

Counseling Corner

Whiteford Elementary School

Diversity and the Power of Inclusion

Our innate desire to find our purpose and feel a sense of belonging can be disrupted by feelings of disconnection or exclusion and can cause deep emotional pain. In order to help children understand themselves and others and foster acceptance and value, diversity and inclusion are essential in education and throughout life.

When diversity and inclusion are embraced in the classroom, children approach learning with an open, confident, kind, and curious mindset.

They learn to empathize with individuals from varying backgrounds, abilities, languages, learning styles, family structures, religions, beliefs, and more. This broad range of human differences is what diversity encompasses. Diversity and inclusion help all children become better learners, allowing them to understand different perspectives and appreciate the richness of human experience. While educators play a critical role in promoting diversity and inclusion in schools, parents and caregivers can also help foster this at home.



1 Involve Children in Conversation

As children grow, they naturally learn to recognize differences between people. It's important to encourage them to acknowledge and celebrate these distinctions, using respectful language, and highlighting the positive aspects of diversity. Asking open-ended questions and listening without judgement can nurture their curiosity and encourage them to embrace diversity as they grow older. As a parent or caregiver, it's vital to express your own values for diversity and inclusion without shutting down their thoughts and questions. Empathy is a crucial element in teaching children to respect and appreciate others. It provides the ability to recognize the emotions of others and imagine how it feels to be in their place. When someone is being excluded, talk with your child about how that person might be feeling and what they can do to help. Empathy can be taught and developed over time. When children value diversity, they tend to be more compassionate and inclusive individuals. Encouraging empathy in children and promoting positive attitudes toward diversity creates a more harmonious and accepting society.

2 Model Inclusive Behavior

Children absorb information from the role models around them. They are constantly tuned in, observing and learning from the people closest to them. It's important to examine your personal beliefs and behaviors and ensure they align with the values you want to instill in your child. Reading a variety of books and speaking out against bias can also be helpful. If something seems wrong or unfair, don't hesitate to make a positive change. By taking action together, children can be empowered to make positive changes on their own.

3 Be Prepared to Answer Questions

Talking about differences can be difficult, but there are ways to make it more manageable. One approach is to be open and honest, without avoiding any questions. If you're unsure about how to answer a particular question, take the time you need to feel more confident. You can also ask why they asked the question, as this may help you better understand where they're coming from. It's important to be honest in your response and let them know it's okay to take a moment to sort through your own thoughts. Using a phrase such as "I need to think about the best way to answer your question" can show that you're taking their question seriously and want to provide a thoughtful response.

DIVERSITY



INCLUSION



If you would like to learn more, please view my "Counseling Corner Newsletters and Resources" section in my "Resources" tab in my Schoology group :)

