

Supporting a Diverse Early Childhood Workforce: Lessons Learned from a Community of Practice

Awuse Tama: Hello everyone, and welcome. We are very happy and excited to have you with us on our first spotlight on innovative practices series of the year. My name is Awuse Tama with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, or NCECDTL for short, and I am your host for today. So today's webinar will focus on supporting a diverse early childhood workforce and lessons learned from a virtual community or practice on this topic. Before we begin, I'd like to go over some information regarding the webinar. We will be using some of the features of this webinar platform to help us interact, so at the bottom of your screen, you will notice some widgets. If you have any questions during the webinar, you can submit them through the purple Q&A widget.

We will try to answer these during the webcast, but please know that we do capture all questions. And if you have any tech questions, please enter them here as well. And a copy of today's slide deck, and additional resources, are available in the resources list, which is the green widget. So we do encourage you to download any resources or links that you may find useful, and throughout this session we may use the yellow idea widget to engage. You may use the yellow idea widget to engage, so there should be a question in there already, so please use this to engage with the other attendees.

You can find additional questions, additional answers to some common technical issues located in the yellow help widget at the bottom of your screen, and you can also find a closed captioning widget in both English and Spanish. Each of these widgets are resizable and movable, so simply click on the widget. Move it by dragging and dropping to resize it using the arrows at the top corners. And finally, if you have trouble, try refreshing your browser by pressing F5, and be sure to log off your VPN and exit out of any other browsers. So, today's objectives. We will explore successes, challenges, and opportunities to support in a virtual community of practice.

We will share lessons learned from those that plan and participated in the virtual Community of Practice, and lastly, we will examine reflective tools and strategies that states or territories can use to enhance their ability to support a diverse early childhood workforce. Today's agenda. We will be doing introductions. We will have the presenters introduce themselves. We will get an overview of a Community of Practice, and we do have North Carolina and Maryland. They will be sharing some lessons learned, and then finally, we will have questions, and final thoughts, and then we will close for the day. OK. Again, welcome. I will now hand it over to our presenters to introduce themselves, and first up, I have Michelle Adkins.

Michelle Adkins: Hi. Thanks, Awuse, and just to clarify, it will be North Dakota and North Carolina who are presenting today for us, so I don't want anybody to misunderstand who's going to be speaking with us later, so we will be hearing from North Carolina and North Dakota later on. I get the privilege of introducing the team here that's going to be on the webinar with you for the next hour or so. I am Michelle Adkins. I work for the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness, and when I was participating with this Community of Practice, I

was with the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching, and Learning, so it is in that role as a senior training technical assistance specialist that I participated and worked with these great people for the Community of Practice. I'm going to let each one of these folks say hello to you, and then you will hear from them again later in the webinar. So Anita, can you say hello to everybody, please?

Anita Allison: Hello, everyone. My name is Anita Allison, and I was also a part of the Community of Practice Facilitation and Planning team, and I'm pleased to be here today to share with you our lessons learned and to engage with you or any questions that you would like to know about as far as how the CoP went and what we learned from that CoP. I am also with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and I'm a senior state training and technical assistance specialist.

Michelle: Great. Thanks, Anita. And, Zelda?

Zelda Boyd: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Zelda Boyd, and I am a senior technical assistance specialist with the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, and have the privilege of partnering with DTL and the speakers that you'll hear from today via Community of Practice.

Michelle: Thanks, Zelda. Kristi, can you say hello to everyone?

Kristi Snuggs: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Kristi Snuggs, and I am the interim director with the Division of Child Development and Early Education in North Carolina, and I look forward to talking with you a little later on the call.

Michelle: Great. Thanks, Kristi. And, Katie?

Katie Ganoe: Hi, everyone. My name is Katie Ganoe, and I am the professional learning services coordinator for Child Care Aware of North Dakota, and I'm excited to share about our team's experiences a little bit later on.

Michelle: Great. Thanks. Well, welcome one and all. I did want to tell you a little bit about some of the other members of our planning team. There was a group of us who got together weekly sometimes, and then every other week as the Community of Practice continued on. And along with Anita and Zelda, Debi Mathias from the BUILD Initiative was a member of our planning team, and if you're not familiar with the work that BUILD does, they do systems building, and health and mental health and nutrition work, special needs, and early intervention. And the view or the project work that Debi really brought to us was the work that BUILD has been doing with diversity and equity at the state level in working with many states across the country, so we were very thrilled to have Debi with us on the planning team.

Our other planning team member that couldn't be with us today is Raquel Diaz. Raquel is with the University of Florida Lastinger Center and really was our Community of Practice guru, if you will, on the planning team. She has had lots and lots of experience working with communities of practice across the country, and although she usually does face-to-face Communities of Practice, she was thrilled to join us, and we were thrilled to have her and bring her perspective in terms of bringing the best practice of face-to-face Communities of Practice into the virtual world. So I'm going to talk just a little bit about just ...

So that we're all on even footing in terms of what we believe to be a Community of Practice. So we shared the following information with our members during the very first meeting of the full Community of Practice, and we used this slide to ensure that we all had a shared understanding of what a Community of Practice was and how we would work together, and Anita is going to talk in just a minute about some of the slides and the philosophy that we shared with our participants to talk about how we wanted to engage with each other, and what we were each bringing into this Community of Practice.

So we showed this during the very first session, and the definition really reflects the fundamentally social nature of human learning. It's very broad, as you can see, and it can apply to a street gang whose members learn how to survive in a hostile world or a group of engineers who learned how to design better devices or even a group of civil servants who seek to improve services to citizens. But in all cases, communities of practices have these three primary elements. The first is the domain, and that is that the numbers are brought together by a learning need that they share, and that learning need may be explicit, or not, and whether the learning is the motivation for their coming together, or a by-product of it.

The community is that collective learning becomes a bond among them over time, so they experience learning together, and that bonds them as a community. And the practice, so their interactions produce resources that affect their practice, and that was really one of the things that we were most interested in seeing this virtual Community of Practice do, is that we were really focused on providing resources and experiences that would help shape the practice of the state teams that were a part of the Community of Practice.

We had seven teams from across the country that were with us during this Community of Practice, obviously North Carolina and North Dakota as our representatives here today. We also had a team from Arizona, from California, from Maryland, Montana, and New Hampshire, and each of them, based on where that team was in terms of equity and diversity and where they sat within their state system, it impacted what they took from the Community of Practice and how they could move the work forward once the Community of Practice came to an end.

And we were very excited about the work that the teams did during the Community of Practice and how they're going to move forward, and you're going to see some real exciting things that are happening both in North Dakota and North Carolina later in the webinar. So I'm going to turn it over to Anita, who's going to talk through a little bit more about how we laid the foundations for what we – how we wanted the Community of Practice to function and how we wanted to engage with each other. Anita?

Anita: Thank you, Michelle. As Michelle indicated, we began the Community of Practice by examining and agreeing on some assumptions that we bring to our work together. As you can see on the slide, we entered this work with examining those underlying things, so that we ask participants if they would agree to these and if they had any assumptions that they would like to add. As a group, we agreed to this list of assumptions: the commitment to children and families, the collaborative work that we come together and work collaboratively, that each of us have our own perceptions and beliefs and blind spots that impact us, and also that there is also some discomfort that may come along with looking at and examining a topic that makes us sometimes feel vulnerable in discussing this with others. And then we also agreed to ...

That this would bring greater insight and understanding if we were able to be vulnerable. And so as the group examined these assumptions they agreed to this list, and we wanted to ensure that by examining the assumptions that the planning team worked with that we were making – bringing it to the CoP were made visible, and that the participants were all in agreement because we wanted to ensure that to be successful that everybody had a grounding and understanding, as Michelle said, a foundation to this work together.

So these were how we started, and by bringing this forward to everybody and grounding us in these assumptions so that we had this framework from which to start. And then we then talked about our invitations for how we wanted to work together as a group of people with a common domain which — that we entered around.

So we reviewed these invitations that we felt were important and invited others to add anything that they thought would be important to make sure that we were engaging in the work together, so some of those invitations were around embracing continuous learning, and, you know, if you didn't have an answer to your question, making sure your question was posed so that people could think about it. To be courageous and be brave and be safe in our places of discussion, to push each other in speaking our truth, and to be open to be challenged in our thought process, to stay engaged, to make room for all voices, and most of all, to have a good time and appreciate each other.

As with any Community of Practice, it's important to ensure that all members approach the work from the same perspective, so this slide — information on this slide outlines the way the planning team was engaging in this work, and the participants were asked to do the same. So our objectives for the Community of Practice were, number one, to explore successes, challenges, and opportunities to support a diverse early childhood workforce at all levels of the early childhood professional development system.

Secondly, to examine the changing demographics in the early childhood sector, explore research findings on cultural intelligence, competence, and humility, and elevate challenges and opportunities. We also sought to provide an opportunity to explore state professional development systems through an equity lens and to share reflective tools and strategies to enhance a state or territory's ability to support a diverse early childhood workforce in meeting their professional development system requirements through best practice and specific examples. And so I'd like to end my time with you going over the topics that we covered during the session and let you know that we didn't do this in isolation.

The planning team didn't decide this was what was going to be discussed. It was very much driven by the community members. So during the first session, each state team shared their answers to questions about what interested them in participating in the CoP, what successes and challenges their state had in their professional development work in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion and what the team was looking forward to about the CoP and what they would possibly learn from participating. State teams were ...

Indicated that they were interested in hearing what other states were doing, having rich conversation with other states, and learning about the resources and tools that would help

support them in their professional development work. We ended that first session with examining what kind of ...

How they would want to work together, so we shared a series of polls where the community determined that Mondays were the best day to meet, and that implicit bias was the first topic they would like to discuss, followed by state policies and then strategies to support their work. But we jump-started that conversation in the first session by sharing a TED Talks video entitled "The Danger of a Single Story," with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Excuse me. So participants were able to jump-start the dialogue, start the framing of the conversation as a result of listening to Chimamanda Adichie's story.

Then our second session was focused on implicit bias with Dr. William Gilliam, talking about research results, implicit bias in early childhood education, and this link to the suspension and expulsion of young children of color, particularly young black boys. Following a large group discussion of Dr. Gilliam's work, we heard from Laura Reid from the State of Georgia on how they're exploring equity and implicit bias in their professional learning community facilitation training. Laura shared the hesitation of both trainers and participants in engaging in the equity conversation and how creating the space for these conversations were so very important to their states. In session three, we continued our discussion in investigating implicit bias because the states indicated they wanted to hear more.

So from this time, we took a more personal perspective, and Dr. Raquel Diaz, member of our planning team, led the Community of Practice through an activity that helped members examine their social identities and which of those social identities defined them the most, what that identity has — when that identity has been an advantage, and when it has held us back. We followed the implicit bias discussion with a team discussion about an article that had been provided prior to the session starting entitled, "Unconscious Bias: When Good Intentions Aren't Enough." We used a discussion protocol from the School Reform Initiative called, "Text Rendering Experience," to guide that discussion, which most states — I think every state — really valued that protocol that we used.

In session four, we explored state-level policies and strategies to advance racial equity, and Rachael Brown-Kendall, from the State of Washington, joined us as a guest speaker to discuss their work in advancing racial equity in Washington's QRIS. Washington's work began with a year-long process, joining over 100 stakeholders together to define Washington's racial equity theory of change. That work led to a new definition for their school readiness goal, which influenced the defining of the Department of Children, Youth and Family's mission, vision, and values. From there, the department created priorities around paying attention to data, having a staff and leadership that reflected the communities in which they served, and playing a role in Washington State's work for equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Following Rachael's information-dense presentations, state teams were provided a time to discuss an article by Dolly Chugh entitled, "How Do You Get From Diversity to Inclusion? Ask These Four Questions About Your Meetings." We used the discussion protocol called, "The Three Levels of Text," from the School Reform Initiative to guide that discussion. In session five, the Community of Practice continued the conversation about racial equity. Dr. Eva Marie Shivers, from the Arizona team, led the CoP through a wide-ranging discussion on how to do

racial equity work. From a very personal place, Eva Marie talked about situating ourselves in the conversation in terms of who we are, where we come from, why we are here and where we are headed. She shared her identity story, talked about establishing group norms, safe space versus brave space, equity from the inside out — from individual, interpersonal, and then institutional — and her working assumptions about race, ethnicity, diversity, and equity that she brings to this work and the role of narration — of narrative in racial healing.

Dr. Shivers talked about racial equity as an outcome and a process, and left us with a number of questions to consider, including, why is diversity important in our workforce? When we think of workforce, do we include ourselves? And what do we think will happen if we are successful at supporting diversity in our workforce? Is this the same as equity? In our last session, session six of the CoP, it was time to hear from the state teams in terms of what they had learned and what their next steps would be.

Each team made a brief presentation, covering their key takeaways, valued content and resources, and next steps. Many state teams mentioned the TED Talks video and the article on unconscious bias as being particularly meaningful for their team. Several states are pursuing continued dialogue around these topics by creating a CoP of their own, and still other state teams are looking at policies and procedures through an equity lens to determine underlying assumptions and unintended consequences. With that summary of our Community of Practice in mind, I will now turn the webinar over to another of our planning team members, Zelda Boyd, who will introduce you to our guest speaker. Thanks everyone.

Awuse: Anita, this is Awuse. Before Zelda goes, there's a question for you. Carol is wondering if the objectives were developed in the community. The objectives for the CoP.

Anita: Yeah, the objectives of the CoP were outlined ahead of time to get people interested in the CoP, and as we had conversations with the state both prior to the CoP and throughout the CoP, we were able to adjust them based on the needs of the members. But yes, they were laid out broadly before the CoP started with the flexibility to change as the team, and as the Community of Practice, gelled and came together in what they wanted as an outcome for the CoP.

Awuse: Thank you, and Katie also wants to know what the name of the discussion protocol was.

Anita: The text rendering protocol, and I think we have it in the resource handout list.

Michelle: Yes. Awuse, is it possible for us to go over the resources that are available because I think it may answer some of these questions. The text rendering protocol is from the School Reform Initiative, and it is in the resources widget, as well as the article that we read, "When Good Intentions Aren't Enough," and the ... I think it's either the link or the actual video of the TED Talks video that we watched with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. So I think some of these questions that we're getting may be able to be resolved by that. Can you point those out for people, please?

Awuse: Yes, so in the green resources widget at the bottom of your screen, you will be able to access all the resources that we are discussing throughout the presentation, and it has direct links for you to click on and access, and you can download them also.

Zelda: Thanks everyone.

Michelle: It looks like we also have a question from Siri about a toolkit or checklist for determining equity in the organization. I am not sure about that, Siri. I will need to go back and look at all the resources that we gathered. So if we don't get back to you right away, we will get back to you after the webinar. OK?

Zelda: Thank you, Michelle, and so this is Zelda Boyd, and I just want to encourage you all to continue to put your questions in the chat box, and we're going to go through our speakers, and if you have questions for them, please do put your questions in the chat box, and we will set aside some time at the end of their presentations to answer your questions. So I have the pleasure of introducing the state team representatives that will be sharing their lessons learned from the CoP. And first we're going to hear from Dr. Kristi Snuggs, and she's going to talk to us about North Carolina's experience with the CoP and her team's continuing work with supporting a diverse early childhood workforce.

A little about Kristi is that she is currently the interim director of the Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development and Early Education in North Carolina, and prior to her current interim role, Kristi has been the deputy director for the Division of Development and Early Education. And over the years, Kristi has worked in various higher education roles focusing on early childhood, so she has been in the role of a college instructor, department chair, the director of a college child development center.

She's also served as an education consultant for early childhood. And so her successful advocacy and tireless efforts to support North Carolina's early childhood system is really evident in the many initiatives that I cannot go through all today, and the programs that continue to support children and families and the early childhood providers in North Carolina. So Kristi, we're happy to have you here today. Welcome, and I'm going to turn it over to you.

Kristi: Thank you so much, Zelda. I'm extremely pleased to be on the call today, and I'm so thankful that I was asked to present. The North Carolina team had a wonderful experience with the Community of Practice around supporting a diverse early childhood workforce, and I would just like to take a moment to tell you who the members of our team were. Of course, you've already heard a little bit about myself, but we also had Sharonita Gardner, who was one of our licensing supervisors.

The Division of Child Development and Early Education, where I work, we actually have the regulatory component of our child care workforce in our — under our auspices, as well as our North Carolina Pre-K Program, as well as our own local education agency that we do the licensing of our teachers. And we also operate our subsidy, and we are the CCDF administrator. So Sharonita Gardner was one of our licensing supervisors in the Eastern part of North Carolina, and she was part of our team. Another team member was Miss Katika Cleveland, who was the policy consultant with us here at the Division of Child Development and Early Education, but we also wanted to be very thoughtful and diverse in our team members and think about all of

those folks who have an impact on supporting the early childhood workforce, so we also had Erin Spear-Smith, who is an early childhood instructor in our community college system.

She currently works at Johnston Community College in Smithfield. And then lastly, we had Edith Locke, who is currently in the role of vice president of Professional Development Initiatives with the Child Care Services Association, which is a partner in our workforce development area, which supports things like professional development around teach scholarships and child care supplements, education-based salary supplements, and things of that nature. So we were very intentional in choosing our team to make sure that we had representation of folks that really had input into the workforce.

And so with that being said, I would like to basically start our comments about North Carolina's involvement around sort of setting the stage, if you would. One of our goals in participating in the Community of Practice was to really look at our state professional development system and explore opportunities to make it more equitable, and North Carolina has had a long history of successful professional development systems. We have a very strong system of support that's funded both locally, by state dollars and by federal funds that includes a higher education pathway, which allows teachers to begin their education at home, at a local community college, and then all the way through a university.

And we have a very, very robust system that allows for them to get scholarships to help pay for their education, the salary-based supplements that I've already mentioned around child care wages, and also we have a specific supplement in North Carolina for infant and toddler teachers. We also have a large continuum of professional development. We've really looked at professional development in North Carolina, and we have things that start from very short workshops that everyone's familiar with to formal CEUs and formal coursework, and we're really embracing a change in our professional development and TA system in North Carolina to more of a coaching model.

And so with that being said, I just want to set the stage that with North Carolina, we have a very, very diverse group of children in our early childhood programs and schools. Right now, in North Carolina, almost 16% of our families speak a language other than English. In some of our communities we have as many as 26 different languages being spoken. But with that, there are gaps that have been identified, and one of those big gaps is that our teaching, and our early childhood workforce, does not match the population. And we also have gaps in the proficiency of what the children accomplish once they move into school.

For example, in North Carolina 84% of black children, 80% of Hispanic or Latino, and 90% of American Indian children, just two years ago, did not score proficient in reading at the fourth grade level, while the counterparts of our white children in North Carolina, almost half of them scored — or over half of them scored — at the proficiency level. So with that being said, and with that context, what we're doing in North Carolina is pretty amazing.

We have the support of our governor, who asked the Department of Health and Human Services — through executive order — to create and draft the North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan, and this action plan was based on a state-wide vision that all children in North Carolina should get a healthy start and develop to their full potential in safe and nurturing

families, in early learning programs and schools and communities. And so we are now looking at data and saying, "This is not OK." We're looking at disparities, and we're really addressing where these gaps are based on race and based on other biases that we'll talk about. And so it was very important for us to recruit a workforce of highly-qualified teachers that would be ready to handle this very diverse workforce, this very diverse group of children and families, and also move the needle in the positive direction in North Carolina. So with all of that being said, some of the key takeaways that North Carolina's team had with participating in this Community of Practice are things such as ...

We learned that equity and diversity work is extremely hard. You can't train people, talk about it, implement a new practice one time and think you're done. It is a constant revisiting, a new discussion. It is something that takes time and takes a lot of energy, and it's also something that we really have to make time for. One of the things that all of the organizations that were involved with our team ...

One of the things that we talked about is that we have to make sure that we schedule time to really talk about and have these courageous conversations. We also talked about that it all begins with us, individually, and that change has to happen at an individual level. It's about even recognizing, becoming aware of it, and recognizing that these unwanted deep-rooted beliefs, values that all of us have, they limit and they have influence on us, and they limit our ability to move forward. And until we recognize that, then our actions will not match our intentions. And so that was probably the first takeaway that our team had, is that this is really, really difficult, but important work.

We also recognized that equity is interwoven into everything that we do. We know that much of what we believe, each of us individually what we believe, is something that is ingrained in how we were raised and the values that we were taught in the families that we were raised in and nurtured in and also in the experiences that each of us have had. Many of our biases ...

We all have them. We're social creatures. We have to interact with one another, and many of these biases that we have are going to come out involuntarily. It's like breathing. They're embedded in our physiological states of our body, and it is things that are going to come out, and we have to be aware of them and recognize them. Another takeaway for us is that we really need to meet people where they are. I talked to you briefly about the diversity in North Carolina and the challenges we face with our workforce not looking like the children that we serve, and so the families that we experience, each of them have different voices. They each come from different backgrounds.

They have different experiences, and one of the things that we recognized as a participant in this Community of Practice, is that we have to recognize and listen to each of those families and understand where they are coming from, and we have to meet people where they are and then help those children to be taken to where they need to go and to reach their utmost potential. We also discovered along the way that when we talk about equity and diversity, that it has to be integrated into every organization's culture.

That it is not something that we can talk about at an individual level. Yes, we need to start there, but it also needs to be integrated and embedded in organizational cultures. And it has to

be named. It has to be recognized. It has to be something that is purposeful because unless you make it a purposeful discussion, it's probably not going to happen because it's easier not to have the discussion. And then finally, and I think I've already addressed this to some extent, is that when we talk about good intentions aren't enough and we talk about unconscious bias, it's because equity and diversity are part of our intrinsic values, and we each come to the table with different experiences.

But it has been my experience through the years that when you bring those differences together, you can create such a greater product if you all work together, and you are respectful and listen to one another. So those were some of the key takeaways that the North Carolina team had. We were also extremely impressed with the many resources that were provided to us, and I know that we've made several acknowledgments already that many of these are available to you. I would encourage you to use them in any way that you can in your organization for yourself just to begin this awareness process.

But two of the resources that were particularly meaningful to the North Carolina team was the article of, "Unconscious Bias: When Good Intentions Aren't Enough," and also the video that was mentioned earlier in the webinar around, "The Danger of a Single Story." But I do want to take just a moment to talk a little bit about the unconscious bias article, "When Good Intentions Aren't Enough." I want to just sort of set the stage and encourage you to go in and read this article. It talks about our deep-rooted biases and how they hinder our best intentions, and the only way that we can move forward is to learn how to recognize and address them. It really takes us through five, I think, strategies that we can use to move forward.

You know, it is true, like the title suggests, that bias is unconscious. It truly is because we aren't aware of our biases many times or how they influence our behavior. And when you really start thinking about biases, that's where you can get into these conversations around racism, and other times where people are not treated equitably. You know, things are still around. Even though we've come a long way, things such as racism, it just looks different then it did 50 years ago. And I think in some ways, it's more difficult because it's not so explicit anymore. It's really gone underground, and that's what this article talks about, but it tells us that the first thing we need to do is to increase our own individual awarenesses, and then to name it.

You know, sometimes the way you increase awareness is by naming biases in others and in ourselves, and it really challenged our North Carolina team to have conversations amongst ourselves to agree that we were going to have these courageous conversations, and we were going to stay engaged. That's what it means to have a courageous conversation, is to stay engaged, expect that there's going to be some discomfort at times when you're caught on the carpet, but also for you to speak your truth and expect and accept that there may be a lack of closure.

You may not resolve it, but at least you are having the conversation and are open to how we can move forward and make changes. But also another strategy that was mentioned in the article is how do you anticipate bias and create systems to reduce it? I think one of the things that really stuck with our team in North Carolina is that we have to realize that many of our teachers in our early childhood workforce have blind systems, and they have to determine which — how to get away from those blind systems, and they have to do things in a more

equitable way. There's an example in the article that, you know, many times teachers call on children that they know are not going to have the right answer.

So instead of doing that, and a lot of times those are along race lines, unfortunately, is that you put everybody's name in a jar, and you pull out the name, and that's who you call on, and then it's a more equitable way of making sure that we have a system in place that does not allow for these biases to happen. And then also, it talked about building empathy. That just by getting to know people that may look different than you but may have some of the same experiences or similar beliefs, that if you get to know them that there will be a difference. It talked in the article about getting to know ...

That teachers could use a getting to know survey, and that helps them to have more empathy for their children because what they learned is that although teachers and students took the survey, only some of the teachers in this particular example learned the results, and those teachers that learned the results of those surveys and recognized those similarities that they shared with individuals in their class, that what they saw was automatically an improvement in the achievement gap because those teachers began to have more empathy for students that maybe would look different or did not come from the same cultural background as them, and they were able to approach them a little differently.

And then it talks about holding yourselves accountable. That's what North Carolina is doing with this Early Childhood Action Plan, is we're holding ourselves accountable. We're putting our numbers out there. We're showing that, you know, unfortunately when you think about early childhood and you think about the development of the whole child, we have to acknowledge that there's disparities in those numbers. And so with that being said, I want to move onto next steps and I want to briefly just talk about what our next steps are in North Carolina. We were very fortunate that we had had some work done already, and this report is available in the resources.

We had some recommendations from a study that was done on cultural competence, a breakthrough series collaborative with one of our state universities, and we agreed as a North Carolina team that we were going to go back and look at those recommendations and begin to advance those recommendations. Those recommendations were around things of looking at our QRIS, and as a result that professional development plans that are required in our QRIS would have a component related to cultural competence. That our orientation for our workforce ...

That we would have cultural competence built into those orientation trainings of our early childhood workforce. But also with these recommendations that there would be a way for centers to be recognized and rewarded if they did this. They would get an extra quality point. In North Carolina's QRIS system, we have a five-star system. They get quality points based on quality initiatives, and we would make this cultural competence training a quality initiative and a quality point. So that is one thing that we, as a team, committed to. We're looking at those now, and our goal is that by the end of this state fiscal year, we will begin to advance those recommendations from the work that has already been done. But I think the second point, the bullet, is also important. We agreed as a team that we did not, in North Carolina, have a set of common definitions around these topics of equity and cultural competence, and we have ...

Are in the process of creating an advisory group that would help us to establish ... Create common definitions and a set of guiding principles that then would be shared with all of our stakeholders and partners in the early childhood arena so that everyone is speaking the same language. And then I've already mentioned embedding the cultural competence training in the orientation of our staff at the beginning when they're hired.

But also we would like to, long term, begin to work with other organizations who have a vested interest in the family and children of North Carolina to create a set of core values around cultural competence, and in order for us to provide the training that we need, we have committed to engaging and training our TA providers and our coaching consultants on and around the area of implicit bias and cultural competence. So North Carolina is committed to these recommendations. We are excited. We were thrilled to be part of this, and I will be glad to answer questions after our colleagues from North Dakota share. So, thank you.

Zelda: Thank you, Kristi, and we're going to move very quickly to Katie, and Katie is joining us from North Dakota. Katie Ganoë is the Professional Learning Series coordinator for Child Care Aware of North Dakota, and she manages the training and professional attributes across the state. So Katie, I'm going to turn it over to you and let you take it over.

Katie: Perfect. Thank you, Zelda. So, like Zelda said, my name is Katie Ganoë, and I am with Child Care Aware of North Dakota, and our team for this Community of Practice was made up of Child Care Aware of North Dakota staff, representing a variety of service areas, including our training and professional development department, as well as some of our start-up consultants and coaches for our state's quality rating and improvement system. And I know we're a little bit short on time today, so I'm going to go through my slides kind of quickly, but my contact information will be shared at the end of the presentation, so please feel free to reach out to me if you'd like any more information about anything I go through.

So I'm going to talk just a little bit about our key takeaways. The biggest takeaway that our team walked away with from this Community of Practice was that we have greatly expanded our definition of diversity. When we started out, many of you heard the word diversity and kind of automatically thought of racial diversity, and I think many of us then thought that, you know, that there's really no diversity in the North Dakota early childhood workforce, so it's easy to avoid having conversations about diversity and equity; however, we've come to realize that it's just simply not true that our workforce lacks diversity.

While North Dakota is not terribly racially diverse, we do see demographics changing, particularly in our larger cities, and we've come to realize that our workforce is diverse in many other ways. For example, the age of providers that we serve ranges anywhere from 16 to 85. There's great diversity in the socioeconomic status and educational background of our workforce, and access to reliable technology is not consistent across our state. And this final point is particularly important for our work as a training organization. As a large rural state, we rely really heavily on online training to meet the needs of providers since we don't have the capacity to physically be in every community.

And we've sometimes taken things like high-speed Internet and comfort with using technology for granted, and this lack of access to technology can have a huge impact on providers' access

to training and professional development opportunities, which in turn can have a huge impact on their career — their career development, and so it's something that we have to continue to take into account and work towards finding solutions to make training accessible for everybody. The concept of implicit or unconscious bias also deeply resonated with our team. We had lots of conversations about the implicit biases that we hold as a staff and how these biases manifest themselves in our work, as well as the biases we hold as individuals. Also, as a result of this Community of Practice, we have taken the time to examine some of the underlying narratives of our policies.

We've asked ourselves why certain policies were put in place, what the unintended consequences of those policies have been, and because of that whether those policies need to be changed to be more equitable or if they can just be discarded, and we don't need them in the first place. And finally, our eyes were opened to new perspectives on lots of different issues through this experience. Our staff of about 25 is fairly homogeneous.

You know, we're all white, middle-class college-educated women, and all but one of us was born and raised in either Minnesota, North Dakota, or South Dakota, and so because of this, our perspectives have sometimes been limited and go unchallenged because we all share really similar experiences and backgrounds. But this Community of Practice gave us the space to discuss issues that were new to us. You know, for example, just the concept of privilege and what that means, or even the use of preferred pronouns. That was new to some of our team members, as well as the ability ask questions in a judgment-free setting. And so related to that, the most valuable resource that our team took away from this experience was just having the dedicated time and a safe space to have honest, and sometimes, vulnerable discussions about sensitive topics.

If we hadn't had the opportunity to participate, we likely wouldn't have taken the time to have these conversations and begin thinking through these issues. And we also appreciated having some accountability measures in place through things like goal setting and action planning, as well as have support from others around the country who were doing the same work. Kristi talked a little bit about the article, "Unconscious Bias: When Good Intentions Aren't Enough," and we really enjoyed both the content of that article, and we've shared it with our staff as an introduction to this topic. But we also really enjoyed the text rendering activity that went along with the article. It was a great way to help us quickly focus our conversation, and we've since used the technique with other topics, so I would encourage you to check out that resource to learn more about that.

And finally, as a result of participating in this Community of Practice, we've just become more aware of and interested in, other resources that are available around the topics of equity and diversity. We've become more tuned-in to new resources and how we can use them in our work rather than that, you know, just simply skimming the email that comes in and then deleting it and forgetting about it. We're thinking about how we can actually use those resources. And so just a few notable examples, and I believe these are also in the resources section, was a new NAEYC report that came out last fall called, "Increasing Qualifications, Centering Equity: Experiences and Advice From Early Childhood Educators of Color," and a blog post for New America called, "Centering Equity: Leading for Equity in Early Learning."

As our team discussed next steps, the biggest question that we all had really was, you know, how do we keep the momentum going? It's not a problem to be motivated and take action during the process of the Community of Practice, but once it's over, it's easy to let it slide and kind of focus on other tasks. And so our team is really committed to holding each other accountable and continuing to have these discussions and sharing resources with each other, with the rest of our staff, and with providers in the workforce whenever we have the opportunity.

We've also committed to finding a solution to providing translation for some of our online training. This has been a need for a really long time, and we've kind of been dragging our feet on it for a lot of reasons, but we now have some momentum and are seriously exploring solutions and have set a goal of having translation for some state-required trainings by the end of this year just as one way to support our diverse workforce.

We've also renewed our commitment to providing resources for early educators who are serving diverse populations since we know there's a lack of these types of resources in our state. And we're also in the process of developing some new trainings that address these topics, including building connections with diverse families, supporting dual language learners, and anti-bias education. And finally, we will be continuing to ask ourselves if the right people are at the table when decisions are being made, and if they're not, how we can invite them to the table to make sure that diverse perspectives are heard and represented. Again, I know that was really quick, but I appreciate you letting me share a bit about our team's experience with this Community of Practice.

Zelda: Thank you, Katie, and thank you both, Katie and Kristi, for sharing your experiences, and I know that we could probably spend another 30 minutes to an hour talking about this subject and about your experiences, and we had allotted some time for questions, but we have been answering questions in the chat box. So I'm going to turn it over to Awuse, who is going to do any final questions and give us some instructions about the questions that we weren't able to answer on the webinar today. So, Awuse?

Awuse: Thank you, Zelda. So we have about two minutes left, and just to let you all know, the questions that we were not able to get to, we will be getting to those at the end. We'll be sending you an email with that information, so keep an eye out for an email just answering those questions that we were not able to get to. So moving along, there are a few resources that we wanted to share with you all before you leave. We have a dual language learner's celebration week coming up.

The theme is Spring Into Practice, so you can sign up for this on the Individualized Professional Development, or iPD, which is on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Central, or ECLKC. You can also join the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices MyPeers community, and for those of you who are not familiar with MyPeers, it is a virtual learning network where you can share resources and exchange ideas with other early childhood professionals. And next, we do have the resources that were mentioned throughout the presentation for you all. You can ...

Again, it's all in the green resources widget, so you can go ahead and access and download those. And also here is a ... Here are the contact information for all the presenters that spoke throughout this presentation. You should also be able to access the slides in the green resources widget. Again, we really want to thank you all.