



Inclusive Practice in the Early Years

REFLECTIONS AND
LEARNING POINTS

2022

Session reflections

Sound Connections and Tri-Music Together worked in partnership to offer 'Decolonising Music in the Early Years' sessions led by Nate Holder. There was a huge demand for the sessions resulting in them quickly being fully booked. Through these sessions it was clear that there was a need for people to dig deeper into the dialogue.

Inclusive practice in EY music: decolonising, anti-racism, and bias was a follow up 2-part CPD opportunity for a small group of Early Childhood Music Practitioners. The two 90-minute critical thinking sessions were carefully planned and sensitively facilitated by Nate Holder and Liz Pemberton.

“Anti-racist learning should be hard work, it is like personal training, an ongoing journey, we need to incorporate it into every day.”

Liz Pemberton

The dialogic sessions provided an opportunity for a focused group of committed individuals to learn, discuss and explore inclusive practice through the lens of anti-racist practice. The sessions were based on creating a respectful, positive space to incite thinking, where people could listen to and understand each other, learn from and alongside one another, and reflect together.

Feeling uncomfortable was a theme running throughout both sessions; this resulted in an acknowledgment and deeper understanding of the need to hold onto feelings that make us feel uncomfortable as this is what will help create change. It was also recognized and discussed that parents attending early childhood music sessions with their children can often feel uncomfortable, e.g., when children do not behave within prescribed social norms.

The power imbalance with white supremacy, and the fact that this is not recognised in wider society was discussed. This led to reflecting on how the child is at the centre of their culture, which may be different from the practitioners' culture, and how this might impact on repertoire choices. An example was given of children and families being misled as to the origin of some repertoire in a music session. We talked as a group about the importance of not shying away from being powerful, and flagging this up when it happens – even if it is hard work and uncomfortable. It was agreed that having support from others with these types of issues is critical.

The facilitators Liz and Nate carefully guided the group through these issues, and regularly paused to reflect on the fact that anti-racism is a journey, and it is important to recognize that people are at different stages of the journey, and some feel more or less equipped to be on it. It was an opportunity to consider how do practitioners support / challenge each other and others that they work with to develop their understanding of racism and anti-racist practice.

Reflective questions for the early years music sector

1

How carefully are you considering the repertoire that you use? Are you aware of the origins of the songs you use, and what implications the lyrics have? Are you using repertoire because you like it? Because it's what you have always used? Because it links to a theme?

2

How can you find ways to normalize singing or using music from a different culture/different country? How can this become part of our everyday practice without viewing this as 'other' music?

3

How are you recognizing your own privilege, cultural lens and bias? How might this affect your communication with children and families?

4

How are you creating environments and spaces that allow children to be themselves and that are based on the children's needs? How can we support children to fully enter the spaces we create so that they do not have to 'take off their culture' at the door?

5

How can you avoid making assumptions about the musical cultures and experience that children may or may not understand?

6

How can you ensure that your practice is culturally sensitive and places children at the centre?

7

Are you able to be bold in settings you work in to challenge repertoire which may have been culturally appropriated, insensitive in origin and/or content?

8

Are you able to build in social time in sessions, get to know people more and get a sense of children's personalities?

9

What are your spheres of influence to affect change? What individual and collective power do you hold?

10

To what extent do you recognise the importance of intersectionality and the bigger picture on your practice: capitalism, structure, feminism, gender, disability?

We thank you for your ongoing support of our programme.

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