



Leading anti-bias early childhood programs: A guide for change by Louise Derman-Sparks, Debbie LeeKeenan and John Nimmo

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This book focuses on the key role education leaders can play in promoting inclusive practices, equity, and social justice in early childhood education. It is aimed at those already familiar with anti-bias education, in particular, at education leaders who aspire to bring about change and a more just world. The book comprises ten chapters, each covering a different aspect of anti-bias education, and is a useful companion to the earlier work of Derman-Sparks (2010), *Anti-bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*.

The authors, anti-bias consultant Louise Derman-Sparks and early childhood directors Debbie LeeKeenan and John Nimmo, invite early childhood education leaders to consider ways they might build and sustain anti-bias education programmes in their early childhood settings. It offers valuable guidance on how to bring about both structural and individual change and provides a conceptual framework, strategies for working with staff and families, and a range of practical tools to enable education leaders to achieve these objectives.

Chapter one begins with the authors sharing their vision of a world where all children's identities are embraced and where children are empowered to become active participants within their communities. It goes on to set out the conceptual framework and key concepts of anti-bias education and outlines four core goals for guiding practice, each with diversity and equity at their core. Chapter two then looks at what current research reveals about key aspects of anti-bias leadership, along with core attributes of effective programme leaders. Chapter three builds on this and outlines ways early childhood leaders might 'read' the programme in order to bring about change, including ways to gather information about those involved and the contexts of the programme. Chapters four and five look at fostering reflective anti-bias educators and include useful strategies for working with staff and families. These chapters provide several engaging activities that will enable anti-bias leaders to get to know their staff and build collaborative partnerships with families.

Chapter six moves on to professional development strategies for deepening and sustaining teachers' anti-bias knowledge and skills and provides practical suggestions on ways teachers can integrate anti-bias education into the daily curriculum. A key feature of this chapter is discussion on how programme leaders can facilitate teachers' work with families, which builds nicely on the material covered in the previous two chapters. Chapter seven then provides advice on how to manage and negotiate the conflicts that will inevitably arise around change and suggests ways to build a foundation for productive conflict by turning this discord into growth.

Chapters eight and nine focus on assessment, beginning with ways programme leaders can document the shift towards anti-bias change in their settings. Chapter nine then looks at the challenges associated with the increasing use of standards and assessment tools in early childhood education and provides clear advice on ways leaders can work strategically with these tools, whilst moving towards their goal of an anti-bias programme.

Chapter ten concludes the discussion with personal reflections from the authors on how to sustain an anti-bias vision. These highlight the need for anti-bias education leaders to find success in small changes and the authors pinpoint this as the most important principle underpinning anti-bias leadership and change.



This thoughtful book makes a valuable contribution to the early childhood education sector in that, unlike other books on anti-bias education, it focuses on the role of the leader in initiating an anti-bias approach to early childhood education. The passion of the authors in achieving this goal is evident and the inclusion of their personal experiences grounds this work in the reality of day-to-day educational leadership practices and relationships.

In harmony with its anti-bias objective, what stand out most in this book are the strategies to enable both leaders and teachers to negotiate disequilibrium and conflict as they move towards change. These strategies help educators to be realistic about the challenges the shifts will present, to embrace uncertainty, and to keep their focus on the long term outcomes. In this sense, the practical activities for working with families and staff, along with the conceptual framework and the examples of best practice, provide invaluable support in facilitating this process.

Overall, a powerful and motivating book that provides practical guidance, support and inspiration for education leaders seeking to meet the ethical challenge of providing anti-bias education programmes in their early childhood settings. This book is a 'must read' for leaders interested in promoting fairness, equity and justice in their education programmes.

References

- Derman-Sparks, L., LeeKeenan, D., & Nimmo, J. (2015). *Leading anti-bias early childhood programs: A guide for change*. New York, USA: Teachers College Press and NAEYC.
- Derman-Sparks, L., & Edwards, J.O. (2010). *Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves*. Washington DC, United States: National Association for the Education of Young Children.