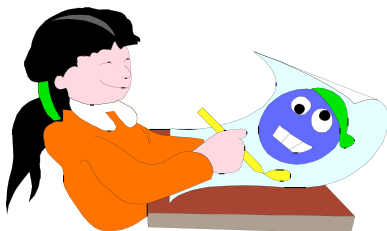


IMAGES WE GIVE YOUNG CHILDREN

Child Care Training Guide

1999

NC Cooperative Extension



Developed by: Cheryl L. Brown
Edited by: Karen DeBord, Ph. D.

**IMAGES WE GIVE YOUNG CHILDREN
OUTLINE**

Materials Needed:

1. Teaching Outline
2. Overhead Projector
3. Overheads and Handouts Provided
4. Easel Pad and Markers

Objectives:

1. To discuss non- stereotypical designs of environments for young children.
2. To understand the messages we give children through various forms of communication.
3. To understand how we help the young child grown beyond stereotypes.
4. To learn strategies to help children understand gender roles, various abilities ethnic/cultural differences and biases.

Activities:

1. Images in Classroom Environments
2. Book Review
3. Discussion: Positive Images (Optional)
4. Vignettes

Overheads:

1. Aesthetic/Visual Environments
2. Intercultural Education and Books
3. How To Select Books
4. Nonverbal and Verbal Expressions

Handouts:

- 1.A Good Aesthetic/Visual Environment
2. Books
3. Discussion: Positive Images (Optional)
4. Vignettes

Resources:

Derman-Sparks, Louise and the A.B.C. Task Force, Anti-Bias Curriculum:Tools for Empowering Young Children. National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington, D.C., 1993.

Carlsson-Paige, Nancy & Levin, Diane E. Who's Calling the Shot's. New Society Publishers: Philadelphia, PA, 1990.

Jalongo, Mary Renck. Young Children and Picture Books .National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington, D.C., 1990.

Carnes, James, Paley, Vivian, et. al. Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades. A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center: Montgomery, AL, 1997.

Introduction

Note to presenter: In this teaching lesson, you will want to discuss the mixed messages and often negative images adults give young children in society. Children struggle against biases that imply people are inferior because of gender, race, ethnicity or ability. There is a great deal that caregivers need to know about how children obtain knowledge and form values that result in attitudes about people, life and society as a whole. We need to know with the complexities of our present society, how children learn to cope and maintain healthy self-esteem. What are the influences? What do we give children to help them develop fully develop? How do we give positive images? Are our messages positive or negative? This is what we wish to explore through this curriculum.

Curriculum Design

This module presents an array of materials to enable the participants to think and probe their environments and their practices about the negative or positive images we give to young children. It is hoped that participants will discuss and analyze their environments, language communication and activities for stereotypical materials, display and use of gender roles, biases, cultural diversity and different ableness. This module contains numerous activities and vignettes that should enlighten and give probable cause to change our attitudes about what can be done to promote healthy development in young children from three to eight years of age.

Time Frame

Introduction	5 minutes
Early Childhood Environments	15 minutes
- Images Activity	20 minutes
- Book Activity	20 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Language Communication	15 minutes
Beyond Stereotypes	15 minutes
Vignettes	20 minutes

Opening questions:

There are many ways we teach children in our care: by what we say and by what we do.

How do we structure learning environments?

What activities do we use?

Let's discuss some of these.

Early Childhood Environments

Have you taken the time to really look around the setting you have created for children in your care? Picture your classroom or family care space in your mind for a moment. Where and how have you included genders, ethnic groups, various abilities and cultures of the world we live in today? How does your early childhood environment provide non- stereotypic images and bias images throughout?

A teacher and philosopher from Reggio Emilia, Italy is quoted as saying:

“ Each one of you has inside your head an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to a child. It is very difficult to act contrary to this internal image. For example, if your image is that boys and girls are very different from one another, you will behave differently in your interactions with each of them. The environment you construct around you and the children also reflects this image... There's a difference between the environment that you are able to build based on a preconceived image of the child and the environment you can build that is based on the child you see in front of you- the relationship you build with the child”

Loris Malaguzzi

What is in our world? The environment alerts children to their teachers concerns of what is important or not important. Children are affected in their attitudes by what isn't seen as well as what is seen. The first step in teaching children about our world is to create an environment with great diversity.

In most early childhood programs there is an abundance of materials that reflect majorities or traditional roles. This is even true in classrooms with children of color. And if you douse images with children's color are they showing current and positive images? Is there a need to increase the materials that reflect all children and adults, and who are engaged in non-stereotypic gender activities?

Facilitator: Brainstorm what should be included in a good aesthetic/visual environment with participants. Present Overhead # 1: Aesthetic/ Visual Environment

A Good Aesthetic/Visual Environment

There should be:

1. An abundance of images of all children, families and staff in the present program.
2. Images of posters and books of children and adults from all major ethnic/cultural groups in a community and the United States should be visible, regardless of the classroom population.
3. Stories, clothing, house hold items of people of many nationalities and different groups.
4. A balance of images of women and men doing jobs inside and outside the home in a variety of economic and work modes (e.g. beautician, pilot, mail carrier, teacher, doctor, telephone repair, factory worker etc.).
5. Pictures displayed of senior citizens of various backgrounds doing different activities and jobs.
6. Different -ableness children and adults in gender roles and wholesome activities.
7. Images of diversity in family styles: single parent families, differently-abled families, extended families, grandparent and child families, interracial and multiethnic families, only to name a few.

Training Activity:

Facilitator: Ask participants to take a few minutes to discuss the images (toys, posters ,art ,books equipment) in their classroom environments. What else can caregivers offer in the environment that will make it anti bias, nonstereotypic and non prejudice? What images must caregivers give to young children? Why?

Notes: Allow participants approximately 15-20 minutes for this activity. Chart answers and post.

Toys and Materials

Toys and materials regularly available to children should represent not only the children in the classroom, but extend to families in the community and in the nation. For example in housekeeping area: chop sticks, rice bowls, mats a wok, (others).

Facilitator: Bring (or ask a provider to bring) several items to discuss how items enhance their environment.

Books

Books can perform a unique function in the plan for intercultural education. They provide a means of gaining knowledge, improving social skills, and influencing attitudes and ways of thinking so they reinforce each other. We want children to have a realistic view of the way people live, gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds. Many classic books tend to show biases. Books are an integral part of a child's life, so much care must be taken in their selection.

Facilitator: Give Handout #2 to participants after reviewing Overhead #2: Intercultural Education and Books

Books should:

- Present accurate information and images of people.
- Reflect diversity in range of ages of people, nationality, culture and ethnic backgrounds, gender roles and ableness of all people.
- Show contemporary life in America (e.g. daily living, celebrations, jobs, family life, problem-solving issues relevant to children, etc.)
- Non-traditional and traditional family roles and styles.
- Represent a variety of languages spoken.

Racism and Sexism in children books are inappropriate. Most librarians have eliminated racist and sexist books from the children's section in the library. Parents have had books removed with inappropriate content. However, with the vast amount of children's books that are being written and shelved in libraries, occasionally a few may be overlooked. Before purchasing and borrowing books for your classroom, become familiar with the content and not just the title.

Facilitator: Recommended activity for participants. Read a book (suggest authors and titles). Critique as a group. Are there biases present in the story? What? How? Had you noticed them before? Are there positive images? What makes them positive? How could you use these?

- *The Little Engine that Could*
- *Cinderella*
- *Is Your Mama a Llama*
- *Why Does That Man Have Such A Big Nose*

Facilitator: Review Overhead #3: How to Select a Picture Book as you discuss this segment. Ask if they have any other suggestions or comments

How To Select a Picture Book

Note: Based on B. Elleman.(1986). Picture book art: Evaluation, *Booklist*,82,1548.

Step 1—Quickly look over the book to get a feel for the tone and approach.

Step 2—Read only the text, mentally blocking out the art.

Step 3—Read the story carefully while focusing on the harmony of words, pictures, Backtracking and pausing whenever you feel like it.

Step 4—Carefully look at other details such as design, paper, type, dedications etc.

Some general evaluation questions :

1. Does the book compare favorably with other picture books of its type?
2. Has the picture book received the endorsements of professionals?
3. Are the literary elements of plot, theme, character, style and setting used effectively?
4. Do the pictures complement the story?
5. Is the story free of ethnic, racial, or sex-role stereotypes?
6. Is the picture book developmentally appropriate for the child?

Training Activity:

Facilitator: Participants should be asked to review and present 5 books from the Library from the categories of the areas mentioned above. If a classroom is available, take the class to review books in the Book Center.

Discuss the clarity of the illustrations as well as the content of the book. What are the images we give children through the caregivers' selection of books?

Notes: If this training takes place in a child care center, you may want to arrange for 25 minutes to review children's books in the classroom.

Dramatic Play and Block Areas

Caregivers should analyze their dramatic play materials and block areas to see that they portray images that invite girls and boys to use equally and with consideration of their ableness. The materials, accessories, pictures, equipment and spatial organization should be wholesome with diversity.

The **Dramatic Play** area should encourage:

- Cooking, eating objects, dress-up clothing, personal objects that reflect a variety of cultures.
- Materials that are affiliated with the home influence of the children and other groups.
- Accessibility of tools and equipment of special needs or even dolls and pictures represented of handicapping conditions.
- Child-sized mirrors.

- Designs to allow for gender role play; spaces for working in and out of the home setting with adequate tools and materials.

The **Block Area** should encourage:

- Pictures that include roles in a variety of jobs.
- Hats and accessories that are varied in presentation.
- Accessibility of tools and equipment of special needs.

Manipulatives

Caregivers will want to assure that children have available and array of diversity in manipulatives. Puzzles, games, community helpers and family figure sets should depict diversity in race, culture ethnicity, gender, occupations and physical abilities. Stereotypic images of cowboys and Indians should be avoided which are available some education catalogues.

Dolls

As mentioned earlier, many early childhood classrooms may not have included black or multiethnic dolls. Homemade and commercial dolls should represent a good balance of African-American, White, Asian, Native American, Pacific and Hispanic populations. All dolls should be reasonably authentic -looking to help children acquire realistic images.

Music

Music in the classroom should reflect the various cultures of the children and staff as well as other groups in the United States. Music in the classroom should present opportunities for dancing, movement, singing, background music and naptime music.

Selecting Materials

Now you have to make decisions about images on the walls of the classroom. Will you check to see that they are accurate and non-stereotypic? Of course children's art should always take center stage over manufactured art.

When selecting materials take precautions to:

- Try not to make available only one picture or doll, or object or book about a particular group.
- Be careful in substituting images and information about people in other countries-e.g. Vietnamese-American children do not live the same culture as do children in Vietnam.
- Only showing images of a group from the past, even though they may be easier to find than contemporary images , such as Native Americans portrays biases.(i.e., not many Native Americans walk around in ceremonial dress and ride horses but use ceremonial dress for festivities and special occasions)

Language Communication, Interaction and Materials

Language environments should provide many opportunities for children to see and hear various languages and sign language. Labeling materials and shelves for blocks, manipulatives and art are important and necessary. The use of songs in different languages and the display and use of print, numbers in other languages provide a rich classroom environment of learning about diverse cultures and people. If multiple languages are spoken in the home, respect that parents are raising a bilingual or multilingual child (a valuable

skill in today's world!) and use values depicting represented language in your group. If you need and interpreter to dialogue with parents, look for sources in the larger community so you can converse with parents.

Nonverbal Communication

Caregivers should be aware of facial expressions and body movements. Children look curiously at caregivers facial expression and body movement and sense meaning as to how one feels about them.

The widening of the eyes and crossing of the arms may appear to show a child that you disapprove of the child's action or that you are unapproachable. Caregivers will shake their heads to say no while seldom relenting to shake their heads to say yes. Then there is the ignoring of a child who perhaps asks many questions or acts out frequently for attention. Or perhaps a caregiver never directly looks at the child on bends to eye –level to communicate or listen to the child. These images that we may send in our nonverbal communication lower the child's self-esteem and are inappropriate.

Nonverbal communication body movements are difficult to gauge or monitor. Caregivers should make a conscientious effort to understand themselves and their actions, and think before reacting.

Interactions

Are your interactions positive with children? Are you aware of caregivers interaction with children may teach gender, racial, and handicap biases without deliberate intent? Caregivers working together should observe each other to each other in the interactions. Discuss the behaviors a caregiver wishes to change. Videotaping classroom interactions may be less threatening.

Facilitators: Use the next set of questions for participant discussion.

Are caregivers cognizant of nonverbal and verbal expression of interest as quickly with girls as they are with boys? With differently-abled children? With children of color?

1. Do caregivers offer girls as much physical freedom and use of large motor equipment as boys?
2. Do caregivers help girls more often than boys?
3. Do caregivers compliment girls on appearance and boys on achievement?
4. Do caregivers respond differently to aggressive acts of boys, or special needs children or an African-American male?
5. Are children's cultural differences respected?
6. Are children supported in their preferred learning styles and encouraged to try new materials and ways of interacting with people?

Interactions between caregiver and child can vastly affect the thinking, feelings and attitudes of the child. The messages and images we communicate about self, people and the world in which the child lives should be positive.

Reinforce discussion with **Overhead # 4: Nonverbal and Verbal Expression.**

Language Communications

Cultural and social forces touch young lives with group attitudes, values and beliefs. Some cultures, expect children to look down when an adult speaks, showing respect by this action. Other cultures make extensive use of gestures and signaling. Still others seem to have limited vocabularies. Cultural values and factors can indeed affect language acquisition and self-esteem . What you say is as important as how you speak. Voice tones should be pleasant and audible in the classroom. Good listening skills as well as a positive responsiveness to the child is vital.

Helping Children Get Beyond Stereotypes (Open Question to Group)

Why do you think children show sex-role stereotyped play behaviors? How does one try to combat the gender stereotypes children learn through play, so that they may use their play to develop the full range of human potentials?

Help girls and boys play together

Children can be helped to get beyond gender stereotypes when they share their ideas, interests and skills together in play. If boys and girls play is make so different, than the opportunity for play to arise spontaneously is small. Sometimes boys and girls have a difficult time finding a common ground for play. Caregivers may have to get actively involved helping them find material and activities they can comfortably share.

Scenerio: Shanika had her Barbie dolls, and Rob had his G I Joe figures and army equipment. Each held their own dolls as they eyed those of the others. They looked as if they wanted to play together, but ending up sitting there. In a situation like this, a caregiver could help Shanika and Rob get started by offering some neutral play material which is not identified with either gender; such as playdough, bristle blocks or farm animals. .

Help both boys and girls expand their play behaviors

Girls and boys today may be missing out on important play experiences that contribute to their development. Boys and girls both need robust, active play where they feel emotionally strong and powerful and can develop large muscles.

Boys and girls both need opportunities to create structures with building materials. Encourage children to try out roles involving nurturing and express feelings of vulnerability and caring in play.

Look for ways to bring in more creative toys children can use along with commercial toys. Encourage building additions to commercial toys (such as a house for the dolls, using blocks, popsicle sticks and glue for furniture, wall paper etc.). Small group projects with legos, blocks and tinkertoys are other suggestions.

Children can all enjoy woodworking once safety and ground rules have been established and taught. A large paintbrush and a bucket of water make a great set-up for "painting a wall". All these activities will contribute to physical and psychological growth.

Children who favor TV-based war toys or games can be encouraged to expand their play and explore a wider variety of play toys. Caregivers should try to include suggestions for activities that involve nurturance and prosocial behaviors. For example, supply props for dramatic play that encourages nurturance and expression of feelings, (a doctor's kit, hospital dress-up clothes, baby dolls other than action figures).

Develop an awareness of sex-role stereotypes

Children will come to understand social gender roles only after many years of living because it is a very abstract concept. But even at an early age, caregivers help them to begin to think about this idea in their own ways and as it connects to their immediate experience.

Some of the most difficult sex stereotyping children see is on television or magazine advertisements directed at them. Toy ads depict for whom the toy is intended. Boys are shown playing with wheel toys, trucks, fighting and shooting, while girls are often shown combing dolls hair or grooming themselves. **These images are sexist.** Caregivers should have discussions with children on these issues as a child watches or discusses cartoons or talks about gifts for special events. Children between five or six years can easily grasp the subject matter about the images as they have sharing time or display this behavior in play. Questions and comments should be directed to what you and the child(ren) see and how it relates to their experiences

For example: "Look at this ad on Barbie dolls? Does she look like anyone you know? How is she the same or different from the people we know?" or "Look at the girls in this ad. Do you play like that? Do you look like that?"

As children get older, you can begin to talk about things like the fairness of only having males or females do certain things or use certain toys.

In addition to using this approach to talk to children about sex-role stereotypes on television and magazine ads, a caregiver can discuss those seen in movies, on toy boxes, and in real situations. If the child asks questions, try to follow the child's lead by asking new questions or making comments based on what the child has said and using the child's words for describing things.

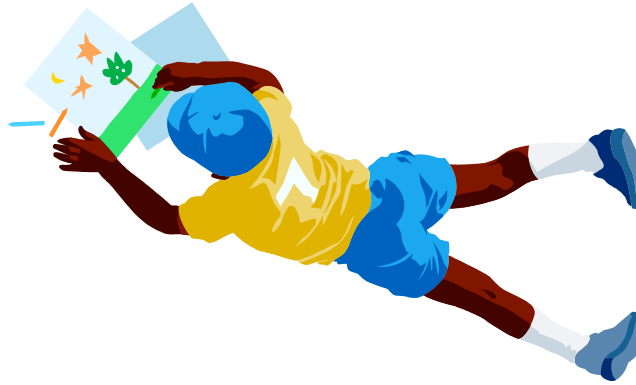
Presenting a variety of gender roles

Powerful messages about gender roles are conveyed to children through the media as well as in the family, school and the community. Children benefit from seeing parents or females assume a variety of roles at home, if the mother fixes things around the house or the father/ male friend helps cook and clean the house. This gives children information for mental categories they are forming about men and women activities and jobs. It is most helpful when caregivers have books or pictures displayed or accessible about males and females in non-traditional roles (a woman mechanic, female doctors, male beautician, etc.). Tell stories about girls and boys doing a variety of activities. Young children's thinking can be so compartmentalized, they don't always adjust their ideas to what they see, but caregivers must always point out situations unnoticed.

Conclusion:

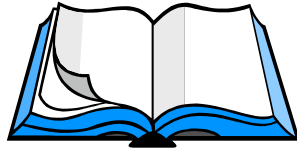
Form a circle. Go around and have each person name one or two things they might consider changing based on today's discussion

A Good Aesthetic/Visual Environment



There should be:

1. An abundance of images of all children, families and staff in the present program.
2. Images of posters and books of children and adults from all major ethnic/cultural groups in a community and the United States. These images should be visible regardless of the class population.
3. Stories, clothing, household items of people of many nationalities and different groups.
4. A balance of images of women and men doing jobs inside and outside the home in a variety of economic and work modes (e.g., beautician, pilot, mail carrier, doctor, factory worker telephone repair person etc.).
5. Pictures displayed of senior citizens of various backgrounds doing different activities and jobs.
6. Differently-abled children and adults in gender roles and wholesome activities.
7. Images of diversity in family styles: single-parent families, differently-abled families, extended families, grandparent and child families, inter-racial and multiethnic families, only to name a few.



Books

(What we should know)

Books should:

- Present accurate information and images of people.
- Reflect diversity in range of ages of people, nationality, culture and ethnic background, gender roles and ableness of all people.
- Show contemporary life in America (e.g., daily living, celebrations, jobs, family life, problem-solving issues relevant to children, etc).
- Non-traditional and traditional family roles and styles.
- Represent a variety of languages spoken.

HANDOUT # 3

**Training Activity:
(Optional)**



In groups of 3-4, challenge participants to discuss ways to create positive images in the lives of young children. Topics are given for in depth discussion.

Positive Images

Showing Mutual Respect

Giving Alternatives to Destructive actions

Teaching Conflict Resolution

Teaching Tolerance

Clarifying Values

Self -Esteem Development

Teaching Empowerment

Learning about Cultural Differences & Similarities

Learning about Racial Differences & Similarities

Living in Democracy

Developing Empathy
