

38 - Why What We Believe about Ourselves Matters

How Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Impact the Classroom

Original Air Date: 1/12/22

Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

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.

Don't forget to subscribe to this podcast to get notifications about future episodes.

Today, we have Dr. Amanda Andrews, who was recently hooded PhD in early childhood development and education and has over 15 years of experience working in early childhood education. She's a lifelong learner with a passion for teaching, and she's found her calling in preparing future generations for the field of development, education, and caregiving.

Welcome Dr. Andrews. Thank you for being with us today.

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: Thank you for having me.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: We are so excited that you're here, and I love the title of your session, which is *Why We Believe About Ourselves Matters, How Teachers' Perception and Beliefs Impact the Classroom.* Why has this become a passion of yours, and you wanted to talk to us about this today?

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: Well, we know from research that our perceptions and our beliefs about ourselves impact the choices that we make and what we do. I think within classrooms, it's incredibly important for teachers to reflect upon themselves and to know and understand that they have an impact, and what they do is extremely important in children's lives, especially in early childhood facilities and centers.

My background is in early childhood education, and so this is a topic that's near and dear to my heart because I was the teacher in the classroom, and I was working with children. There were some days when I felt that I was extremely successful, and there were some days when I felt defeated. Now with my research and what I've been learning through my doctoral program, I realize how important it is for us to support our teachers and to support ourselves in understanding that what we believe about ourselves, it matters, and it matters to those students in the classroom.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Dr. Andrews, I'm with you. I think that the more that we can build community and the more that we can reflect on what we are building, the greater our environments will be, and thus our learners will be more successful. So, can you tell us how to start building these classroom communities?

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: Well, okay.

So similarly, to how highly self-efficacious athletes perform, having an increased teacher self-efficacy, or TSE, it actually correlates with higher student achievement and overall outcomes. So, what we've learned from research is that

teachers who feel that they have this ability to control what happens to their students, they have the ability to make a positive impact in their lives, we are more likely to face challenges with a positive attitude, to look at that new curriculum and go, you know what, I've got this. You know, to look at those brand new faces when they come into the classroom and say, yeah, it's a new year and it's overwhelming, and maybe I have three more students than I had last year, but I can do this.

That creates a pattern within the classroom that helps children, that demonstrates and models a level of perseverance, also that leads to lower levels of burnout for teachers themselves. They spend more instructional time on cognitive and social emotional skills and spend more time communicating with parents. If you feel like you have more control over the classroom and control over what you're doing, you are more responsive to students, rather than being punitive when giving them feedback as well.

These are all things that go into basically how we can impact a teacher's positioning toward education, as well as their individual instructional activities and strategies. And that is what we know teacher self-efficacy does and how it impacts the classroom. So, the question from there is, how do we increase it? How do we create this feeling of classroom community and this feeling of teachers believing in themselves? Because we know now that it is important.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Amanda, I love this because it makes me think back to when I was a child, that my mother did this for me. So, then I think about how can we empower parents to feel the same way about their parenting style and helping their children learn at home? Did you ever work with families on being this person also?

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: You know, I actually really haven't. I did personally when I was a teacher myself.

We had a lot of family engagement nights, and I sat down with the parents, and I modeled a lesson. Simply helping your parents understand how we teach and why we teach, even with simple reading lessons or math lessons, was really informative for them. And they felt even more invested in their child's education, even at the pre-K three or four level, even at the toddler level.

So, I think family engagement, even we called them family engagement nights, and we held them, I think, twice a year, focused on certain specific strategies, gave them activities to take home to try. We modeled it within the classroom. We also gave them a little information about why we do what we do, because that's important, too.

It's for that buy in. So that they feel like they can do it as well. And we gave them some materials to go home.

It wasn't, it didn't cost a lot of money, but it more, it was time that we spent with them and their children were there and they were able to show them, you know, this is how we do this activity. Oh, I know this. I do this every day in class.

I can do this at home type of thing. And it's a way that we engage the parents so that the parents understood that they, too, are educators and they can do this. And so, it is important to make sure that the parents buy in as well.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: I agree with you 100 percent. I did the same thing. I called them family forums.

And I think that when we really help those families help their children, they're not scared to do it anymore. So, thank you for sharing that. So how do you ensure that your own self-efficacy is where it needs to be?

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: Well, there are, it's a good question.

It's a lot of self-reflection. And there are a wide variety of self-efficacy surveys that are available online. A simple Google search will lead you to some.

I've used the teacher self-efficacy scale when I was working with childcare educators from birth through pre-K-4 throughout the state of Texas, actually. And it's a simple survey. It's just a rating scale.

And it asks you in various scenarios, how do you feel? And it takes less than five minutes really to go through it. And then you can look at your pattern of answers and you kind of go from your gut. You want to finish it quickly because you don't want to really hesitate and think about things.

You want to just take your initial kind of snap feelings because those are your those are kind of your true your gut feelings. So, then you would look at the patterns within it. And it is like I said, it's a range.

It's a scale with a range from like one to nine. So, the higher obviously means you have a higher feeling of self-efficacy, the lower you are tending more toward the lower. So, you would find the areas within the questions where you have the lower levels of self-efficacy.

And those are potentially areas that you want to areas of improvement that you want to learn more about and maybe figure out where you struggle or why you're struggling with that and how you feel maybe you need additional training on it. So, for example, it could be as complex as cultural diversity or anti-bias teaching or social emotional development, or it could be as straightforward as, you know, I really don't feel confident when I'm doing my read alouds. I really don't feel confident in my parent conferences when I sit down with parents.

So, you would use that information to seek out or even create support or training for those areas of growth. This is also a call to administrators that this is important for you to know where your educators are feeling like they have control. It's that sense of agency.

So, if they feel really good with their parent interactions, then that's fantastic. But if they're really kind of struggling with maybe that social emotional development in the classroom, OK, maybe we need to have an entire, you know, all the pre-K teachers together for a day for professional development on social emotional development, social emotional activities, how we engage and integrate it into everyday teaching. So, it's really important to not only understand yourself, but also to help understand those around you.

That way, your entire team becomes more of a team, and you feel like you can be successful. And it brings us back to that being invested in the process.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: That's so great.

So, you really spoke to the fact that we are getting families involved and you spoke just a moment to the leadership and administration, how to get them to buy in support. Any suggestions for either leadership and or new teachers on how to just really kind of get this process started?

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: So, for leadership, one of the things that I strive to do as well is to remember that we're always learning and growing. So, I think it's important for us as educators to receive feedback as well as to give feedback.

So, for example, in my professional development trainings and support, I always ask for feedback about the training from the teachers that are there. I think it's important for me to remember that I am still learning, and I am still growing. And as educators, that we are still learning, and we are still growing so we don't get stagnant, or we don't get stuck.

So for new teachers out there, if they feel if their perception or their belief of themselves is maybe less than when it comes to a certain thing, the best thing for them to do is to have an open mind, to look to others or to reach out for other resources to help support you. So, for example, if I am really worried about my parent conferences that are coming up and I'm a new teacher and I have to sit down with parents, I might as a precursor go up to a veteran teacher or maybe my teacher mentor, a professor and say, hey, do you have any tips or tricks? What do you suggest? Do you even have a script?

Because the more preparation that we have, the better we feel about our chances of going in and getting the gold and winning, you know, or doing what we need to do. So it goes back to preparation, planning, and then also using all the resources that you have around you for support, whether it is mentor teachers, whether it's veteran teachers, you know,

whether it's Pinterest or Tteachers' Pay Teachers or other resources like that, because if that can take something, take some of the pressure off of you, you will feel better about it and you will go into it with a better headspace.

And that's really what self-advocacy is about. Albert Bandura taught us that the way we think about things and the way we approach obstacles is almost as important as, you know, that moment when we're actually facing obstacles. So, the mental aspect of it is almost important as like the physical aspect of it, too.

If we go into a classroom and we don't think we're going to be successful, we're not, you know, no matter how many wonderful toys and supplies and materials that we have out and available for students, something's going to go wrong. But if we walk into it that day saying, you know, I've got this, I can do this. We are much more likely to be successful and to notice the good things throughout the day, the positive things throughout the day.

And we are much more likely to show perseverance and to face challenges and be like, you know, I've got this, I can do this. And so that's what we want to build up within our own professional development communities, even with our pre-teachers as well, our pre-service teachers.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Yeah, that's so powerful.

That growth mindset is just really something we want to start in the beginning and just foster as we continue to learn and grow ourselves. So, Dr. Andrews, as we leave, can you leave our listeners with three takeaways?

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: Sure. Basically, the first one is there are a lot of available self-efficacy surveys that can help you identify maybe specific areas of improvement.

So, I highly suggest you look for just Google them, look for them and maybe learn a little bit more about self-efficacy and about how our perceptions and our beliefs impact others. It's something that seems common sense once you are keyed into it. But at the time, with everything that teachers have to do, sometimes we don't take that moment to really reflect on ourselves in our own positioning.

Secondly, teachers should be allowed choices for their professional development hours. Similarly to how we allow children to have choices within the classroom, it creates a sense of agency and a sense of control. We like to have that same kind of agency and control as educators ourselves.

So, we should be able to choose, you know, what kind of professional development we want to attend throughout the school year. And also, we should be allowed and encouraged to provide feedback about, you know, professional development programs, about any training or coaching that we also receive too. The feedback is important not only for us, but also for the trainers and the coaches that we work with.

And finally, a positive attitude and an increased feeling of control, the belief that you're capable, it's really powerful. And just remembering that, that it's super powerful for both ourselves and our students helps us understand and helps us to be aware that the impact of our beliefs upon our situations is crucial. It allows us to adapt and even reevaluate our choices so that ultimately, we're all successful.

And just being aware of that and cognizant of that is extremely important.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: I love the three takeaways that you just shared because I think it's so important, even if we're working with a colleague or as a leader, if we have leaders listening, we have to make sure that we're doing this for our people and encouraging and telling them that they can do it. So, Dr. Andrews, as we leave, is there a challenge that you have for our listeners?

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: Yes, here's my challenge for you.

I would like you to examine your own personal self-efficacy about specific topics like instruction or behavior management, assessment, parent interaction. Identify one area of growth in which you feel you need more training and

then seek out an opportunity to learn more about this topic so you can ultimately increase your self-efficacy. You could look for a training class, maybe read a book, join a professional learning community, you name it.

This I want you just to find one area where you do not feel like you have as much control as you really wish you had and work forward to increasing that sense of control and boosting your own self-efficacy. But yes, you can do it. We believe in you.

You should believe in yourself, too.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Exactly, 100%. Dr. Andrews, that was amazing.

And I hope that everyone that listened to this short session today is going to have a positive outlook as they face the day or face tomorrow. So, thank you so much for being here. We appreciate you.

Dr. Amanda Andrews Speaker: Thank you for having me.