

70 - How to Handle Change

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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. URL at www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Dr. Tisha Shipley: 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.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: Twice a month, we come to you with a 10-minute professional development that you can quickly listen to for new ideas to use today. Don't forget to subscribe to this podcast to get notifications about future episodes. Today we are so fortunate to have with us Dr. Amanda Andrews. Dr. Andrews is an adjunct professor and reading specialist, in Fairfax County Public Schools in Fairfax, Virginia. She relocated there after a long teaching career in North Texas and has been enjoying bringing a different perspective to the East Coast, as well as learning more about how others do education. Welcome Amanda, we're so glad you're here today.

Dr. Amanda Andrews: Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Hi Dr. Andrews, I'm super excited to talk about your title today because it's how to handle change and all of us at some point in our life or every single day have changed in some sort. So, I want to start from the very beginning, because new and veteran teachers are going to benefit from this topic. So, I want you to explain your broad topic and what we're going to be talking about today and why it's important to you.

Dr. Amanda Andrews: Sure, well change is inevitable, right? It's a part of growth. It happens every day in small ways and large. It can be exciting. It can be scary, overwhelming, fun, confusing, cathartic, sad, uncomfortable. I mean, it could be a myriad of emotions for different people. And it's something that I have been going through personally, obviously from moving from North Texas to Virginia, but also that everybody encounters every day. And change in the early education field can even just, it feels like it magnifies those feelings because as educators and caregivers, we're often more empathetic, and we want to ensure that we are utilizing best practices at all times, for our students and even for our children at home too. We are happy if we do have children, and that's a lot of pressure. It's a lot of pressure. Right. Especially in a field that is constantly changing because we are centered around humans and humans are not stagnant.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Right.

Dr. Amanda Andrews: Humans themselves are constantly changing. So, this is one area that has really hit home for me, especially recently with the science of reading movement, and instructional changes that are shifting in Virginia and just going from North Texas to Virginia and seeing the difference too. So, some of the changes that we might face in education is, you know, the best practices, what instructional practices are the best for these students? What does it mean to be developmentally appropriate? And even like the resources that we have access to, these things do change and evolve as we learn, as we learn new things. So many times, the changes are basically handed down from above and mandated. Do what we say, because this is quote unquote best practices. So, what do we do? Why is this important to talk about? Well, not only is change part of life, but all those feelings that you mentioned above will impact how we think and the choices we make. So, our perceptions impact our actions, how we respond to change directly affects our students, our coworkers, children's children, family, and other people in our lives. So, it's best for us to effectively manage change. That way we can cohabitate peacefully with those around us. So, I've come up with some ideas of what we can do to really help us understand and manage change in a positive way. And first, you have to give yourself grace. You cannot, or you should not feel guilty, about something you didn't know or understand, even though you do now. And even though you do feel guilty, because guilt is a part of life, you really should not, because you did not know something, or you did not understand it to the full extent. So that should help relieve some of your guilt and just remind yourself to give yourself grace. Would we make a child feel guilty, that they don't know how to tie their shoes when

they've never been taught, or basically just learned about it yesterday? Like, are we going to make them feel guilty about that? No, but the idea is, okay, we're adults. We do know we feel guilty when we hear that we're doing something, maybe not even wrong, but different and not the best idea. So how do we fight the guilt? Well, one of the ways that we can fight guilt is by looking for our passion, because our passion is power. It helps drive our choices and gives us motivation. So when you have something new that's coming down the pike, whether it's from administration, maybe the state department, wherever, that's saying that this is something that we need to take into consideration, and this is a change you need to make, either in your classroom or in your home or in your school, find some passion behind the new. Learn about it and find something that really drives you that you connect with. And that passion can become your power to make the change. It can give you some motivation. Along that same line, passion is power, but also knowledge is power. So, understanding the reason why for the change, why the change is happening, reflect and respond to it accordingly. So really giving yourself that knowledge will help equip you, to better make changes and to feel better as you are making those changes as well. The second idea that I have is, stop what isn't working. Just stop. Not all at once, because we just drop everything and run. We don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, but you can start with micro changes. So micro changes are just small, easy, quote-unquote, to adjust changes that are part of like an iterative process that leads to lasting, impactful change. This involves making a small change and then assessing the impact of that change. Was it a good thing? Was it a bad thing? Do I need to continue with this micro change, or can I add something else to the mix? The idea is we're pulling weeds and planting flowers. So, in our garden, if we are taking out the old, we're pulling those weeds, we also want to be doing something to better the garden. So, we're going to plant those flowers at the same time. This works in both our professional and our personal lives. So, examples could be changing your schedule slightly, maybe allowing for a little more time for that read aloud or for questioning after you're reading a book. Maybe it's trying one aspect of a new curriculum. Okay, word study is new to you. So, I'm going to try just a 10-minute chunk of time every day to highlight a quick word study lesson or even implementing one new activity a week, into your schedule just to try things out. Those small micro changes are much more manageable, and much more doable and don't give us that feeling of being overwhelmed. Basically, the idea is slow and steady wins the race, just like we learned from the tortoise in the hare. The last thing I also want to tell you guys, that will help you adjust to change and effectively manage change, is supporting each other. Humans change and adapt, but we also require connections to successfully live our lives. So, acknowledging the changes that are coming, how you feel about them, and doing this with others can help you. It helps release your emotions, such as frustration. It also helps you support an honest evaluation of how you're doing. It is tough for me personally, and I'm sure for many others, to be evaluated and to be put under that professional microscope. But I have learned to ask, like currently my assistant principal will come into meetings, and she'll sit in and she'll observe and add feedback and things, and I have learned to go out of my comfort zone, and to ask her when I see her afterwards, hey, was there any suggestions you can make about how I'm running the meetings, questions you might have, or ideas you could give me for this? And that small, just asking that question, oftentimes it really doesn't lead to anything. No, it was great. I'm so happy that I was there to see it. But other times it could give me a little nugget, and that's one of those micro changes that I've made in my own professional life, is asking for feedback. Also, when you are supporting other people, it provides time for you to problem solve together. So classroom communities, grade level communities, parenting groups, all of these resources give you basically kind of like a sounding board, to discuss change and why you feel hesitation or why you're excited about it, or this is the problem that I'm running into, what do you think about these options, or do you see this too in your school? And you get to bounce these ideas off of each other and hopefully come up with even more acceptable and exciting plans, for your school, your classroom, your home. And also, when you are working with others and supporting each other, it gives you a different person's perspective. So, when you're able to take somebody else's perspective on something, it might actually help with the sting of change. Because you can kind of let down those barriers and your emotions, as you release your emotions, you are in a better position to think about other people and take that kind of understanding from a different angle. And that can always, it can be tough, but it is ultimately one of the driving forces behind change, is understanding the why and the how. And sometimes that comes when we can talk to others about it, and we can understand their perspective as well. So basically, I say all that to say that change is hard, but there is no escaping it. So, we have to make the best of it, me included.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: I totally understand. And I love, you gave so many wonderful things for teachers, and that's who this is for. They're listening, they're veteran, they're new, they're aspiring. And we deal with families that need change too. But is there any little nugget that you can give those teachers in the classroom, who can help children that are going through

change? Because we know there's so many things out there, COVID, divorce, death, that children have a hard time going through it also, and we need to be respectful of that.

Dr. Amanda Andrews: And that's a great point. But even these small things that I've mentioned, can be good for children too. Helping them understand that change can be scary, and that's okay. You can be sad about change, and that's okay. It's okay to feel these emotions. But it's very important to get support and love from people that you trust. So, when we're talking to students about dealing with change, having them know that you are there to talk to them no matter what at any time is important. Also, keeping their routine in their safe place, especially in the classroom or in education, keeping their standard routine. That way they know that this one place, while everything else may be changing around them, this one place will always be here, will always have somebody to listen to, somebody to take care of them, somebody to care about them, and somebody to ask them how things are going or how they're feeling. That's really important. And that goes back to that supporting each other, and connecting with those children. But reminding them too that you're going to have a lot of feelings, and that's okay. And that kind of goes back into that social-emotional development as well. Let's talk about how we can express our feelings, in a positive way. What can we do? What can you take control back over? Well, you can control your day-to-day when you're here in school. You can control a letter that you write to your mom or dad, or maybe you can control a drawing that you're making because you need to release some frustration. Or when we get outside, you can run around the playground as fast as you can, just to get some of that frustration out of your body. So, providing kind of the same experience that we want to provide for other adults too, and even our family members, we can do for children just on their level.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: Dr. Andrews, that's so great. That we have so much in our mind now to just kind of think through as we work towards this integration, in a manner that might be different from what we'd experienced before, the building of walls when we're faced with change. So, it's kind of a different perspective. Can you leave our listeners with three takeaways?

Dr. Amanda Andrews: Sure. First, if you didn't know something, you didn't know something. So, try to keep your guilt in check, basically. You didn't know it. That was it, period. That's the end of that. Second, change is inevitable, and it can impact everything we do, positively or negatively, but it's our choice. It's our choice, how we move our bodies, what we say, what we think. It is our choice to focus in on certain things. So, understanding that can also help us change our perspective too. And finally, micro changes are essential to successful, lasting development. We have to start with micro changes. So not anything large, or huge or immediate, but small things that accumulate over time and become long-lasting changes.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Wonderful job. I appreciate you being here today. And for all of your wonderful knowledge, you gave us so many ideas. So, thank you so much, and we hope to see you again.

Dr. Amanda Andrews: Thank you. Have a great day. One thing I want to leave you with is this quote by Maya Angelou. "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better".

Dr. Tisha Shipley: That's perfect. Perfect for today's times too. Thank you so much. Talk to you soon.

Dr. Amanda Andrews: Thank you.