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EHDI Annual Conference

Unveiling the Power of Multicultural Programming

March 19, 2024

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>> Hello everybody, my name is Angela the moderator for today. It's going to be unveiling the power of multicultural programming, and as a reminder there is plenty of water in the back. Thank you.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Good morning everybody. I am excited to be here. I will keep the microphone close. Anybody or everybody tired? Are you all tired? Yeah. By now it's tiring, I am all conferenced out by Tuesday. I am glad you guys are here.

My name is Rashaun Davis and this is the session of unveiling the power of multicultural programming. So let's get started because 25 minutes goes fast.

So I am from New Jersey but currently living in Delaware. That's enough about me. My personal story. I am the father of an 11-year-old little girl. 12 years ago, probably 12 years ago to the day somewhere around there, or to the month, my wife and I find that we are pregnant. Or she is pregnant. [LAUGHTER]

And we are excited. We are looking forward to it, and in preparation as the date gets closer we start preparing. And so we get the strollers, the baby carriage, we get the crib, we get Pampers, we get types, we get all of that.

December 14, 2012 happens, it comes around and she takes an AVR test on that day and she fails of the right ear. The next day they said we will test her again and she fails in her left ear. And so now we are confused. And they say that's okay, it's probably fluid and everything will be okay tomorrow. And on the third day she fails again, and I think it was in the left ear.

Now we have an inconclusive task, and now we are trying to figure out what is the truth. Is she Deaf and has no access to sound like they told us on December 14, 2012, or is the test wrong. A year later we take her back because we were intentionally LTF, we were intentionally lost to follow-up. We said your tests are wrong and inconclusive and we don't trust it, and so at three months we are not responding, six months we are not responding. 12 months, now we are going to take her back to her pediatrician and we find out she has conductive hearing loss, minimum to mild. She wears bilateral hearing aids.

Fast-forward 11 years, she is a three-time published author, speaking Chinese and Chinese immersion. And so we are just proud of her.

That is my personal story. But that is not my why. I spoke at the parent session on the first night and I said that is not my why. My wife and I were strong advocates. We believe that Madison, because of our advocacy, because of our pushing limits, Madison is going to be okay. My why happened three years ago when I attended my first EHDI. I sat in a room at the EHDI 101, looked around, and there were five, six, 700 people. This was prior to Covid. May be upwards of 1000 people. I'm hearing about access, I'm hearing about the importance of early detection of hearing and all of the data. When I look around and I see that I am the only Black male in the room.

To take it a step further, out of 1000, what we see here is probably twice as many Black and Brown faces then we saw three years ago. And so I sat and I asked the questions, I stood up and EHDI 101 and I said I hear your numbers, I hear your statistics. But if accessibility is not accessible to all, then your accessibility and your data does not matter. It needs to be accessible to all. So that is my wife.

Three years later I am at the hands and voices headquarters on the board, also a board member of the EHDI. So I can have a seat at the table. Three years ago, Candace Davies, she came up to me after my question and she said I want to invite you to the table. So I am here because Candace invited me to the table, and that is my why. To make sure that Black and Brown families get the information, get the access, get the programming necessary so that their kids have the same opportunities that Madison has.

And so a question. This is not a lecture. Well, let me say this also. I had a conversation with somebody and they said make sure you tell them these are solely the thoughts and ideas of you. I do not represent hands and voices right now, I don't represent any. These are Rashaun Davis's thoughts, ideas, and opinions. All right?

So let me ask, this is not a lecture, this is a conversation, and so we will have dialogue. The first question. Let me go through the session objectives. First is to uncover biases. And then second is to discuss why multicultural programming is important.

I want you to ask yourself am I biased?

So if I asked that question, by a show of hands how many people would say yes?

Good. Good. We all have our biases, right? As individuals, as humans, as people with access to social media, information, we all have biases. Here is the definition of bias. A prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group, compared with another usually in a way considered to be unfair.

Because we all have preferences, we all have bias. So that is the noun version. And the verb is to cause or feel to show inclination or prejudice for or against someone or something.

So what are some of our biases? Anyone bold enough to raise their hand? What is a bias that you have?

Age bias. Good.

>> [Away from microphone]

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Okay. Hold on, do you need this?

>> I used to be a social worker many years ago, and I would have a problem with parents, particularly mothers who would put spouses or boyfriends before their children's needs. That is my bias.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Good. And so I think I heard age, I heard gender. Let's get more personal. What are some of your personal biases? Anyone? We can take one or two more.

>> I'm in audiologist, I used to work in California and I would see a lot of children who spoke other languages than English. I only spoke fluent English and a biases to have is if you showed up 20 or 30 minutes late test your appointment I was less likely to see you because I knew we were not finish what we would do and the 20 minutes we had, and that was in a globalized you recognize interchange.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Thank you for that.

>> Hi, good morning. My personal bias, I have an adult child that has a disability, and intellectual disability. When people automatically assume, they like to put them all in one pocket one every child that has a disability, they have their strengths and their weaknesses.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Yeah. That's good.

And so one thing I think for us to understand and consider is that there are different types of biases. There is intentional bias. Those other ones in which we can communicate, those are the ones that we can identify. And then there is unintentional bias. And so some of those are in our marketing. So for our program coordinators, those that are responsible for programming, we need to consider what type of biases are communicated as a result of our marketing. What is it saying when we send out materials and the faces are of one color. The age. And so how we identify those biases in our preparation is very important, because not only is it unintentional or intentional but there is also passive and aggressive.

We can identify aggressive biases all day. But what are those passive biases that we face that we don't even know our present?

Before we move on, I want to -- actually I want to give permission. I want to give us permission to be uncomfortable. Before we can move forward, before we can make progress, the room might get tense. It might get uncomfortable. But that is healthy because when we are comfortable, it breeds complacency. And anytime we are complacent, it fosters an area in which we overlook the ability to make progress or even to be productive.

So one thing I notice, here is an observation that I made in the three people who raised their hands. Did anybody notice? They were all people of color. And I know I only did three, we only had time for three. But that was one of the things in which I noticed.

So, permission to feel uncomfortable. I have a YouTube video. Let me see if I can remember -- all right.

Enlarge it? Is it loud enough? No? All right, that is as loud as it goes.

Can't do that.

So she said a lot. She said a lot. But I think what I want to go from here is to commend individuals who are in the room because that means you identify that there needs to be more. And you are comfortable addressing and hearing what needs to change so that we can change.

And so she ended with how do we build racial inclusion. She talked for three and a half minutes, and I want to land with how do we build racial inclusion. And so what we are going to do next, we are going to have a conversation. But here is the key and here is the conversation. We are going to allow for our White colleagues and our White participants to hear hostile or eavesdrop on a conversation that we have as Black and Brown parents and Black and Brown professionals oftentimes you are not privy to. That take off the blinders, takeoff what we have to hide in certain settings. But we are going to have a conversation so you can use some of the things in which we say as Black and Brown people.

First question. How does it feel when you take your child to appointments and providers, doctors, specialists, and they don't look like you? Anyone? How does that feel? I know for me how it feels, but let's have a conversation. And I know she put up 10 minutes and we are running out of time.

Okay, maybe that is my timer.

>> I am a bad moderator.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Anyone? How does it feel as a Black or Brown parent, you take it out to the provider, and you search in network and out of network and you are looking for providers and specialists, but you can't find someone that can identify with your lived experience.

>> I was in a suburb of Atlanta and I wanted to have a Black male because I was in a single-parent and I just got divorced, and I wanted to have a Black male position. I searched and searched and searched, and I very, very discouraged because it was very limited Black teachers, particularly Black male teachers, and then going to the doctor. I ended up settling for a Caucasian male. He still was a male but he was a White male, and it was very discouraging. But we did build a relationship. But he was not able to speak with my son as he got into his teenage years in terms of being, you know, just a Black teenage boy. He was not able to do those things.

So I had to plug in the pieces with sports and with church. But I intentionally did those things. But I was very discouraged because I moved in that area to get away from different areas in the city of Chicago. But only to come to this area and still was not able to fully accommodate the cultural gap that I knew we was going to suffer.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Right, right. And why was that important for you?

>> One, because I knew the disparities of Black males in Chicago. Two, I have always been a social worker, but I knew about that and I knew how it reflected with the males in my family. I personally was raised around males and females, but predominantly females. The Black males didn't have no role models. All of the social ills that exist, 25 years ago when I was raising my son, he is my adopted son so I wanted to put that extra piece in there. It was very important for him to see what a Black male looked like, other than a Black male that was walking the streets of Chicago affected by drugs or homelessness or untreated mental health.

In my fight to make that happen I still came up short, because now is a 26-year-old Black male suffering from mental health. But I tried.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: I commend you, and thank you for your authenticity and your vulnerability and your response.

So I would love to get more responses, but I want to move to this next question. How do you feel when you attend conferences? I know how I felt three years ago, but how do you feel when you attend conferences like this and you see limited faces that look like you?

>> Unfortunately I am used to it.

>> Same exact thing. This is my first time coming to an EHDI conference. I didn't know what to expect. But I did expect this. So I am not really surprised by it. However, I was glad to see a lot more Black and Brown faces that I thought would be way more limited.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: What does that do for you when you see the Black and Brown faces of the conference?

>> It makes me feel seen. It makes me feel as if the powers that be are trying to make a more concerted effort in being inclusive and trying to gain diverse perspectives. Because in something as niche as hearing loss and the Deaf community, not everyone gets to be seen and represented. Especially like you were saying in data and insights and things like that.

And human beings are not a monolith. There is so much intersectionality within us, and all of those need to be represented in order for us to be properly unified and work towards that common goal.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: And it's draining. I mentioned I am tired. But it's draining because often times I am looked at as the subject matter expert in the room. So I am answering questions all day. How do I get more fathers, how do we get more Black and Brown -- that is draining. Sometimes I don't know your name, but watch how I interact. I see you across the room, what we going to do? We have a commonality, I don't know his name, we haven't had an opportunity to meet yet, but there is already a connection. There is a connection because I already know we have a lived experience. As a Black man and another Black man, there is some things I don't need to communicate to him that he will understand.

Those are some of the things and the feelings that we have.

The last one. How does it feel? We are talking about multicultural programming. How does it feel attending programming in your community and you are underrepresented at the program?

>> I kind of touched on yesterday with my son's journey as a Black transgender man, and when I jumped into that world of parent to parent support for LGBTQ. You walk in and you are like okay, they get it. They have been oppressed, they understand, they are motivated. I am still the only one. And I just remember that conversation about oh yes, I am so nervous about my kid wants to go into the bathroom, blah-blah-blah. And first of all I'm like my child is Deaf going into a bathroom that I cannot access. And on top of that he is Black, and our Black and Brown transgender children and adults are being killed. So the weight I carried in that experience is overwhelming. It's a whole other layer that I think a lot of us parents have to deal with.

>> RASHAUN DAVIS: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you.

And so here are responses. Underappreciated, unimportant, devalued, isolated, uncomfortable. And forgotten. These are not the responses of adults. These are the responses of my 11-year-old daughter when asked how do you feel going in. Because I am the advocate and because I'm not intimidating going into different settings, how do you feel, Madison, going into these? These were responses.

We got about a minute left. Unveiling the power, right. The question I have for you is this was Madison, Black and Brown. How would you feel if asked if this was your child. If these are the responses of your child in the programming or walking into a setting in which you are feeling what some of the responses were, that you heard today. That should be the power -- that should be the power behind our multicultural programming.

So when we ask, programming is the what, and the why is to avoid for anyone whether it is the child of the adult of the family to have these feelings.

In closing, a quote I often have is the why power is greater than the what power. So when we asked the question of why am I doing this, whether it is multicultural programming, whether it is audiologists, whether it is a social worker, when we asked the question of why, the what becomes easier. The what of taking the extra mile, going the extra length to make sure that diversity is apparent. That is the want.

The why is that no one feels the brunt of these emotions. It is already hard enough that our families are dealing with -- our kids are dealing with having to navigate the world as Deaf or hard of hearing. That is hard enough. To have this piled on. As providers, as parents, a specialists, these other reasons why we should want to do what we do.

My 25 minutes is up. I am available. We didn't get to questions and answers. But I am available, I will be outside if anyone has questions.

Real quick you guys, I get to my last slide. Here is my contact information. If you scan that code, you will be able to save my contact. That is my phone number, that is my website.