens when a person steps forward to make a difference.

including those with lesbian moms or gay dads.
• Create curriculum that challenges gender stereotypes, expanding what is typically considered acceptable for girls and boys. Support children’s choices—in play, clothing, activities, toys, or future career plans—that break gender stereotypes.
• Maintain awareness of the language you use, especially if it implies differences based on gender (for example, complimenting boys on what they do and girls on how they look or implying that the only love relationships that exist, or are possible, are between a man and a woman).
• Interrupt children’s potentially hurtful behavior that denies or ridicules some families. Treat these incidents as teachable moments, and follow up on children’s questions.
• Find ongoing opportunities to help children see the similarities and differences between families and the importance and value of each.

In Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves, Derman-Sparks and Olsen stress the importance of supporting all families:

Some adults mistakenly assume that teaching children about diversity in family structure devalues “traditional” families or promotes certain other family configurations. The purpose of anti-bias education is to enable teachers to support all children’s families and to foster in each child fair and respectful treatment of others whose families are different from the child’s own. Anti-bias education does not disparage or advocate any particular family structure—but it does adhere to early childhood education’s fundamental ethic of positively representing and supporting every child’s unique kind of family. (2010, 116)

Tips for Administrators for Working with LGBT Families

• Include LGBT families in promotional materials, such as brochures and Web sites, through photos and inclusive language
• Address family diversity in the mission statement, explicitly including LGBT families
• Use gender-neutral terms like parent or guardian on forms
• Provide the same benefits for domestic partners of LGBT staff as for legally married staff
• Conduct ongoing diversity training related to LGBT families for staff
• Implement an anti-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity
• Create a safe environment in which LGBT staff and families can come out
• Ask families to tell you the language they use to describe their families and how they would like you to describe their families

Taking Responsibility for Change

The lessons and best practices described in this article grew out of the work of many dedicated pioneers in the early childhood field who are committed to raising awareness and taking action to include LGBT families in early childhood settings. Among these initiatives is one that spawned the creation of the first three-unit early childhood course in the nation focused on supporting LGBT families in early childhood education settings. The success of the course, initially offered at City College of San Francisco, motivated the publication of a text titled Making Room in the Circle: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Families in Early Childhood Settings, written by the three authors of this article and published by Parent Services Project.

This early childhood education course is now offered regularly at City College of San Francisco and Wheelock College in Boston, Massachusetts, and has been offered at University of North Carolina—Greensboro, De Anza Community College (San Jose, California), and Chabot Community College (Hayward, California). Other colleges are developing ongoing courses or integrating the course (or aspects of the course) into their current programs.

Parent Services Project is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to integrating family support into early childhood programs and schools through raining, technical assistance, and education. For more information on these initiatives, visit www.parentservices.org.

Conclusion

Change happens when a person steps forward to make a difference. Each step will look different and is important. Whether an educator reads a new children’s book that is inclusive of LGBT families, gathers information for self-education, builds a new relationship with an LGBT parent, leads a staff training, or changes policy in a school, each step brings that person further along the path that contributes to a safer and more just world for children and their families. It is up to each of us to do whatever we can do. If we don’t, we inadvertently support the exclusion and harm that currently exist. As Lin Yutang wrote, “Hope is like a road in the country; there never was a road, but when people walk there, the road comes into existence.”
References


Resources


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A New Resource for Your Curriculum from NAEYC

"In this wonderful and long-awaited second edition, the authors compellingly invite early childhood educators to learn and reflect, and to teach in new and daring ways."

— Patricia G. Ramsey, Professor, Mount Holyoke College

Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves

Louise Derman-Sparks & Olja Olsen Edwards

The eagerly awaited successor to the influential Anti-Bias Curriculum! Over the last two decades, educators have gained a wealth of knowledge and experience implementing this work. This sequel offers a deeper appreciation of what is important in anti-bias education. Become a skilled and confident teacher with this volume: a practical guidance to confronting and eliminating barriers of prejudice, misinformation, and bias. Most importantly, find tips for helping staff and children respect each other, themselves, and all people.

JOIN NAEYC AND SAVE ON THIS AND OTHER RESOURCES
Curriculum activities related to American Indians, including the use of children's books, are common in many U.S. schools; while some are appropriate, plenty of them are not. Teachers implementing inappropriate curriculum may be inexperienced, lack professional training, or have been seriously misinformed (Jones & Moomaw, 2002). Sometimes, teachers want to make the necessary changes, but may not do so “simply because they have not had time to reflect, research, and restructure their teaching style” (Reyhner, 1992, p. 93), or because they lack a strong cultural identity and cultural sensitivity (Banks, 2001; Jones & Moomaw, 2002). Thus, inappropriate practices are perpetuated by a lack of culturally relevant curriculum materials (Jones & Moomaw, 2002; Reyhner, 1992) and leadership that fails to support culturally respectful learning environments (Banks, 2001). Yet, educators have a responsibility to incorporate material that is authentic as well as developmentally and culturally appropriate for the children they are teaching.

Good Intentions, Bad Approach
Numerous accounts of inappropriate curriculum, such as focusing on Indians as the theme of the month, are well documented and still problematic (Dorris, 1998; Jones & Moomaw, 2002; Heinrich, 1998; Slapin & Seale, 1992). The themes of Thanksgiving and fall harvest are typically combined, with fairly predictable units focusing on how generic American Indians lived—their dwellings, food, and clothing.

An early childhood professor observed one example of a Thanksgiving feast theme during student teacher supervisions. Teachers of students from kindergarten through 3rd grade divided their students into two groups, Pilgrims and Indians. The students made costumes and the parents made food for a reenactment of an imagined Thanksgiving feast to which community members were invited.

Later, when the professor described this activity to a class of early childhood education undergraduate students, their first reaction was quite favorable. Some students wanted specific information on how to replicate this activity. Their attitudes changed, however, when the professor encouraged them to reflect more deeply and critique the activity from a developmentally and culturally relevant perspective. As students began to critique the Thanksgiving feast, most were able to comprehend the inappropriate nature of many of the activities.

The 2005 International Focus issue of Childhood Education focused on the education of aboriginal and indigenous children.

Guest Editor Jyotsna Pattanaik located too many excellent articles on that important topic to include in one issue. Therefore, we revisit the issue here.
The professor decided to follow up by engaging the students in exercises designed to get them to reflect on their own cultural practices and beliefs. According to one hypothesis (Banks, 2001, p. 211), “Self-clarification is a prerequisite to dealing effectively with and relating positively to outside ethnic and cultural groups.” In one activity, the students were asked to write and share a brief essay about what their families do on Thanksgiving Day. As students shared their essays, it became evident that the students’ families perceived and celebrated Thanksgiving in many different ways. Some families did not celebrate Thanksgiving at all. While one American Indian student described this holiday as “just another day,” another described it as a “day of mourning” in her family. She added, “This day only reminds us of all that we have lost . . . including a lot of our land.” A Polish student shared that she ate a wonderful meal with friends, although she did “not see what there is to celebrate.” In addition to developing a strong sense of ethnic and cultural identity, preservice teachers need plenty of opportunities to reconstruct their belief systems and construct their own knowledge about culturally relevant curriculum.

The Thanksgiving feast described earlier falls under the category of tourist curriculum, whereby children “visit,” or briefly study, non-white cultures, focusing mostly on exotic differences between cultures and failing to embrace the present status and reality of those cultures (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Jones & Moomaw, 2002). The most serious problem with tourist curriculum is that it often perpetuates negative stereotypes and neglects to recognize the present-day existence of a culture. Invariably, children go away from these experiences believing that cultures such as those of American Indians existed only in the past. When incorporating a Thanksgiving theme that focuses on American Indians, teachers should study the Pawhatans, Wampanoags, or other eastern tribes to learn about their cultures, their customary ways of giving thanks, and how they taught the Pilgrims to survive in their new environment (Gomez, 1987). Dorris (1998) makes some pertinent observations in the following statement:

Considering that virtually none of the standard fare surrounding either Halloween or Thanksgiving contains an ounce of authenticity, historical accuracy, or cross-cultural perception, why is it so apparently engrained? Is it necessary to the American psyche to perpetually exploit and debase its victims in order to justify its history? And do Native Americans have to reconcile themselves to forever putting up with such exhibitions of puerile ethnocentrism? (p. 76)

Teachers need to address the needs of all children, including American Indian children, by providing a solid educational experience infused with best practice and curriculum that is meaningful and that relates to children’s lives. The best way for the teachers to begin is by getting to know all the children, tapping into their prior knowledge, evaluating their preconceived impressions about particular children, and using this information to enrich the curriculum. Sometimes, teachers expect children from other cultures to be knowledgeable about their own culture, including being fluent in their home language. This is not always the case, however, as children’s home language skills develop according to a multitude of factors, including exposure, family attitudes regarding home language use, and formal schooling experience.

The teacher can tap into children’s prior knowledge by having conversations with the children and their parents or by making home visits. An excellent strategy for tapping into children’s prior knowledge is to incorporate the K-W-L chart (Tompkins, 2003), documenting what the children know about American Indians under the letter “K,” what they want to know under the letter “W,” and finally what they have learned under the letter “L.” Generally, children will contribute highly stereotypical items to the “know” section, including that American Indians lived in the past, wore feathers on their heads, danced around a fire and whooped, lived in tipis, and scalped people (Jones & Moomaw, 2002; Peterson, 1998).
Responding to Stereotypes and Prejudice

Some teachers believe that once stereotypes, or prejudiced behavior, are revealed, they need to be addressed immediately (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Peterson, 1998). Young children, even as young as 2 and 1/2 years old, are capable of demonstrating pre-prejudiced behavior or discomfort with others who are physically different from themselves (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Pre-prejudiced behavior has been described as four specific steps that children go through prior to developing prejudice (York, 1991). In the first step, awareness, children are aware of and notice differences. Second, in the identification stage, children can name, label, or classify people based on their physical features and attempt to “break the adult silence and make sense of the world” (York, 1991, p. 169). Third, children develop attitudes towards others and their way of life. Fourth, children develop a preference for certain things and demonstrate their preferences for particular physical characteristics and lifestyles. The final step is prejudice, when children develop a “preconceived, hostile attitude, opinion, feeling, or action against a person, race, or their way of being in the world without knowing them” (York, p. 169). Pre-prejudice can occur when young children are limited in their thinking ability, have a strong need to please others, or are misinformed (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; York, 1991).

Teachers have an obligation to respond once stereotypes or prejudice present themselves. Referring back to the example of a K-W-L chart and the possible stereotypes that are likely to surface, a teacher may start by repeating what children say and breaking it down with them to help them learn to think constructively. Next, the teacher could ask the children to think about the stereotypes they listed about American Indians and discuss each one individually. These discussions could begin to raise awareness and provoke a number of questions. For example, the teacher might say, “You said Indians live in tipis. How do you know this?” or “Where did you learn this?” These discussions also should help generate questions that can be listed on the “want to learn” list. Teachers then will need to provide plenty of resources and activities that children can use to answer their own questions and become better informed about American Indians.

Critiquing Children’s Books That Feature American Indians

Teachers need to meticulously plan and incorporate more culturally relevant curriculum and selectively identify the most appropriate curriculum activities and materials (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Although much of the curriculum may be planned prior to meeting a new classroom of children, it is considered best practice for a teacher to become familiar with the children, including their backgrounds, interests, and learning styles, prior to finalizing the curriculum plans (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995). Ideally, when teachers incorporate children’s books on American Indians, they need to reflect on the purpose for using them and research ways to use them appropriately.

Recommendations for Selecting and Analyzing Children’s Literature About American Indians

1. Select Children’s Books That Reflect the Cultures of the Children in Your Classroom. Select books that represent tribes the children in your class are from or the local indigenous people who historically have lived in the community. Balance historical information with
the voices of contemporary members of your community. This information may be found on tribal or individual Web sites, libraries, and other community sources.

2. Decide on the Purpose for Incorporating Books About American Indians. Is this part of a thematic unit on American Indians, or are you studying about the people in your state, the history of the United States, or the cultures of North or South America? Do you know what tribes you will be addressing and why those particular tribes have been selected? Are the tribes you selected from your particular part of the country? The teacher could talk about the ways that land, water, animals, food, climate, and environments have influenced the diversity of American Indian lifestyles, arts, clothing, and architecture.

3. Check for Generalizations and Stereotypes. Do the American Indian people or characters in curriculum materials behave in a manner that is free from misleading generalizations or negative stereotypes? Does the author use qualified generalizations, when appropriate, to indicate that some or most of the members do or think something, rather than suggesting that all members of any group do or think the same thing? If teachers use books that include broad generalizations or stereotypes about American Indians, they should question those ideas with their students and show them a variety of other books that would challenge those ideas.

4. Consider the Accuracy of the Clothing, Architecture, and Art. Does the book accurately show the clothing, architecture, or sacred objects used by a specific cultural group who lived in a particular place? For example, some toys and books for young children show American Indian characters in the same location using an assortment of culturally specific objects from geographically different areas, such as wearing eagle feathers and living in tipis (historically utilized by people from the plains states region of the United States), but also paddling canoes (employed by the woodland peoples around the Great Lakes). They are also shown next to a totem pole (which is a sacred art made by peoples in the northwest coast of North America) while they live in a canyon (commonly found in the southwestern United States). We recommend using children's books in which the author uses photographs to show the lifestyle and stories of one group of people in a particular context and time.

5. Show Ancient and Contemporary American Indian People. Children commonly think that American Indian people lived only in the past. They do not realize that the child who sits next to them may be a descendent of American Indian people. Teachers should clearly differentiate between customs used by indigenous people historically and contemporary practices used by some of their ancestors today.

6. Check the Storyline for Character Traits. Are the American Indian characters in active or passive roles? Do the characters seem smart and able to resolve their own problems or are they dependent on others? Are the characters able to identify measures of success, or is "making it" only projected from a dominant white ideal? Are only white characters shown holding positions of power?

7. Look for the Perspective Taken by the Main Characters and "Loaded Words." Do the American Indian characters have their own perspectives, or are they "discovered" or "encountered" by the European characters? Are the American Indian characters described by such words as "native" or "savage," which commonly have negative connotations? Are their lifestyles negatively characterized as "primitive" and as inferior to European lifestyles and technology?

8. Identify American Indian People With the Names They Prefer to Use. Teachers should learn how to identify American Indian people in their classrooms and in curriculum materials. Try to learn the history of the name used to identify people. For example, the same group of woodland people was called Ojibwa by the French, Chippewa by the British, and Anishanabe in their own language. The terms that people favor for themselves depend on their family traditions and the connotations that names carry. For example, some people call themselves Navajo, which is a term used by the United States government and is commonly used in books. Although someone may be an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, he or she may prefer to identify him or herself as Diné or Dineh, which has been a word that these people historically have used to designate themselves in their language.

9. Examine How American Indian People Are Represented in Pictures. Are the people shown as particular individuals with distinct features, or as caricatures like those used by some sports teams and advertisements? Are the characters done in a cartoonish fashion that ridicules or belittles the person or tribe represented? Are the colors or facial features exaggerated? Would an American Indian child identify with, or feel embarrassed by, the way the people and cultures are represented?

10. Observe for Images That Trivialize Indian Culture. Are American Indian characters treated as people and not as objects or animals? For example, in the book The Ten Little Rabbits, the illustrations are beautifully drawn but they are very offensive. The title also refers to the insulting song Ten Little Indians.

11. Research the Author’s Perspective. Who is the author and how did he or she research the material used in the book? All authors come from cultural and educational backgrounds that inform their perspective. Is the author a member of the tribe mentioned?
in the story? Did the author interview members of the tribe to prepare this book? Did the author explore the specific contexts in the lives of actual people at particular times, places, and cultures, which may change over time?

12. Hear the Voices of the American Indian People. Did the author quote a variety of American Indian people and allow them to tell their own stories whenever possible?

13. Identify Negative Stereotypes. Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children (Slapin & Seale, 1992) explains some of the most common stereotypes of American Indians. One of the chapters describes recurring stereotypes that appear in numerous children’s books, analyzing and organizing them according to several categories, including:

- Books with illustrations of children “playing Indian”
  (no reference to “Indian” in the text)
- Books with illustrations of children “playing Indian”
  (reference to “Indian” in the text)
- Books with animals portrayed as “Indians”
- Books with illustrations supposedly depicting Native Americans
- Alphabet and dictionary books
- Counting books
- Hat books (Slapin, Seale, & Gonzales)

A discussion of several children’s storybooks will demonstrate commonly found stereotypes. An example of the second category, “playing Indian,” is evident in Amazing Grace (Hoffman & Binch, 1991), in which the main character puts on a Plains Indian headdress and pretends to be Hiawatha, an Iroquois Indian. Jones and Moomaw recognized how illustrations with stereotypes, such as the one of Grace dressed as Hiawatha, are often used to “transform all Native American people into members of Plains Nations, wearing feathered headdresses as part of their normal attire” (Jones & Moomaw, 2002, p. 14). In addition, Grace wears braids, has her face painted with three lines on each cheek, and strikes a stoic pose with her arms folded across her naked torso as she sits cross-legged (Jones & Moomaw, 2002). Noll (1995) points out that “[i]t is both ironic and unfortunate that this book, while intending to expose discrimination in one culture, perpetuates a distorted view of another” (p. 32).

Examples of Category 3, books with animals portrayed as “Indians,” can be found in two books that elicit negative commentary for distinct reasons. The first one, Ten Little Rabbits (Grossman & Long, 1991), brings out an immediate reaction because the title sounds too much like “ten little Indians” and evokes the degrading idea of counting Indians. The artwork is colorful, with American Indian designs on the rabbits’ blankets and clothing. Unfortunately, the book entices children to count rabbits dressed like Indians, treating Indians like inanimate objects. A second example of Category 3 is found in Coyote: A Trickster Tale From The American Southwest (McDermott, 1994). Coyote is a comical character who encounters a group of crows that he wants to imitate because of the way they sing, dance, and fly. Although the book never refers to the crows as Indians, children perceive them as Indians because of the way they look and act (Jones & Moomaw, 2002; Peterson, 1998). Old Man Crow, a major character in this book, is shown wearing a turquoise necklace and a red bandana around his head while the rest of the crows are wearing blue bandanas. In addition, the crows have American Indian-like designs on their bodies. Gutierrez-Gomez (2005) found that when preschool children reenacted this storybook, they referred to the birds as “Indian birds” or in Spanish as “Indios.” Teachers should know that children may be absorbing subtle messages from words or images in children’s literature (Noll, 1995; VanAusdale & Feagin, 2001).

Learning About American Indian Art

Teachers often incorporate art as part of units on American Indians or as extended activities in association with children’s books about American Indians. Teachers should provide students with opportunities to study the art of indigenous people, but should be cautious about asking children to replicate the art of specific groups without doing some research and determining if this is appropriate. Students who belong to an Indian tribe may have in-depth information about the art of their ancestors or contemporary artists from their tribe. However, teachers should be sensitive and not expect American Indian students to share or teach others about this artwork.

Zuk and Bergland (1992) recommend that students make art about a common theme from a curriculum on ancient and contemporary Indian artwork. For example, students might study how particular indigenous artists have expressed their thoughts and feelings about nature. After the students have discussed the qualities of the artworks and their interpretations of them, the students can reflect on an experience they had in which they experienced nature significantly, and make a drawing about it.

When studying about art made by American Indian people, it is important for teachers to teach about diversity and change within ancient and contemporary forms of art. American Indian art springs from the same sources of human creativity and communica-
tion that have inspired people to make art all over the world. Some American Indians have made art about their environments, others have made art that is useful, and still others have made art that communicates social or political messages. When identifying American Indian artists, we recommend that teachers use the artist’s name and tribal affiliation rather than the general descriptor “American Indian.” Contemporary artists often maintain Web sites where teachers can find information about the artist’s work, written from the artist’s own point of view, to share with their students.

From a Narrative by an American Indian Student Teacher:
What is most humbling to me is that we too have been guilty of incorporating the same inappropriate curriculum... Now that we are in a new place professionally, soon to graduate, we have asked ourselves, why or what was I thinking? Although the answers may not be quite clear, we all agree on one thing—we were not thinking. I don’t think we were expected to think. We were simply doing what we learned from our experiences and what we saw others do. The early childhood curriculum we used in our classrooms, whether we were teaching on or off the reservation, were often superficial or plain stereotypical. We asked ourselves why, or how, did this happen? The answers were painful to accept, we didn’t know any better. Teachers often teach what they see others teach. We used what we saw others use or what we were told to use, even if it didn’t fit with our tribe. We know better now; we question everything. (Early Childhood Multicultural Education, student project, Spring 2001)

Conclusion
Teachers are in a powerful position to make decisions about what to incorporate into their classroom curriculum. They should tap a diversity of resources, conduct their own research, and learn to critique children’s literature. This process takes time and dedication; nevertheless, it is necessary. Classroom activities and materials that continue to perpetuate negative stereotypes and misinform young children about American Indians need to be eliminated. All children, including American Indian children, deserve to experience an exciting, meaningful, and authentic curriculum that is relevant to their lives.

References