



Understanding Diversity: What's a Parent to Do?

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There is no question that U.S. society is becoming increasingly diverse. This diversity spans race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, geography, educational background, ability (cognitive, social, physical), religion, and language. Schools across the country are not exempt; they are also increasingly diverse. What is the role of parents in helping students understand diversity in order to live meaningful lives?

When one thinks about diversity, he or she might begin by looking inward rather than outside of the self. Each of us brings layers of diversity to particular social contexts, and acknowledging this diversity can be an important precursor to living and learning with others in a school community and beyond.

In this article, I provide what can be considered some strategies or suggestions for parents to help their children more deeply understand human diversity. A central theme of the article is captured in the title: **What's a Parent to Do?** Perhaps more than a set of strategies or suggestions is the importance of parents having the mindset to lead their children in ways that are welcoming and supportive of all people in a school community. In some instances throughout this article, I have

intentionally shared personal stories to help elucidate the points made. I have included these narratives to (1) suggest that I am consistently and persistently learning about myself and others; (2) emphasize the richness and possibility embedded in personal experiences; and (3) invite others to think about their own stories related to diversity and how those narratives have shaped who they are and what they believe thus far about themselves and others.

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Winter Celebrations:

Learn about unique traditions, celebrations, and holidays that occur around the world during December and January.

Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. It falls on different dates each year, between January 21 and February 20. Visits to friends and family take place during this celebration. The color gold is said to bring wealth, and the color red is considered especially lucky. The New Year's Eve dinner is very large and includes fish, noodles, and dumplings.

Christmas

Christmas is celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas in the United States brings together many customs from other countries and cultures. Around the world, family members help to decorate the tree and home with bright lights, wreaths, candles, holly, mistletoe, and ornaments. On Christmas Eve, many people go to church. Also on Christmas Eve, Santa comes from the North Pole in a sleigh to deliver gifts; in Hawaii, it is said he arrives by boat; in Australia, the jolly man arrives on water skis; and In Ghana, he comes out of the jungle.

Eid Al Adha, the Festival of the Sacrifice

Eid Al Adha is celebrated by Muslims on the 10th day of the month of the lunar calendar (In 2008, it fell on December 8) to commemorate the willingness of the prophet Ibrahim (or Abraham) to sacrifice his son for God. Today, Muslims sacrifice an animal—usually a goat or a sheep—as a reminder of Ibrahim's obedience to God. The meat is shared with family, friends Muslims or non-Muslims, as well as the poor members of the community.

Hanukkah

Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah, a holiday honoring the Maccabees victory over King Antiochus, who forbid Jews to practice their religion. For eight nights, Hanukkah is celebrated with prayer, the lighting of the menorah, and food. A menorah has nine candles, a candle for every night, plus a helper candle. Children play games, sing songs, and exchange gifts. Potato pancakes, known as latkes in Yiddish, are traditionally associated with Hanukkah and are served with applesauce and sour cream.

Kwanzaa

On December 26, Kwanzaa is celebrated. It is a holiday to commemorate African heritage. Kwanzaa lasts a week during which participants gather with family and friends to exchange gifts and to light a series of black, red, and green candles, which symbolize the seven basic values of African American family life that are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

New Year's Day

New Year's Day is the first day of the year in the Gregorian calendar on January 1. There are often fireworks at midnight to celebrate the new year. Commonly served in the southern part of the United States, black-eyed peas are thought to bring luck and prosperity for the new year, greens (usually collards) bring wealth, and pork because pigs root forward.

Three Kings Day

At the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas comes a day called the Epiphany, or Three Kings Day. This holiday is celebrated as the day the three wise men first saw baby Jesus and brought him gifts. On this day in Spain, many children get their Christmas presents. In Puerto Rico, before children go to sleep on January 5, they leave a box with hay under their beds so the kings will leave good presents. In France, a delicious King cake is baked. Bakers will hide a coin, jewel or little toy inside it.

Diwali

The time of Diwali is one of the most festive and beautiful times of the year. Diwali literally means a "Row of Lights". It is a time filled with light and love, a time when Indians all over the world rejoice. Diwali is celebrated on the darkest night of the darkest period, yet it is a celebration of light! Diwali is heralded as the triumph of good over evil.

Ramadan

The holiest month of the year for Muslims. During Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims all over the world unite in a period of fasting and spiritual reflection, renewal and family bonds. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "For the person who is fasting, there are two moments of happiness and rejoicing; when he breaks his fast, and when he meets his Lord." The actual date will depend on the sighting of the crescent moon that marks the beginning of the Islamic month.



Barrington Academy will be closed in observance of the holidays— December 24th (4pm) & December 25th

Four Suggestions on What Parents Can Do (continued from page 1)

Broaden Social Network Comfort Zones

An important step to deepen understanding about diversity is to socialize with people whom you may not normally (or naturally) associate. The idea that we learn best from those who challenge our own ways of thinking and being in the world is relevant when thinking about diversity. The point is that broadening social networks can be important to the ways in which we better understand ourselves and others. Invite new friends over to dinner parties or simply set up opportunities for coffee with other parents in your child's classroom.

Engage in Real Conversations About Diversity

As I was growing up, my parents talked directly and explicitly about matters of diversity with my siblings and me—namely, we talked about race. During the early years, conversations were more superficial. For instance, I was known to interrupt adults during conversations when they used language like “the Black man” or “the White woman.” I queried: “What Black man?” or “What White woman?” My curiosity forced my parents into answering questions about race that they probably were not ready to answer. Later, as I grew older, the conversations grew more intense. For instance, we talked about my impressions of a high school teacher, who, I felt, was teaching solely to the White population of students in our class. My experiences as

well as those of my parents drove real conversations about diversity with me and would not allow my parents to espouse a color- or culture-blind discourse in our home. In essence, real talk about diversity allows for expanded cognitive and social consciousness that can make a difference in the actions of those in the family unit. The nature of the discourse at home can show up in how students respond to and work with others at school.

Be Careful Not to Generalize Unsubstantiated Assumptions

My grandfather, who died at the age of 82, would sometimes say things about other groups of people that were clearly a result of the times in which he was born and also a consequence of his experiences growing up in the segregated south. I cannot stress enough the importance of judging people as individuals and not allowing stereotypes and misconceptions to shape beliefs about a broad group of people. Learning as much as one can about others is an important strategy in breaking down stereotypes and rejecting the perpetuation of hurtful unwarranted and unsubstantiated stereotypes and assumptions.

Don't Think of Diversity Awareness as a Destination but as a Journey

Finally, it is probably not appropriate to think of diversity awareness or consciousness as a destination. Learning

about the self, another, and the self in relation to others requires that we consistently engage in processes of introspective learning. In this sense, the processes of becoming more aware are most important because one never really becomes completely “competent” or aware of a wide range of diverse perspectives, ideologies, worldviews, people, and practices. Indeed, I have been deeply engaged in processes of trying to better understand myself and others for most of my life. Moreover, it has been through these processes—my journey—of trying to broaden my conceptions that I have increased my knowledge and understandings of myself and others. Thus, we should consistently work to gain insight about the ways in which diversity works and—perhaps most importantly—can work in society and schools.

Thinking about, addressing, and building a skill set as well as knowledge about diversity can be critical components in helping students live meaningfully both domestically and internationally. Schools (namely, teachers, counselors, and administrators) cannot solely accomplish the goal of providing students with what they need to understand the many nuances historically and contemporarily that shape our diverse society. Parents need to help with this important work.

It's getting cold outside...



Let's go play!

Spend a fun-filled day playing across five football fields of frosty joy. Zoom down the 400-foot hill all together in our family-sized tubes, or go it alone as a single rider. From snowman building to snowball shooting, tubing to togetherness, enjoy all the moments that will make for the perfect snow day.

NEW for 2013, Avalanche Alley is adding an extra lane for you to get in more family tubing time! And take a spin in the snow on the new Snow-Go-Round, a tubing carousel adventure designed for Little Angels!

Pinnacle



December "Deck the Halls"

Holidays Around the World

The Sights of the Holidays

The Sounds of the Holidays

The Tastes and Smells of the Holidays

The Feelings of the Holidays

What's Happening...

DECEMBER



Food/Toy Drive Begins: December 2nd

GA Pre-K Winter Break: December 23rd-January 3

Winter Spirit Week: December 16th-20th

Barrington Closes 4pm: December 24th

Barrington Closed: December 25th

Henry County Schools Closed:

December 23rd-January 6th

WINTER SPIRIT WEEK

Monday: Jersey Day

Tuesday:

Wacky Tacky Day

Wednesday:

Pajama/Movie Day

Thursday: 80's Day

Friday: Winter Party