

Refreshing your passion=A great school year

Starting a new school year is always full of mixed emotions: excitement to start a year with new children and families, anxiousness because the new routines will limit family time, or maybe, just glad that summer is over because you are ready to start! At this time of the year, I usually share information about the importance of emphasizing social-emotional skills during at least the first 8 weeks of school. This is the time when the children are adapting to a new environment and initiating social groups, as well as understanding the world of grownups and education (following directions, respecting individual space, and engaging in adult-child interactions). Yes, we also discussed the importance of the environment as a third teacher, from visual schedules, transitions, and inviting surroundings, to engaging routines, and sensory activities. All that comes into place with only one thing: your dedication and passion for what you do, and “feeling complete”.



I recently attended a National Indian Head Start Directors Conference. During one of the sessions, they showed a video about the importance of “feeling complete” with what you do. Program administrators interviewed parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, custodians, cooks, and directors. Each person shared their passion and dedication for Early Childhood Education, but what stuck in my mind was a conversation from one of the cooks for the program. She was grateful to have a job as a cook because she was feeding the children with nutritious and culturally reflective foods. She emphasized the importance of her role and how being part of a group of people dedicated to the well-being of the children was a blessing. “I feel complete every day when I leave because I know my job is important”, she said.

That powerful thinking sprouted a thought of reflection. It doesn't matter how many times I share about responsive environments and the importance of social-emotional competency, if YOU, as a professional and educator, don't “feel complete” after spending a day with your children and families. By coming to that reflection, I wonder what it will take for you to realize how important your job is for the future of our children. Recognizing that times in education are more challenging, and documentation more intense than previous years, and of course, more technological and critical thinking oriented than decades ago, is not enough.

This profession requires educators who not only embrace the challenges of hard work and long hours but have strong spirits that nurture and value differences. Most importantly, they intentionally reflect on the importance of their role in the lives of our young ones and their future as a 21st-century generation.

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