
Confronting Our Biases

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INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article “Rocking and Rolling. Reflection: The First Step for Addressing Bias in Infant and Toddler Programs,” published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. 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 self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Recognize how our beliefs about young children and their care influence our relationships with children and their families.
- ◆ Understand how bias develops and creates disparities in how we relate with young children in the classroom.
- ◆ Explore concrete ways to disrupt the negative impact that bias can have on teacher-child relationships.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to reflect on your biases and their impact on your relationships with every child in your care.
- ◆ Develop and implement a plan to intentionally build relationships with children and adjust as needed.

Awareness of beliefs and biases is important for growing as intentional teachers.

Sarah MacLaughlin, LSW

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? Why was that fact, idea, or example meaningful to you?

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- ◆ Our beliefs about young children and their care come from our backgrounds, cultures, families, and experiences. The article opens with three scenarios meant to help us identify those beliefs that we bring into the classroom. Read each scenario and use these questions to reflect on your reactions:

- How did each person's words and actions make you feel?
- Do you relate closely with a particular teacher or parent in these scenarios? Why?
- Have you experienced or witnessed similar situations? How did you react or respond in the moment?

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- ◆ Sometimes, without realizing it, our beliefs form biases that lead to negative thoughts about other people. These biases can lead to disparities in the quality of our relationships with children.
 - Why is this important? How do our relationships with children impact their growth and development?

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- ◆ Ongoing reflection is an effective way to disrupt the negative effects our biases have on our relationships. Think about the children in your classroom.
 - With whom do you feel you have a "natural" connection?
 - Who are you not as connected with? Why might that be?
 - How may your biases be affecting your connection with and care of each child?

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- ◆ Plan to intentionally build your relationship with a child to whom you aren't as connected.
 - Choose one concrete way to get to know that child better every day (e.g., intentionally observe to learn more about them, spend one-on-one time together, talk with their family at drop-off/pick-up).
 - What additional support do you need to implement your plan? Who will provide that support?
 - Implement your plan for at least one week and reflect on your feelings to understand how your relationship changes. Adjust your plan as needed to continue building your connection.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about different types of biases and perceptions and reflect on how they may affect teacher-child relationships:

- ◆ **Source:** IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University's Peabody College
- ◆ **Module:** What Do You See? Perceptions of Disability
- ◆ **Link:** <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/da/>
- ◆ **Description:** In this online module, you will explore your implicit biases (i.e., perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs) around people with disabilities. After completing the module, you can reflect around why becoming aware of our biases about people with disabilities is important to develop close and supportive relationships with children with disabilities in the classroom.



- ◆ **Source:** UC Berkeley's Greater Good in Education Program
- ◆ **Reflection Protocol:** Mindful Reflection Process for Developing Culturally Responsive Practices
- ◆ **Link:** <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful-reflection-process-for-developing-culturally-responsive-practices/>
- ◆ **Description:** In this exercise, you will unpack one challenging interaction that you have had with one of your children. The reflection protocol will guide you to consider how different types of implicit biases (e.g., race/ethnicity, disability, culture) influence your interactions and relationship with a child, particularly your attributions around that child's behavior.