



early risers

Waking up to racial equity
in early childhood.

Discussion Guide

Season 5, Episode 5: *An Anti-Bias Approach to Classroom Management* - released March 6, 2024

Learning Goal: To learn about culturally diverse classroom management for early childhood educators.

Suggested Conversation Length: 60 minutes



Early Risers is a podcast focused on how to talk with young children about race. Hosted by Dianne Haulcy, the podcast invites early childhood experts into conversations about how parents, caregivers and early childhood educators can tackle this big topic with the little ones in their lives.

Background

One of the hardest parts of teaching is managing the classroom to promote learning, keep order and inspire students. Many approaches to classroom management are punitive and reproachful. Guest Shawn Prakash Reddy describes a different approach that – at its core – celebrates students and gives them opportunities to practice their identities.

Guest Bio

Shawn Prakash Reddy was an elementary school teacher in Chicago public schools for nearly ten years. He is now associate director of teacher development at National Louis University in Chicago and a field coach for teachers in training.

General Facilitator Tips

- Read through all the questions first.
- Reiterate that the purpose of the discussion is to learn from each other.
- Create an agreement with everyone in the discussion group that helps create a safe, nonjudgmental atmosphere—talking about race can be difficult.
- Be sensitive as to how people identify.
- Be prepared for a response to any remarks that might be offensive. The person saying it may not be aware that it is offensive, so be gentle in pointing it out.

Group Agreements

Ground rules and group agreements are a way to respect safety. Ask members to brainstorm and collectively determine group agreements. Here are some agreements tools to use as a reference:

- [Group agreement information from Seeds for Change](#)
- [Community Agreements tool from Just Lead Washington](#)
- [Sample group agreement from GSAFE](#)

Questions for Discussion

- Shawn talks about his biracial heritage and how his father, who was an immigrant from India, stated that he had never experienced racism. However, at 10 years old, Shawn remembers witnessing racist encounters that his father had experienced. Why do you think Shawn and his father disagree about whether experiencing racism?
- Shawn talks about working in the segregated Chicago Public School District and witnessing firsthand the disparities in education. What are the differences between resource and opportunity gaps and achievement gaps?
- Shawn talks about the need for culturally diverse classroom management techniques. Do you agree or disagree that we need culturally diverse classroom management techniques?
- Shawn talks about a 5th grade student he taught during his first year who stayed up late one night to dissect the meaning of words in our English language. All the words that included the word "white" were good and positive, while all the things that were described as "black" were negative. Why do you think he was interested in knowing why this is? What do you think he experienced in his life to make him even ask this question?
- Shawn talks about honoring the children's culture in the classroom. If you are an early childhood educator, how do you honor your children's culture in your classroom? If you are a parent, do you feel that your child's culture is honored in their classroom?
- Shawn talks about components they use in creating an anti-bias classroom. If you are an early childhood educator, talk about how each of these components can add to your children's classroom experience:
 - a. Having educators engage in meaningful self-awareness and reflection practices. Identifying their own multiple identities and how that might impact the learning process in their classroom.
 - b. Curating and evolving the classroom climate and culture. Making adjustments based on how your students are growing and evolving. Really getting to know students.
 - c. Fostering student agency and voice – students should be thinking and communicating about how they like to engage in their own education.
- Shawn says, "Whether or not you feel comfortable as a white educator discussing issues of racism, I guarantee you that your children of color are experiencing issues of racism on a daily basis." If you are a white educator, discuss your response to this statement. If you are a parent, discuss what your concerns might be about this statement.

Closing the Discussion

As you close your discussion, encourage people to look up additional resources. Acknowledge key points and lessons learned during the discussion. Finally, share additional resources participants can use to continue learning.

Additional Resources

- [This study](#) exploring how teachers can be taught “racial noticing” to increase awareness in the classroom.
- [This webinar](#) from the “Cultural Competent Knowledge Cafe” series that Shawn Reddy is facilitating with the National Louis community.
- [More from National Louis University](#) on their work to train teachers to be conscious of race, racism and bias.

Early Risers is a podcast from Little Moments Count, produced by Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). This discussion guide was created by Little Moments Count and MPR, 2024.

