

# Supporting Professionals and Young Minds: Creating Effective Libraries for Early Childhood Educators

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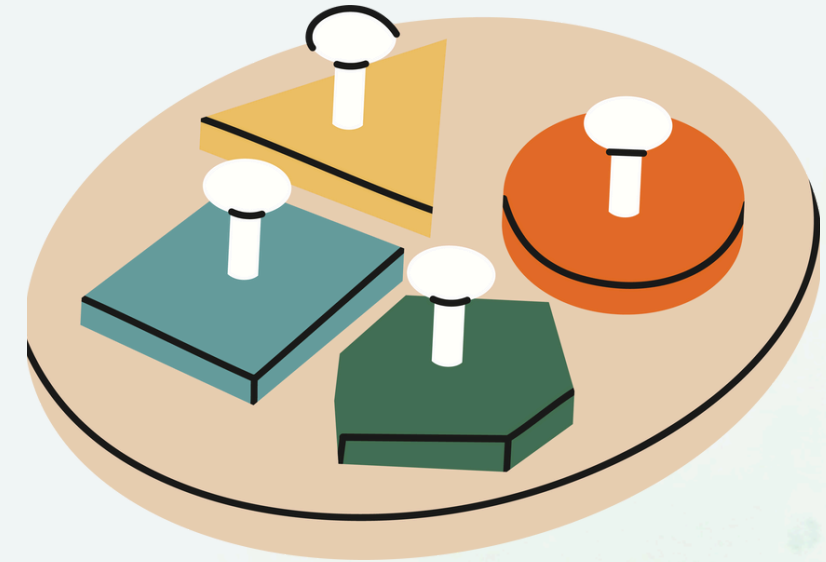
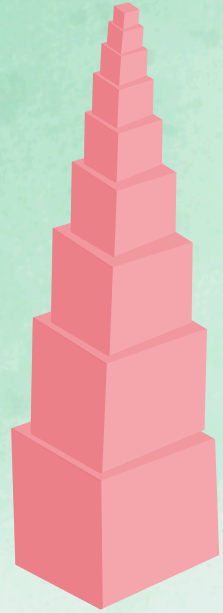
University of Washington

MLIS Capstone 2024





# The University of Washington Children's Center at Portage Bay



The UW Children's Center at Portage Bay first opened in January 2017. It is a childcare center/school that supports children from 3 months old up to 5 years old. We follow Montessori and Resource for Educators (RIE) curricula. We have also been fortunate to have music and art specialists support our children!

With a school that consists of 9 classrooms (2 infant, 3 toddler and 4 preschool), there are a multitude of needs to be met. Socially, emotionally, physically and environmentally.

Our program focuses on building independence skills, fine motor, gross motor, practical life, and eventually academic based works for the older children.



**BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER**



# Overview & Opportunity



As an Early Childhood Educator over the last 7 years, I have worked at the University of Washington's Children's Center at Portage Bay since we opened in January 2017. I have been an assistant, a lead teacher, an assistant director, and now the Head of School at Portage Bay.

The curriculum of the school is mainly focused on Montessori and Resources for Infant Educators (RIE).

While these curricula offer a foundation in developmental milestones - the school has been missing curricula that are dedicated to social-emotional development and anti-bias curriculum. It became evident during and in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 that children were and continue to need more support to navigate social-emotional interactions and the world around them. They also need support in starting to learn about social justice, fairness, equality and inclusivity.

But to even consider doing this work with children, we have to start with the training and education of our teachers.

To be successful, we needed to evaluate where we stood, what sorts of resources we had available and then brainstorm how to bring it into the classroom effectively.



# What is Anti-Bias Curriculum for Early Childhood Education?

Anti-Bias curriculum focuses on 4 main goals (outlined below, directly from NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)), that aim to support children in building positive self identity, understanding fairness/unfairness, and ultimately the ability to stand up for themselves and others.

## Identity

Teachers will nurture each child's construction of knowledgeable, confident, individual personal and social identities. Children will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

## Diversity

Teachers will promote each child's comfortable, empathetic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds. Children will express comfort and joy with human diversity, use accurate language for human differences, and form deep, caring connections across all dimensions of human diversity.

## Justice

Teachers will foster each child's capacity to critically identify bias and will nurture each child's empathy for the hurt bias causes. Children will increasingly recognize unfairness (injustice), have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

## Activism

Teachers will cultivate each child's ability and confidence to stand up for oneself and for others in the face of bias. Children will demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.



# What is Social-Emotional Curriculum for Early Childhood Education?

Social emotional curriculum focuses on supporting children with understanding, labeling, and regulating their emotions. It is also a curriculum dedicated to helping children navigate challenging situations and social interactions. Examples include:

when they are in a disagreement with a peer, setting goals for themselves, connecting with peers with empathy, setting boundaries for themselves, talking about their feelings and so much more.





# Key Project Objectives

There were 3 distinct needs to consider on this journey of creating sustainable ways to introduce, support, and empower teachers and students with social-emotional and anti-bias curricula.

The three main project objectives were:

1. Resources for educators specifically around anti-bias and social-emotional curricula needed to be researched and acquired for educator usage in the Portage Bay Community. This would allow teachers to look within the school for help with their classroom curriculum instead of relying on outside support especially when planning time is a major factor.
2. Ideally this starting list of resources can be shared with sister schools so they can also have a baseline of resources for these curricula readily available. It can serve as the beginning of a streamlined process of evaluating current materials and determining when new books/resources are needed for the collection.
3. An anti-bias and social-emotional focused collection needs to be created and maintained for a younger audience to be able to navigate with teacher support.



# Deliverable

Assess the information needs of educators and determine where the school (and company) stands and create a new set of information materials for curriculum use

What is your position at Portage Bay? \*

Assistant Teacher - assigned to a classroom

Float Assistant Teacher

Lead Teacher

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What kinds of books do you currently have in your classroom? \*

Books with anthropomorphic characters including talking animals

Books that talk about gender identity

Books with little to no words

Non-fiction books - variety of topics

Fairy Tales & Folk Tales

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What kinds of Professional Development books do you currently use in the classroom? If none - write N/A

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

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If there were a collection of books for professional development, what topics would you like to be included? \*

Anti-Bias Education

Social-Emotional

Toileting

Montessori Philosophy

RIE (Resources for Educators) Philosophy

Not interested in professional development books

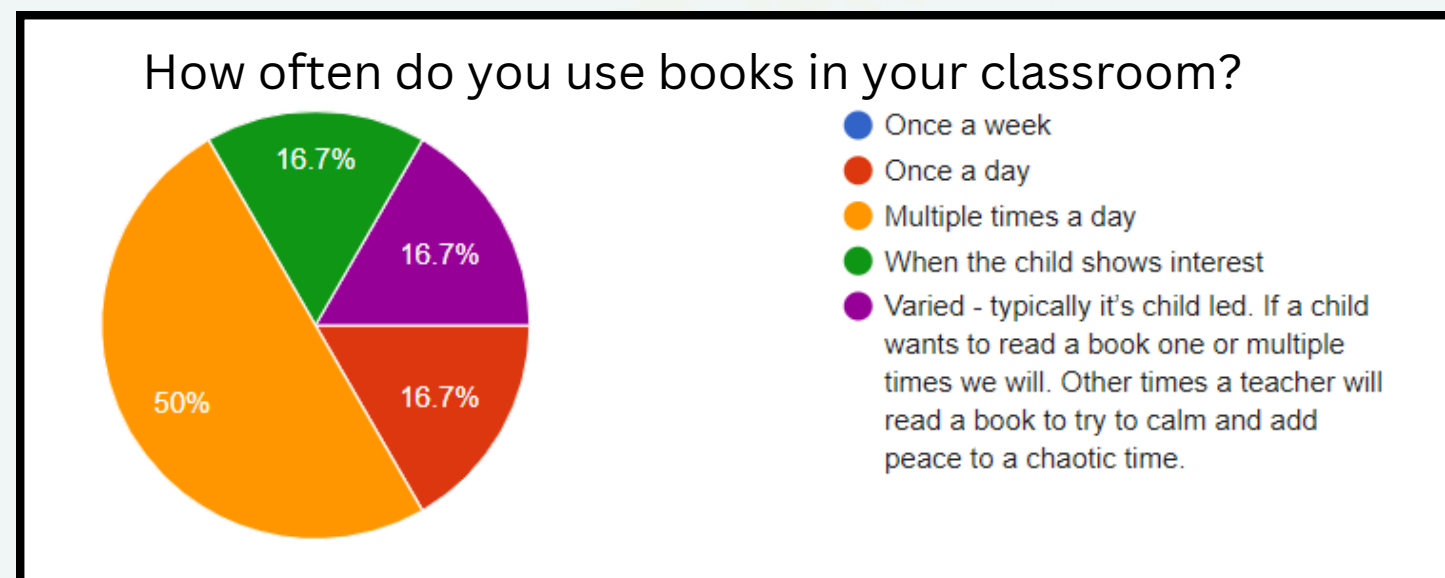
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you have a professional development book that you would highly recommend? If so - what is it called and who is the author?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Before being able to buy books for the professional development library, I needed to find out what the leads were struggling with when it came to implementing curricula in the classroom. While the focus on the Professional Development library is anti-bias and social-emotional curricula, I felt like it was also important to make sure that there are proper resources for Montessori and RIE as well.



To gather this information, I created and shared a survey with teachers to determine their interests when it come down to having materials to educate themselves and how often they use books in their classrooms.



# Deliverable

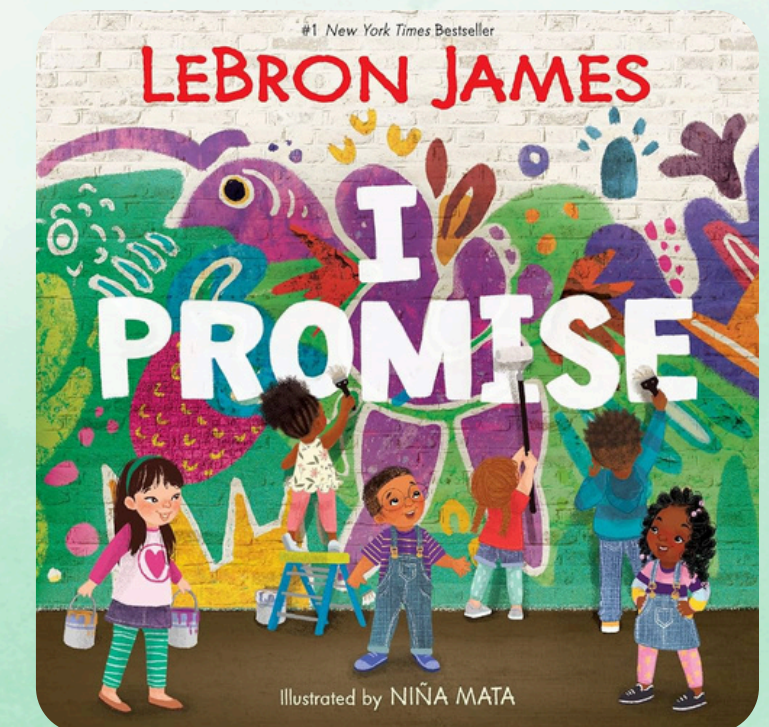
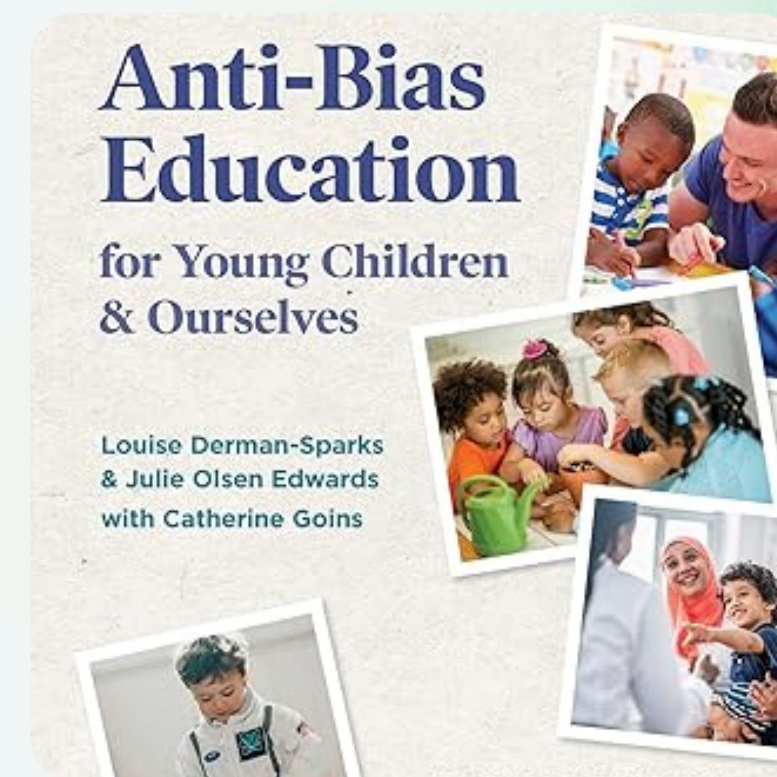
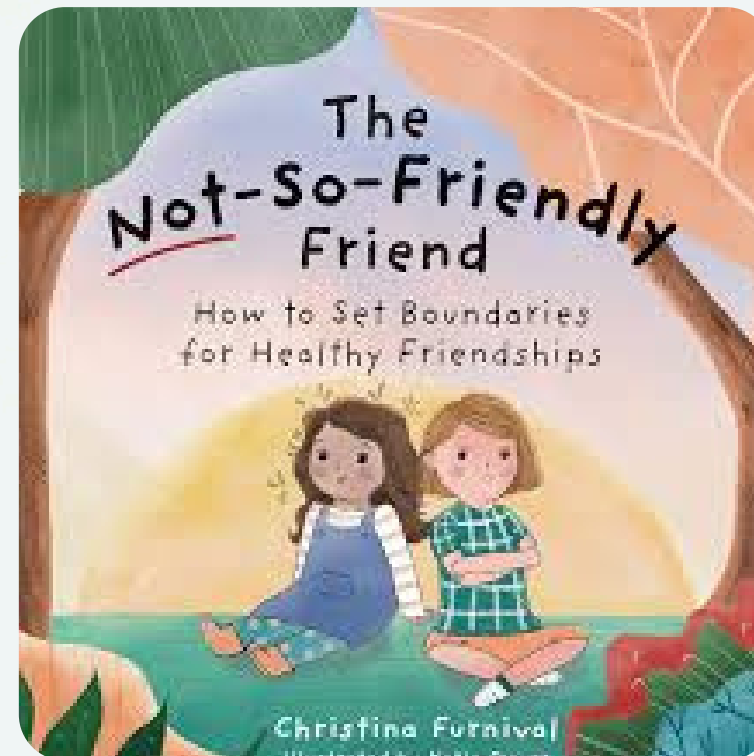
Build and share a portfolio that will include the criteria for collection management with a focus on Social-Emotional and Anti-Bias curriculum

With the initial feedback from the teachers, I was able to create criteria for determining whether a book in our collection (both Professional Development and School-wide) fit into appropriate, meaningful, accurate, and inclusive materials. This criteria included information that should be avoided.

With this criteria, I researched books that would meet these expectations. Examples of criterion and books that fit into that category for both collections can be found below:

## Common Harmful/Undermining Stereotypes

- Strong, independent girls and women are “manlike”
- Book-loving or nonathletic boys and men are “effeminate”
- Latino men talk funny, are lazy, gang members, or wear oversize sombreros
- Latina women are earth mothers or subservient
- African American men are gang members, oversexed, or underemployed
- African American women are too independent, oversexed, or “welfare moms”
- LGBTQ people are invisible or sexual predators
- Poor people are invisible or depicted as passively needing help from others
- American Indians live in teepees, carry bows and arrows, or are half-naked in winter
- People with disabilities are not independent or are to be pitied
- Arab and/or Muslim men are terrorists
- Arab and/or Muslim women are voiceless and passive
- All Muslims are Arab





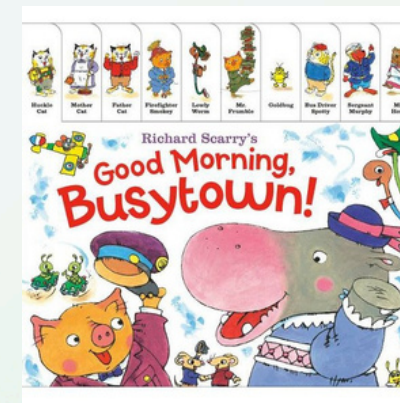
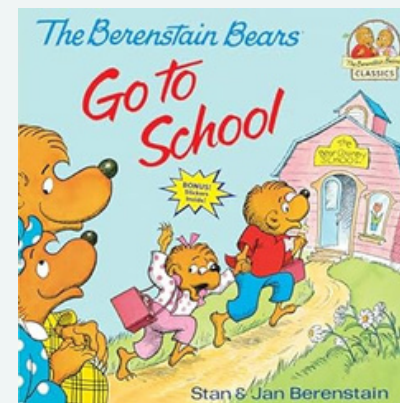
# Deliverable

## Analyze existing collection and remove outdated, unsupportive material

Once I knew what we were looking for with the criteria created with the help of the lead teachers - it was time to look at our existing collection and weed books that didn't serve the vision or mission of our school and program.

This took place over the course of many weeks and the weeding process was completed with the help of teachers and admin. We started with damaged/unusable books that had been a part of the collection. If the damaged book we removed fell into a category of books we wanted to keep, we ordered a new copy of it. We then started removing books with inappropriate terminology, racist representations of cultural events/holidays, and anthropomorphic animals.

Examples of books removed from School Wide Collection



The reason we remove anthropomorphic animal books is that young children are still learning about the world and about what is real and what is not. Often an important message in a book, for example, 'treat others with kindness' is ignored by how cool it is for animals to talk in a story!

We started with a collection of 315 books and weeded it down to 200 books.



# Deliverable

Create a new organizational system for an existing collection

The collection at Portage Bay was expansive. Over the years, we have had families donate books every so often, not looking at the context of the books. While this created many options for families and teachers to choose from, many of the books themselves didn't fall into what our ideal library would include. With the help of the teachers - we were able to break down the categories for the library and their respective colors for easier organization:

-  Green: Social - Emotional Focus
-  Blue: Anti-Bias Focus - includes books about cultural celebrations
  -  Yellow: Non-Fiction
  -  Red: General Fiction



# Solutions and Findings

Throughout this process, I was able to determine that there is a direct correlation between the comfortability of teachers incorporating anti-bias curriculum and social-emotional curriculum and how much knowledge/training they have on the subjects.

I started introducing teachers to the books acquired for the Professional Development library, and once they reviewed the materials provided, they felt more confident in finding ways to incorporate lessons in the classroom that explored ways to support positive self-identity, empathy, justice, and recognizing diversity (in language, cultural identities, household demographics, et cetera).

Additionally, as I was researching materials for our school, I also realized that there will continue to be more research over the years and we will need to find a way to regularly check out materials to ensure they are up to date and follow the standards of NAEYC and other Early Childhood expectations.



## Next Steps

I plan on sharing my list of criteria with other schools in our network in hope of supporting a stronger and cohesive anti-bias and social-emotional curriculum. I plan on doing this during a Director's Meeting that we have each month. Ideally, I would like to do this for our June meeting.

I would like to create a system to annually review books for the Professional Development library to make sure that information is up to date. This requires help from other admin and potentially teachers.

For our school wide, student collection, I will teach the children, families and teachers the labeling system so they can begin returning books to their respective locations.



# Thank you!

Thank you to the teachers and families of UW Children's Center of Portage Bay for being kind, supportive, and always willing to lend a helping hand. A special thank you to the Steidl family for designing the back of our library shelf - which is featured as part of the logo for the Capstone Archives Deliverables.

Thank you to Shawna Taylor, my sponsor, who is just as passionate about anti-bias and social-emotional curricula. You inspire me to continue to work towards creating a world of well-rounded citizens.

Thank you to Professor Chance Hunt and my TA Mandi Harris for being willing to answer any questions, offering insights and being supportive during the Capstone process.

Thank you to everyone who has offered hugs and words of encouragement when things were tough!