

34 - The A's (Aware, Ally, Advocate, Activist)

Original Air Date: 11/17/21

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Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Host Dr. Shipley Speaker: Hello everyone and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. We will upload a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Host Dr. Heald Speaker: Twice a month, we will come to you with a 10-minute professional development that you can quickly listen to for new ideas to try.

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We are so excited to have with us today a colleague and a dear friend, Dr. Fitzpatrick. Dr. Fitzpatrick serves as the lead faculty for the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education Leadership at the University of Arizona Global Campus, a program that emphasizes leadership, innovation, and social justice in early childhood education.

We are so excited to have you here today, Dr. Fitzpatrick.

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Welcome, welcome.

So, the title of your session is *The A's, Aware, Ally, Advocate, Activist.*

Why is this near and dear to your heart, and why do you want to share this with others that are working with children?

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: You know, that's a great question. So, when I think about the importance of sharing this with other people who work with children, a part of it is because we were likely led to this profession because we wanted to help those around us, particularly the children that we interact with on a daily basis.

And in most cases, that means that we are either formally or informally advocating for individuals who may not be able to advocate for themselves.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Perfect. So can you tell us, you told us about awareness.

Tell us about the other three A's.

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: Okay. So, when we think about the A's, like I said, I personally use these stages.

So, you have these stages that, you know, they start off with your awareness, then you have your practice, and you have your modeling. And then there are these four A's associated with your self-awareness journey. And so just like I have, I label it awareness when it comes to the stages, the very first A on the advocacy reflection piece is also awareness.

So, I use that as the framework for my continuous improvement plan. So, when we think about what those four A's are, we are going to have, let me see if I can sum this up a little bit better. When we think about the four A's, we have awareness.

We have the ability to serve as an ally. We can be an advocate, or we can be an activist.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: As you're listing these, I can really start to engage in my own kind of personal journey and personal reflection.

And I'm, you know, envisioning how I'm going through stages or how I can possibly go through stages. Do you have any suggestions about this personal reflection that you've gone through to maybe help others?

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: Most definitely. So again, I'm going to reference these stages because I saw that they were a common theme.

And so, you know, I use that first awareness practice modeling as the framework for my continuous improvement plan. So as a parent and an educator, I'm really passionate about the promotion of conversations that impact change. And that's actually something that I mentioned during my last visit on your podcast.

And so, through those conversations, I really hope that people are driven to action. One way that I move from conversation to action, or ways that I hope to contribute through my advocacy work. So, some people hear that word, you know, advocate, and they say, Oh, no, I'm definitely not an advocate.

But I encourage you to really reflect on the many roles and responsibilities that you have. Oftentimes, as educators, like I said, we are either formally or informally advocating for the students, the families and the communities that we serve. But we may not always realize that as parents, we are often our child's very first advocate.

We could also be advocating for our parents, our peers, or even ourselves. But the advocacy may be in a different stage in each one of those scenarios. So, in one, we may be aware of the fact that we could make a positive contribution to a situation, but we may not know how.

So, my advocacy work always begins with a reflection of where am I? So, what is my advocacy awareness? And it begins with a few questions. And those are things like, am I aware of an issue? Am I an advocate for those impacted by an issue? Am I an advocate for myself or others related to an issue? Or am I ready to be an activist? And so next, I consider who or what is the focus of my advocacy effort? And why is it important to me or anybody else? And so, I kind of use those questions. I have a couple of others, but I kind of use those questions to fuel most of my reflection.

And so today, what I want to do is just kind of share what I found so that more of other people's time can actually be focused on their actual advocacy work. So, I'm sorry, go ahead.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: No, I was going to say, that's great.

I love the questions that you pointed out, because as a new teacher, you walk into this building and you really don't think about these things because you're just kind of a fish out of water and you're trying to just teach, right? So, if you had this first-year teacher and you were the leader or you were a peer mentor to someone, what are some things that you can tell like a first-year teacher or even a veteran teacher where to start? Like when school starts back in August or September, what do they need to do if they want to follow these four A's?

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: OK, so when I look at these, I look at the awareness. So let me pause for a moment and also say, even before we get to the stage of awareness, there are two stages. So, in the very beginning, sometimes we are completely unaware, or we can even be a bystander.

So, when we are unaware, we don't even notice that there is the need for a change or why it is being why it's being sought. So, we are likely not engaged or not interested. As a bystander, we don't act because we don't know how or why we should act.

But when we get into the first four A's, when we get into that awareness, which is again for me is the very first one, we start to notice that something is going on. We begin to understand the stories of those impacted and how it connects to us. So, a lot of people are concerned.

And, you know, if you're a first-year teacher, sometimes you're like, when am I aware? When am I an ally? When we're an ally, we build on the awareness, and we provide assistance and support. So essentially, we move into what I'm going to call the practice stage. So, remember a moment ago, I mentioned the stages, awareness, practice, modeling.

When we're an ally, we're now we're now practicing because we're actually providing assistance. And so, in essence, we're practicing our awareness because it's coupled with the act of assisting. Now, as a new teacher, sometimes you'll say, OK, I don't know where I fall on that spectrum.

I don't know, you know, am I an advocate? And so, I would first want to clarify that as an advocate, we've often moved beyond the awareness and the allyship to a more active stage where we aim to influence and increase support by understanding and using our privilege.

Sometimes that may mean we belong to the impacted group, which is why we also include the term self-advocacy. But essentially, this is an active support in spaces, places or ways that many of those impacted are not present.

For example, this could be our students. We're now advocating for our students in ways that they may not be able to do so themselves. And so, you know, like being an ally, advocacy is also a part of the practice stage.

But as an advocate, the ways in which we extend support become more visible than they were in any of the previous stages.

The last A, when we think about it, is where our voice leads to widespread, meaningful transformation. That's when we are introduced to the form of activism.

It's where we're modeling advocacy for others. In other words, you act on behalf of the actual change. And I know that's kind of hard to visualize.

So, I do want to say there's some really great resources out there that provide visual representation of what an awareness journey looks like. And so, you know, I'd encourage people to seek some of those out.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: As you're speaking the entire time, I just think about the importance of professional reflection and just being a reflective practitioner in education and just really continually growing and engaging in personal reflection and just really knowing our own personal awarenesses.

And I just think that you've really spoke to that through the A's. And I can't wait to hear more in your presentation. As we wrap up here today, do you have three takeaways that we're able to provide our learners with?

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: Yeah, when I think about the takeaways, the very first thing that I would suggest for anyone really is to really kind of examine where you are, what is important to you, what is advocacy for you? And so, when we say what is advocacy for you, when you think in terms of those four stages, you know, where can your time and talent best be utilized? Would it be in being aware? Is it in being an ally? Is it in being an advocate? Or have you participated in the practice enough to actually go ahead and be an activist? Also, you know, I think the important thing is to remember that when we're thinking of our advocacy work, it should always begin with self-reflection.

We should examine kind of what our role is in this thing. How does our perspective shape the work that we're going to do? And then lastly, you know, I'd just like to say that the terms are pretty, pretty common. But for some people, they're just now hearing these things and and they hear the term activist or even advocate.

And they say, you know, I don't think I'm ready for that. And again, you may not be an activist, but if there is an issue that is important to you, once you are aware of it, I can only hope that you won't remain a bystander.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Those are, Yeah, those really are. They're perfect. Do you want to leave our session with a challenge for the listeners?

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: Yeah: , that'd be great.

So, when I think about the challenge, again, I'm going to say, you know, really take the time to reflect and see where you are on your awareness journey. And, you know, if you look at your work, if you if you do the self-reflection and you realize that there are some opportunities where you can develop or extend your awareness of a particular issue, I really encourage you to dedicate the time to kind of, you know, find out what do I need to know so that I can move to the next stage of practice?

And once I've practiced and I've realized that I'm really passionate about something and I have an opportunity to propel an initiative forward, hopefully you will feel comfortable and empowered to do the modeling that it takes to really solicit those positive changes.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Thank you so much for joining us today, Tamecca, this was amazing and it's something that's so relevant.

And as we start to begin the new school year, I hope that others can really take this information since you have taken your journey through it and kind of model off what you're doing. So, thank you so much for being here.

Dr. Tamecca Fitzpatrick Speaker: Thank you.