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Educator's Corner

Creating Inclusive and Welcoming Classrooms



By Ilana Dvorin Friedman

Early childhood care and education is a fragmented system, and it reflects the numerous inequities of the past which persist in a myriad of ways today. My students in EDU 685 (Equity, Diversity, and Social Policy in Early Childhood Education) are learning how to scrutinize socio-historical factors that shape early childhood care and education in the United States as they further situate themselves as advocates and leaders within the field. This course challenges students to consider how their cultures, identities, beliefs, and socialization fuel assumptions and biases that infiltrate professional identity, practices, and policies.

As anti-bias educators, students commit to creating inclusive and welcoming spaces for young children and provide them tools and strategies that value diversity and act against injustice. We strive to raise conscientious and just children who utilize their curiosity, empathy, creativity, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving capacities to affect change in their worlds; similarly, early childhood educators engage in a parallel process of learning, acting, reflecting, and development. One student shared: "A reflection of myself, my school, and the way I teach, has been a huge part of my growth already in this program. The discussions that arise from our work have taught me so much about myself as a teacher and how I can always strive to learn more."

I have learned so much from the vulnerability, openness, and innovative perspective of my students as they engage in their practice in their classrooms. As each week passes, I have been so impressed by their insightful examples of how they enhance their relationships, classroom practices, school culture, and educational philosophies. They have motivated me to continue reflecting on myself as a cultural being and how my own biases are interpreted into my professional work.

It is evident that these students will inspire change within the field of early childhood Jewish education. "As I take this course," one student expressed, "I grow more confident in my ability to lead discussions in my school and implement true change to have a school that celebrates all forms of diversity. I feel truly blessed to learn with this cohort of people!"

If you or someone you know is passionate about early childhood education, our program is currently accepting applicants. Please visit aju.edu/education for more information.



Ilana Dvorin Friedman, PhD, is a child development consultant, instructor, and researcher. She is passionate about early childhood Jewish education, anti-bias education, giving voice to educators' experiences, early childhood leadership and advocacy, and designing and implementing professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals.

SPRING 2022 COLLEGE-LEVEL EXTENSION CLASS CHILD GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS COURSE STARTS JANUARY 18

TEENS AND ADULTS:
CALLING ALL AMBITIOUS
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

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Class Details

Adult Class Meets Virtually Bi-Weekly every other Monday on zoom 4:30pm-6:30pm pt (7:30pm-9:30 et)

Teen Class Meets Virtually Weekly on Tuesdays 4:30pm-6:30pm pt (7:30pm-9:30pm et)

Earn 4 college-level course credits

Total cost of course: \$600

Who Should Take this Course

This extension class is an excellent opportunity for teens who love teaching, and current or aspiring preschool educators to meet other passionate educators in the Jewish setting from around the country virtually

This course will teach you how children develop physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and culturally within a Jewish community



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