

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

A DIEEC spotlight feature that highlights the variety of programs delivering quality care to children in Delaware.

April 2024

Anti-Bias and Diversity Activities at the Children's House Montessori

Cathy Lopez-Cooling, administrator of the [Children's House Montessori](#) program in Wilmington Del., participated in DIEEC's [Anti-Bias Education: Diversity](#) professional learning experience (PLE) in February of this year. Following the first sessions of this PLE, participants are challenged to put what they've been learning into action, and supported as they explore new options and opportunities.



Image credit: Children's House Montessori

The staff at Children's House Montessori knew they wanted to incorporate an adult component into their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) activities, because they already had parents who volunteered to share around cultural celebrations like Diwali, Lunar New Year, and Black History Month. This dovetailed with the focus of the Anti-Bias Education PLE. Children's House Montessori discussed options with their families and carried out a variety of activities that focused on recognizing and valuing diversity. One particular activity, built around quilts, was incorporated in a variety of ways.

The families had the opportunity to read several stories about quilts, including [The Kindness Quilt](#) by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace, a story about a child whose quilt squares document acts of kindness and grows into a school-wide effort; and [The Keeping Quilt](#) by Patricia Polacco and [The Patchwork Quilt](#) by Valerie Flourney, both of which feature families whose quilts tell their stories across generations. This led to discussion of how messages and histories were often embedded in quilts. Families then created their own quilt squares, which were combined and displayed at the school. (Note: all three of the books mentioned above are available through Delaware's public library system!)



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
EDUCATION &
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the quilt activity, families were also offered the chance to read various children’s books used in the classrooms, and share their feelings about the text and the illustrations as they related to representation of diversity and any concerns about bias. According to Ms. Lopez-Cooling, this led to some wonderful discussions about culture.

Other activities provide families an opportunity to share their own cultural traditions with the Children’s House Montessori community. Darius Davis, a drummer, brought African drums to share with the children, who got to try out all of the different drums. For the Lunar New Year, families came in and shared the history and culture of the dragon dance, what the children’s birth animals were by year, and calligraphy.

Both staff and families are pleased with the results of Children’s House Montessori’s efforts to date. The center’s business director, Katie Leibel-Marin, shared that “Parents are really excited. It’s good for parents to realize that we want to do this!” Her advice to other programs that would like to do more to promote diversity and inclusion is to “communicate with your parent population. We had more resources built in than we realized.” Ms. Lopez-Cooling noted that once they got started and families began contributing their own ideas as well, it created a cascade effect of sharing.

Keep an eye on DIEEC’s [PLE calendar](#) for this and other future PLEs that focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. We hope you’ll join us at one of them!



Families created their own quilt squares, which were combined and displayed at the school. - Image credit: Children's House Montessori



Darius Davis, a drummer, brought African drums to share with the children, who got to try out all of the different drums. - Image credit: Children's House Montessori