

88 - Best Practice – Best for Who?

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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 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 the podcast for notifications about future episodes. We are so thrilled to welcome one of our good friends and colleagues with us today who is back. Camille Lachar is with us. Camille has been in the field of early childhood education for 35 years and has worked in several roles. She's currently an adjunct faculty at several institutions of higher education. Her volunteer work includes serving on the board of the Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children and the Arizona Division of Early Childhood. Camille, thank you so much for being here.

Camille Lachar: Thank you so much for that great introduction and for inviting me to share a topic that I am so passionate about.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Well that's awesome because I wanted to talk to you about your title which is called Best Practice, but best practice for who? So I'm curious to find out all about this. So why did you choose this topic?

Camille Lachar: Well, I've been an advocate for quality programming forever and I think it all started back when I was in college going for my associate's degree. So that's like a million years ago and that's when I was introduced to the National Association for the Education of Young Children aka NAEYC or some people say NACY and that has been my guiding star throughout my 35 plus years career. And so for me it's just so important especially with the new revisions that have been made over the past few years and with the reframing of the term best practice.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: You know and I think that's really great because we want to make sure we're you know knowledgeable on this topic and we want to make sure we understand the topic. So why did NAEYC decide to actually make the change and what is the process in even going about that?

Camille Lachar: So whenever NAEYC is doing revisions to any of their position statements, now they're called foundational documents, it's a process and in particular with developmentally appropriate practice there have been several influences over the past few years that impacted that change. I think the first one was COVID. That opened everyone's eyes to equity and what that really means. During that time there was stress on different populations with regards to accessibility and especially on the early childhood workforce. You know and I always say it took a pandemic for society to realize that early childhood education is and early childhood educators are the essential workforce. So I think that was a major, that caused a major shift. Also around that time the murder of George Floyd that brought out the inequities that are impacting the black Americans. There was anti-Asian violence again that focused on inequities. So all of these things that happened in our entire society brought in to make these changes and to revise this statement. And the process is a little bit daunting but what NAEYC does is they develop a developmentally appropriate practices work group and that pretty much would oversee the work. Then they reach out to the early childhood workforce partners and it's put out for public comment. So there's a draft that's created and they put that draft out for public comment. So I know that this process went back and forth several times and I tried to comment and share my experience, my expertise, my comments, what I'm seeing, where I am. And they take all of this feedback, they look at it, the workforce, they look at this information, they see how much it impacts their draft, they make revisions, then they send it out again. And I want to say that with the DAP position statement, I mean, I think that there were five or six

times that it was put out for public comment. So it's a process. When they finally get it all together, then they introduce it. And this statement was introduced at the end of 2020. So it took a while, years. Okay.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Well, that's great. And I love when they come out with new and updated ones. But how does the language that you are using now, how did it change and how will that impact the work that we do with children and families?

Camille Lachar: So there were a lot of changes in this statement. And I will say, I guess I want to take us like a step back because NAEYC has five foundational documents. We know them as position statements. And all of these documents are, they're developed by NAEYC, but they're really created by us with this public comment process. And for me personally, the two that I use most often is the Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment, and then the Developmentally Appropriate Practices Statement. However, most recently, I've been referring to the relatively new Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education. And that's a newer statement, one of the most recent. And that's where a lot of the language, and the focus really was a shift in the terminology. So I think that for me, and again, this is just like a personal passion for me, the term best practice was the big shift. Because, I mean, you've been in the field a while, and people who have been in the field, even not for a long time, best practice is just like part of our lingo. Like we always say it, you know, and it's part of our professional jargon. And it supported our teaching strategies. So for me, that was the big shift. Although there were other, you know, there was additional terminology put in there. And the foundational documents all like play on each other. They can be used individually and separately. But you know, it's like child development. One domain impacts another. That's the same way these foundational documents are. One impacts the other, and they reference, there are references to each other.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Right. Well, they're so important. And I know as an early childhood teacher, I went and looked all the time at the green DAP handbook for NAEYC, and made sure that I was doing exactly what they said. And I tried to incorporate all those standards into my classroom, and I did that regularly. So out of anything that you would want our audience to know, what is the most important thing about this?

Camille Lachar: Well, the most important thing is not the actual statement, but it's the mindset. Because when there's a shift in jargon, you could say it, and that's a process in and of itself to change the way you speak. But it's the mindset around why you're making those changes. And the mindset is reflective of culture, and it's respecting differences, and looking at differences as a positive and not a negative, looking at differences as not something that has to be changed, or not something that's not okay. And I think that with that mindset, you can embrace the change in terminology. And when you embrace that, I think that's how you make a major impact on society.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: Great.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Okay, what are your major three takeaways that you want our listeners to know?

Camille Lachar: Language matters. Definitely language matters. And we are role models, and so the language that we use matters. And that's one.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Okay.

Camille Lachar: I want everyone to know that, well, that the developmentally appropriate practices and all of the NAEYC foundational documents can be found on their website. So if you're not familiar with them, I would hope that people would take a look at them. And that differences are strengths and not challenges. But the other thing, too, I think that's really important is the self-reflection and understanding who we are. And when we're making decisions for young children and their families, which is something we do all the time, all day. That's how we spend our day, is making decision after decision after decision. Those decisions should be unbiased. And I think all of that plays into the reasoning behind the shift in best practice and in that terminology.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Perfect. Okay, what is one challenge you would leave our listeners with?

Camille Lachar: Oh, a challenge? Well, can I leave you with two challenges?

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Sure, go for it. We'll take as many challenges as you want.

Camille Lachar: Okay. So the first challenge is instead of saying best practice, if you can try and just use maybe effective practice or appropriate practice, that would be the beginning of the shift. And the other challenge is try to use people

first language. And if you're not familiar with people first language, that is really, people first language is describing, is the understanding that we are all people first, right?

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Right.

Camille Lachar: So we don't have in our classroom autistic children, but we have children who have autism. And even though it's just like a transfer of words, that is a major difference. That is a major difference because you're not using the ability, disability, characteristic descriptor to explain or identify who we are. So those are my challenges.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Right. Okay. Well, I love it. And as always, Camille, that was wonderful. And we thank you for being here. And we can't wait to chat with you again.

Camille Lachar: Okay, well, thank you so much. I really appreciate the opportunity.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Thanks, Camille.

Camille Lachar: Okay, thanks. Bye.