
Using Classroom Observations to Develop Empathy and Plan Equitable Interactions for Every Child

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INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the webinar “Equitable Interactions in Early Childhood Education.” The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand how teachers can develop deeper empathy for racially marginalized children.
- ◆ Learn more about how the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) measures the quality of equity practices in preschool classrooms.
- ◆ Make a plan to observe, reflect on, and improve the experiences and interactions of the racially marginalized children in their classroom.

Activity

- ◆ Watch the webinar.
- ◆ After watching, use the questions below to reflect on how you can deepen your empathy for children in your classroom.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to deepen empathy and plan equitable interactions with every child.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the webinar? What made that fact, idea, or example meaningful to you?

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- ◆ How could carefully observing the experiences and interactions of racially marginalized learners help you develop greater empathy for them?

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- ◆ According to Dr. Stephanie Curenton, self-awareness is crucial to empathizing with racially marginalized learners. She recommends that teachers understand their own racial identity and biases in order to better reflect on their interactions with racially marginalized children.
 - Have you already examined your own racial identity, biases, and stereotypes?
 - If yes, what steps have you taken? How has your self-awareness influenced your interactions with racially marginalized children? Are you better able to empathize with them? Why or why not?
 - If not yet, what resources or support would you need towards developing self-awareness? In what ways do you think that self-awareness could help you better empathize with racially marginalized children?

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- ◆ During the webinar, Dr. Stephanie Curenton describes the six dimensions of the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) and provides examples of ways to support equity through conversations and activities with children throughout the school day.
 - Plan for a time you will record (or have another teacher or instructional coach record) your interactions with children during one part of the day.
 - Plan a time to reflect. Carefully observe the experiences and interactions of the racially marginalized children. If your class isn't racially diverse, carefully observe the experiences of a different group of children (e.g., girls or children with disabilities).
 - How are your interactions with racially marginalized children different from your interactions with their white peers? Why are they different?
 - In terms of empathy, what are these different interactions modeling/teaching to racially marginalized children? To white children?
 - How do you think they feel about the way you interact with them? How can you tell?
 - What could you do to be more equitable within your interactions with racially marginalized learners?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about ways to develop your own empathy to support children’s development of empathy, particularly for marginalized children:

- ◆ **Source:** National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- ◆ **Article:** Developing Empathy to Build Warm, Inclusive Classrooms
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/apr2019/developing-empathy-inclusive-classrooms>
- ◆ **Description:** In this article, you will learn eight tips to help you develop empathy when interacting with children from ethnic and cultural backgrounds different than your own.



- ◆ **Source:** Early Inclusion
- ◆ **Video:** Family Voices
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqslASuH8-g>
- ◆ **Description:** This video highlights the experiences and perspectives of families with children with disabilities served by inclusive settings. The video will help you connect emotionally with families and children with disabilities. Connecting emotionally with children and families is key to respond to their needs with empathy and compassion.



- ◆ **Source:** CA Department of Education, Special Education Division – Desired Results Access Project
- ◆ **Video:** Win-Win: Inclusive Preschool Settings
- ◆ **Link:** <https://draccess.org/videolibrary/WinWinInclusivePreschoolSettings>
- ◆ **Description:** In this video, you will see an example of how inclusive preschool settings can build children’s empathy for each other.