FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

KC Ready 4s Multicultural Education Newsletter

The KC Ready 4s Funds of Knowledge Newsletter is a new publication for the Early Childhood Education sector.
The name is intentional: to honor the funds of knowledge each person contributes to the teaching and learning environment.
We welcome your insights and encourage you to submit questions, future topics for consideration,
and things you do to create inclusive and equitable learning spaces for all.
Please submit to: mpeake@kcready4s.org

Co-Creating an Affirming Pre-School Community

Consider...

Referring to the classroom and/or school as a "community" rather than a "family".

Co-creating the community with staff, children, and families.

Levels of vulnerability experienced by others when asked to share familial and cultural information.

Structures, systems, policies, and procedures that are *community* minded.

Researching and learning effective strategies to co-create a community in which all can contribute and are welcome.

Avoid...

Declaring that the classroom is a "family" and then continually correcting interactions based upon one's own definition and expectations of "family".

Singularly creating a community without shared input from those with various experiences and identities.

Misalignment by stating one thing yet doing another.

A fixed mindset and continuing to do what has always been done without intentional conversations with others to evaluate relevancy and impact.

Embrace...

Using intentional and thoughtful language within a classroom/school.

Being a sincere, inquisitive learner when co-creating safe, affirmative, and supportive shared spaces and interactions.

Understanding that assimilation is not equitable or inclusive when co-creating community.

A "rookie" mindset when meeting new people, starting a new school year, and/or learning about new ways of being and doing in a community.

Exploring Resources for Learning

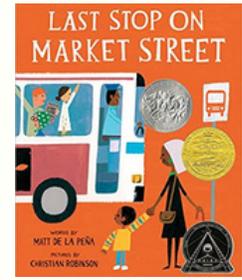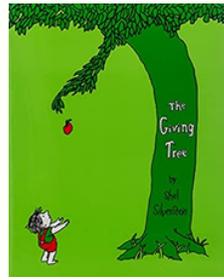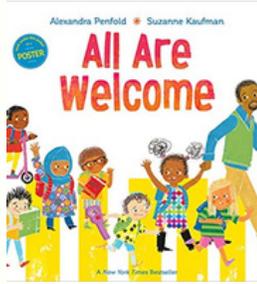## Books to support discussions about creating welcoming communities

Image description L-R: front cover of the books: *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold (Author), Suzanne Kaufman (Illustrator), T*he Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein (Author), *The Big Umbrella* by Amy June Bates (Author, Illustrator) and Juniper Bates (Author), and *Last Stop On Market Street* by Matt de la Peña (Author), Christian Robinson (Illustrator)

Self-Reflection Activity

1. How do you define community? How might this be different or similar than how you define family?
2. What personal experiences and identities contribute to your expectations of community and family interaction?
3. How do you feel when someone new inquires about your family and cultural traditions? Does it depend upon who, where, why, and how they are asking? How might this be experienced by children and families?
4. When you consider your classroom environment, ask what perspectives and experiences were sought when creating the classroom environment and culture? Can you identify caring and affirming aspects for all?
5. Engage others: communicate with staff, colleagues, families, and children about what they think makes a productive, safe, and welcoming classroom environment and community.
6. Consider **co-creating** classroom community expectations and revisit policies and procedures to check for alignment.

Educator Scenario: Referring to a classroom or school as a "community" instead of as a "family"

Helpful: Acknowledge that this may be a new way of thinking about classroom and school environments and cultures.

Consider: Communities typically have common expectations, and equity-minded communities create opportunities for input from all within the community. Families have unique and personal expectations and ways of interacting within the familial unit that may not always manifest in ways that are understood by those outside the family. Often these misunderstandings can be perceived through a deficit framework, leading to undesired outcomes and result in exclusion.

Internal growth framework: "I have an opportunity to co-create a shared space and expectations of the space with all who occupy it."

Comment: "Our classroom is a community space for all to learn and grow. I want to learn more about your ideas about how to make that happen for everyone who enters this space, creating affirmations and expectations that inspire safety, learning, and joy for all. Please assist me with co-creating classroom community affirmations and expectations."

Not helpful: Sending confusing messages. Referring to the classroom space as a "family" and then correcting or punishing behaviors that are embraced in a child's family. This can be confusing for children and frustrating for educators.

Push back on considering: The idea that family interactions *"should"* align with a specific model and that anything that varies is deficient in some way.

Internal fixed framework: "In my family, children are to be seen and not heard. That is how things are going to be in this classroom."

No comment or too much comment: Ignoring that there is not a need to have conversations about creating classroom environments and cultures that inspire and support the learning and growth of all children in safe and productive shared spaces.

Adult Skill Building and Guidance Resources

https://www.edutopia.org/article/building-joyful-classroom-community

https://www.edutopia.org/article/building-supportive-classroom-community-early-childhood

https://www.edutopia.org/video/morning-meetings-building-community-classroom