



INVISIBLE BARRIERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S INCLUSION IN SOCIETY

by

The Diversity and Inclusion Immersion Team 2018

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Our Process

When the immersion teams were first assigned, we realized how large a concept diversity is and how encompassing inclusion must be. The topic is broad and touches on every immersion topic being discussed in our community. We realized that LMR in itself has embedded diversity and inclusion into every meeting and every learning opportunity.

We debated whether the complex issues surrounding healthy, affordable and accessible food; healthy, affordable and safe housing, our history as a community and as a significant place in America's civil rights history, education and employment for all ages, affordable and accessible healthcare, and other issues regarding our community could be thoroughly discussed without admitting the deeply rooted feelings and misunderstandings of our differences between each other. The issues that we all immersed ourselves into are complicated and we realized that to move toward solutions, it takes looking at not just community leaders and not just community history but ourselves and how our children are learning from us and our educational systems.

As we started our Diversity and Inclusion journey -- we had a couple realizations early on:

- 1) Diversity lines are not drawn only by race but includes socioeconomic status, immigration and language, disability, sexual orientation, mental health and addiction, religion, age, and more. We realized that race is embedded in all of these issues.
- 2) The Richmond metro area, as is all of Virginia, is changing. While we have been a diverse community in various ways all along, we are now recognizing it, talking about it, and moving toward each other instead of segregating from each other. In terms of race alone: from 1990 to 2010, Virginia went from 77 percent white to 69 percent. Within our children's lifetime, Virginia will likely be a minority majority state.

Research and Interviews

Our individual team members read reports, listened to podcasts, researched and shared our findings with one another. An example of some of our sources is the Common Thread (radio show on WRIR 97.3 FM), The Inclusive Class (Blog Talk Radio) and Tik Talk Podcast (podcast)

A minimum of two team members interviewed and recorded representatives from the following organizations: *ECOFF Elementary School, Greater Richmond SCAN, Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium, Peter Paul Development Center, ReEstablish Richmond, SPARC, Side By Side, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities and Chesterfield County (Multicultural Services).*

Project Decision

We struggled initially on what area to direct our focus. As a team we started a document to put our individual ideas and then looked for overlaps of ideas, while we started our outreach to organizations. We combined content areas until we narrowed our focus down to ***invisible barriers and the impact it has on children's inclusion into society.***

Call to Action and Recommendations

Through our immersion experience, we, the Diversity and Inclusion Workteam, have been deeply moved by the amazing work occurring around diversity and inclusion for children in the Greater Richmond area. We hope that you too may feel inspired by the community resources and methods to employing diversity and inclusion programming for children grades K-5.

We, your partners in the Leadership Metro Richmond Class of 2018 (Best Class Ever!), invite you to consider three ways you can promote diversity and inclusion within your own sphere of influence for any age group.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Pledge

I, _____, *pledge that I will make a conscious effort to be a champion for diversity and inclusion programming, resources, and methods within my community and/or place of work. I believe that everyone deserves to feel safe, valued, that they have some power, that they are learning and that they can make mistakes and not lose their dignity. I will demonstrate and uphold these principles to the best of my ability to make a positive impact in the Greater Richmond community.*

Team Members' Personal Learning Journey

Carol Olson: "I work within myself to recognize the impact of being raised in cultures of racism, sexism and intolerance and how to not bring that forth into the spaces I live, work and volunteer in and to teach concepts of anti-racism to my mentees/supervisees and the children in my family. Creatively I use my art and media projects to talk about these issues."

Pam Hervey: "I've also felt that many of the conflicts in our world today are a result of groups or individuals that haven't felt included within their community. This experience taught me that sometimes it is as simple as creating 'a sense of belonging' for the environment in which we work, play and live. Learning those keys phrases, taught to us by VCIC, I can now use them in my everyday experiences to make sure I'm providing an open and thoughtful space for everyone."

Virginia Moore: "I gained perspective about inclusion in areas that aren't immediately seen - for example: sexual orientation, disabilities, past trauma, or mental health. I also gained perspective on how creating an inclusive environment really starts with opening up a space to talk and be vulnerable. I vow to work to create an environment where having a time and space for that becomes the norm within my friend groups, family, and work."

Zeistina Khan: "This project has given me hope and enlightenment that there are many people doing good things in various communities around RVA. I now have a better understanding on how broad diversity scope is and become aware of challenges faced by each community. This new understanding has helped me to have stronger empathy and better approach to create a diverse and inclusive environment."

References

Site Visits

- **Chesterfield County (Multicultural Services)**, www.chesterfield.gov/multicultural/
9800 Government Center Pkwy, Chesterfield, VA 23832,
santacolomaj@chesterfield.gov
- **ECOFF Elementary School**, 5200 Ecoff Ave, Chester, VA 23831, Chesterfield County Public Schools
- **Greater Richmond SCAN** www.grscan.org 103 E Grace St, Richmond, VA 23219,
jharperscan@aol.com
- **Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium**, <https://merc.soe.vcu.edu/>
- **Peter Paul Development Center**, www.peterpauldevcenter.org, 1708 N 22nd St, Richmond, VA 23223
- **ReEstablish Richmond**, www.reestablishrichmond.org, 2920 W Broad St Suite 246, Richmond, VA 23230,
- **SPARC**, www.sparconline.org, 2106-A N Hamilton St, Richmond, VA 23230,
rripperton@sparconline.org
- **Side By Side**, www.sidebysideva.org, 2311 Westwood Ave, Richmond, VA 23230,
ted.lewis@sidebysideva.org
- **Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities**, www.inclusiveva.org, 5511 Staples Mill Rd # 202, Richmond, VA 23228, contact@inclusiveva.org

Podcasts, Radio Programs and Websites

- **Common Thread**, 2017-2018. WRIR-LP 97.3 FM. Thursdays at 12:00 PM EST
- **Kids Inclusive & Diverse Media Action Project**, 2018. Kid Map, www.joinkidmap.org/#mission
- **The Inclusive Class**, 2018. www.theinclusiveclass.com
- **Tik Talk Podcasts**, 2018. www.theinclusionclub.com

Books, Blogs, Data Reports

- **Kids Count Data Center**, A Project of the Ann B. Casey Foundation. www.datacenter.kidscount.org/data#USA/1/0/char/0
- **Overcoming Bias**, Tiffany Jana & Matthew Freeman, 2016, Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- **“Richmond’s Quiet Transformation”**, Hamilton Lombard, April 7, 2015. Stat Chat from UVA Demographics Research Group. www.statchatva.org/2015/04/07/richmonds-quiet-transformation/
- **“Virginia: 2010 Population and Housing Unit Costs: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012.**