P.E.A.C.E.: Creating resources to empower parents to discuss and model proactive, interfaith engagement with local families.

A Capstone Action Project

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts in Interfaith Action program

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Tobey Aubert

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Abstract

My Capstone project intends to provide an answer to the question, “How can average families advance a positive climate of interfaith engagement within the local community?” Parents can discuss and model acceptance and understanding of families with other faith traditions, to instill a respectful interest within their children that will promote inclusivity.

The participants include parents from a local community who will share their perspective and will participate in a focus group study. Family therapists, school teachers and social workers, religious leaders and a local businessman will help to format written materials.

A goal is for the materials to be implemented within everyday living, to produce a change in the perspective of the parent regarding families of other faith traditions, and to bring together various sectors of our community to publish these materials with their recommendation onto a local parenting website for greater community usage.

The results of the change project include a first stage formation of the written “P.E.A.C.E.’ parenting materials, a better understanding of the perspective of parents from faith and no faith traditions, and the opportunity from the momentum produced by this project to further collaborate towards an online presence backed by community leaders. The conclusion of this project is that the need for easily usable training materials for parents on the subject of interfaith engagement is desired. Further longer term focus group studies are necessary to refine the materials and the promotional methods for the topic and the P.E.A.C.E. parenting materials.

Key words: interfaith engagement, families, parents, resources, awareness, understanding.
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I am grateful for the support of my wife, in encouraging me to pursue my dreams and continue to risk in the pursuit of great and positive change for our community. Joanna Currie-Sartori for believing in me and in the project to better equip parents to promote interfaith engagement and understanding, and backing that belief by making her ability and insight available in helping create the P.E.A.C.E materials. The parents, teachers and religious leaders of our local community for being willing to share their thoughts, time, and life for the betterment of our community. The professors of Claremont Lincoln University for their insight into my project and their kindness in guiding with wisdom and gentleness.
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CHAPTER 1 – Introduction to Project and Evidence of Mindfulness

Purpose and Scope

My Capstone project intends to provide an answer to the question, “How can average families advance a positive climate of interfaith engagement within the local community?” As an answer to that question, parents and their children can incorporate respectful interest or curiosity when interacting with their neighbors, classmates, and their families of various faith traditions in everyday life. My Capstone project intends to provide parents with easy to use engagement materials to generate positive questions, answers, and celebrations of faith diversity in an approachable manner for both parents and their children.

I have worked with five families from the local community who have elementary age students and are of various faith backgrounds. In collaborating with a school psychologist, a family therapist, and elementary teachers to produce the engagement materials, a five step process was developed to be read and potentially implemented by the parent focus group. I have referred the materials to religious leaders in the community for their review and recommendations. The final product will be available through a trusted parenting website for public use post Capstone project.

The setting for the project is within one local community with a history of acceptance of diversity. The goal is to have this five step process enable parents to proactively engage in interfaith dialogue with other parents to establish an open communication between families that encourages true understanding of the values of each family and their commonality. The parents will then be able to encourage the children to move forward in acceptance and understanding of their peers who are of diverse faith traditions without fear or awkwardness. The materials teach
parents to work through an internal process that leads to external engagement with confidence.

When an interfaith opportunity arises or in preparation for an interfaith engagement, parents will collaborate with their child in a five step process. They will pause to become aware of the opportunity. They will explore their own feelings regarding the interaction. They will ask themselves appreciative questions that can bring positive perspective to the interaction. They will create an action plan. Finally, they will then commit to the experience interfaith engagement confidently. A key aspect of the materials is that it be available to use in a format suitable for their convenience at home.

The timeframe for the project was 10 weeks. Three weeks were used to finalize engagement materials and prepare the focus group. Three weeks were used for the parents to work through the materials and engage in the community with the materials in mind. The last four weeks were used to gather test results, present results to family therapist and education professional stakeholders and religious leader stakeholders, and to publish the findings.

Guiding Values and Project Significance

- The family unit is an important place for child development in all areas including acceptance and understanding of diversity of faith tradition.
- Acceptance in the home encourages acceptance in society.
- Dialogue, meaning presenting relevant information and opinions to understand the perspective of the other without a desire for a winner, discourages misunderstanding, fear, and stereotypes.¹,²

• When we talk about ideas or people in a positive way, we change the future.3
• Participation within the context everyday living forms a habit that is not easily broken.

I identified a gap between those values and the local community setting primarily through interviews with parents. The significance of this project is due to the lack of guidance for parents and their children in regard to everyday interaction and with neighbors and friends of other faith traditions. An increase in diversity leads to everyday interactions with families. As I interviewed parents of various faith traditions I discovered that all of those I interviewed considered acceptance of other families with different faith traditions as positive and fairly normal in our community. Conversely they identified awkwardness and confusion in regard to discussing lifestyle differences relating to differing faith practices in the course of common community interaction, such as a home playdate. Most parents interviewed simply avoided those discussions.

I identified that gap between those values and the local community setting secondarily through research into interfaith engagement. Research showed that discussion regarding diversity, including differing faith traditions, was left to schools and educators, often focusing on providing methods and opportunities for those of minority faith traditions to acclimate to the culture or create a special venue for them to practice their faith tradition, such as, differing holiday schedules, food and external requirements such as dress or hair.

The project is needed because there is currently little available resources for parents to learn how to comfortably engage in interfaith dialogue as part of their lifestyle. It is usually regulated to academic exercises at their least accessible or special seminars and meetings often

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based upon a crisis or organized action.

I hope the project will contribute to filling the gap between families of various faith traditions. Parents and, with guidance, their children should be able to proactively engage in dialogue with their friends and their families of other faith traditions without fear of accidental offense or awkwardness. They should know that the more comfortable they are with respectful curiosity, the more comfortable their children and community will be with understanding and accepting others. Their positive engagement can create a safe community for all, emotionally, socially, and even physically.

Record of Initial Mindfulness

Two aspects of mindfulness were integral in bringing this Capstone project to my attention: Awareness and Empathy. The works of John Kabot Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh played a big role in opening myself to an awareness of the other. I understand mindfulness to lead to awareness of yourself and beyond yourself to a connection with all things. As Kabot Zinn states, “Attending . . . is about the relationship between what seems like the perceiver (you) and the perceived (whatever object you are attending to). These two come together into one seamless, dynamical whole in awareness, because they were never fundamentally separate in the first place.”

As I have practiced mindfulness in my daily life, an awareness of the deeper things happening in the “little” moments of the present has awakened within me. There have been moments on the elementary school playground of children where interfaith engagement happened. Parents connecting with parents, children connecting with children of different

ethnicities, cultures and faith traditions. Along with that there was an awareness in talking with parents of a perception that, with the new US administration, a sense of helplessness was affecting those parents in regard to promoting inclusivity. They felt, true or not, that non-accepting people may feel emboldened to discriminate in regard to classmates who were of minority faith traditions. That anecdotal sentiment is found in a recent polling of students in an UCLA survey.⁵

On the positive side, I was aware that the integration of families of various faith and no faith traditions was an action that contained power in the long term. Marcello Spinella describes a process by which empathy can be born within each of us that I have used in mindful interactions in the past.⁶ I imagined if children were growing up with diversity of interfaith engagement, as a normal part of their community existence, then empathy and kindness, instead of self-protection, could be the natural response toward others no matter their faith background. That provides a ground level hope for the future. What if we became aware of the power of this interfaith engagement in everyday living and cultivated a respectful interest in each other?

Limitations

There are a few limitations to the Capstone project as it must be implemented within 10 weeks. The results are a sampling of families within a specific community. More testing is necessary before a final product can be released. The parenting website that will format and publish the materials for public use will require more focus group testing and polling of the local

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community for evidence of interest before publication. Also, the results of the project are meant to help produce materials that will be available in a specific format for a specific community, approved by therapists, child educators, and religious leaders within this specific community. It is not to be generalized beyond the community scope of the project without further research and review by qualified family professionals and religious leaders at a higher level.

Definitions of Terms

- **Resource/Tools/Materials/End Product:** This is a series of thoughts and questions formulated by a family therapist and myself with the input of parents, teachers, religious leaders, and social workers. It is designed to help the parent know how to proactively demonstrate respectful interest by self-reflection and asking quality questions of those of other faith traditions. It is also designed with the intent that parents engage with their child and lead them through the process as well.

- **Parenting Resource Website:** This project is working with a website, Yellowbrick.me, to eventually make the End Product available in various formats to the public. This website is a for-profit business that has articles written by professionals involved in family and child therapy and education. It is not faith based.

- **Multifaith/Interfaith:** For the purpose of this project these terms refer to the interaction between the parents, children or family of one faith tradition, including no faith tradition, and the parents, children or family of another faith tradition, including no faith tradition.

- **Faith Tradition/Faith Background/Religious Tradition:** The religious group with which one is affiliated and actively participating. It implies those specific beliefs and practices that will have an impact on the social interactions of families within the community.
CHAPTER 2 – Literature Review and Initial Stakeholder Dialogue

Introduction to Literature Review

The literature review researched the social effect of differences of faith traditions among students and the methods parents and educators apply to promote acceptance and understanding among those students. The research question is, “How can average families advance a positive climate of interfaith engagement within the local community?” Another way to state the question is, “How can parents encourage a pattern of respectful interest and acceptance when their children interact with their peers from other faith traditions?” There seems to be a gap in literature specifically targeting parent to child interaction regarding interfaith experience with their peers. Educator to student interaction was also couched in a broader diversity context. The choice was made to ascertain the trajectory from past to present of research on student interfaith experience in a social context.

In the context of assessing the need for resource materials for parents to learn how to better engage in interfaith dialogue with families in their community, several aspects were researched. Was there resource materials already available on the topic? Were they easy to use in the context of the normal schedule of a parent in Connecticut or Western culture in general? Was diversity training specific to faith traditions an educational focus? To generate research based answers to those questions, the Claremont Lincoln University Library database and the Google Scholar database were searched in January through February 2018. Key words were searched in various combinations including parents, students, diversity, interfaith, faith based, education, and community. Sources were found upon the topic from various time periods in books, professional journals, and papers. The major themes the literature review will discuss are the following: lack of parent usable materials, lack of specific focus on faith and diversity with children and
families, methods for discussing diversity of faith, and positive and negative opinions on faith traditions in Western culture.

***Past Perspectives on Interfaith Engagement among Children and Families***

In looking at the manner in which the topic was previously understood by academics, there appeared to be three major ways in which the faith topic was discussed. Firstly, there was an emphasis placed upon ethnic diversity and race, of which faith tradition was simply an aspect. Secondly, a de-emphasis was placed upon faith tradition as a factor in minority children and family integration. Thirdly, an emphasis was placed in the past on viewing faith traditions through the lens of empathy. All three of these ways did not expressly deal with interfaith engagement for students. Only the last discussed ways in which a parent would be able to model empathetic behavior with their children, but in the larger context of diversity, not specifically in regard differences in faith tradition.

One way the faith topic was discussed was by placing emphasis upon ethnic diversity and race, of which faith tradition was simply an aspect. The 1999 article, “Responding to Religious Diversity in Classrooms,” emphasized ways that parents of faith traditions could work with teachers to create an inclusive environment. For those of a minority faith tradition, it emphasized ways that families of faith traditions could work through difficulties. Practical examples emphasized the frustrations of holiday conflicts for parents of minority faith traditions, and the isolation of students from minority faith traditions when in-class assignments potentially clashed

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with the interpretation of the family faith practice.

Other past resources deemphasized faith tradition as a factor in minority children and family integration. Often the emphasis was placed upon data that seemed to indicate religion as obsolete. In the 2002 study, “Parenting Practices, Child Adjustment, and Family Diversity,” the connection of race, ethnicity, family structure, education, income, and gender with parenting practices was studied to determine the outcome of children. Faith tradition as a focus of study was not included but simply an assumed part of ethnicity.⁸

A third way the topic was understood in the past was through the lens of empathy. In 2002, the study, “Reach Beyond Tolerance: A Framework for Teaching Children Empathy and Responsibility,” had as a goal the development of an awareness of the feelings of others and the ability to respond compassionately as if the child was “the other.”⁹ The example of expressing empathy and care by a parent was a way in which empathy for other children could be transferred to their own children according to a 2003 study, entitled “The Relations of Parental Warmth and Positive Expressiveness to Children’s Empathy-Related Responding and Social Functioning: A Longitudinal Study.”¹⁰ This was the closest my research came to parent to child

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engagement on the topic of understanding and interacting with peers of diverse backgrounds including faith tradition.

Overall the literature suggests past methods excluded the parent to child dynamic. Teachers cooperated with parents of minority faith traditions to create inclusive classrooms. Faith tradition was not specifically considered on its own as an ongoing emphasis for diversity. Empathy was encouraged to be taught within a classroom or therapist session and modeled by the parents. Direct parent to child discussion about ways to understand and positively interact with peers of diverse faith traditions was not emphasized in the research.

Current Perspectives on Interfaith Engagement among Children and Families

Current perspectives on parent facilitation of acceptance by their children of diverse faith traditions continue in the emphasis upon empathy. As a bridge between past research with children and the present focus on empathy as an effective emphasis, the validity of the “Empathy Questionnaire” was studied and given positive affirmation. The emphasis seems to be upon the need for a culture that encourages empathy instead of behavioral guidelines.11 Another article, “Connecting Children to Kindness: Encouraging a Culture of Empathy,” emphasized creating an empathetic mindset through play in which thoughtful questions foster care for others.12 Direct emphasis on caring for others of diverse or minority faith traditions were not necessarily

highlighted, but fell under the umbrella of caring for others in different or difficult life circumstances.

For many non-traditional families, maintaining a faith tradition is a significant part of their cultural perception. A 2016 article, “Religion and Non-traditional Families in the United States,” emphasized the role of religion in determining the acceptance or rejection of non-traditional families.\(^{13}\) The point being made is the promotion of the idea that religion is here to stay in the United States and must be taken into account in diverse settings. Current secular society has not created an America with less religious belief, but, it seems, simply personalized it. That creates the circumstances that may suggest that if children have easy to use tools to engage and celebrate the faith tradition of others, it decrease the possibility of misunderstanding, awkwardness, or even conflict in school or the neighborhood. The article emphasized a culture in which religion is personal instead of an overt cultural influence on societal norms.

The article, “The Language of Friendship and Identity: Children’s Communication Choices in an Interfaith Exchange,” continues that emphasis on addressing religion as a focus.\(^{14}\) The article distinguishes between friendliness and respectful interest. Using the language of friendship in an interfaith setting can produce an unintentional consequence of dismissiveness. The idea is that the past method of handling religious diversity in a secular society was to promote friendship despite religious difference. The article proposes to handle religious diversity by affirming the religion of the other as valid and worthy of interest. This distinction ties in with


the perspective that an empathetic culture combined with respect will create less conflict than an empathetic culture that dismisses religion as irrelevant to the friendships of children. This perspective celebrates the faith tradition of the other as a means of acceptance. The other perspective agrees to mutually dismiss the religion of the other to “be friends anyway.”

Religious education did not seem to create greater acceptance among students in social context in one study. The article, “Relationships between local patterns of religious practice and young people’s attitudes to the religiosity of their peers,” seemed to emphasize that acceptance of religious students was based upon the number of those students who were religious in general. In areas with little religious attendance among the families of students, the more dismissive and unaccepting the students were toward those who were religious.¹⁵ As an interfaith leader, providing tools at the family level for positive engagement between students of different faith traditions and no faith tradition is one possible solution. Respectful interest instilled as a standard behavior through engagement and modeling by parents may discourage the tendency to demean what students do not embrace themselves.

Another comparison can be made from past to present understanding of the issue is the idea of majority engagement of the minority issue. The research done on past articles emphasize professionals, such as educators, working with those families of minority faith traditions to create a positive atmosphere for their students. The current emphasis can be said to have the families of majority faith traditions be able to affirm the students of minority faith traditions at the personal level.

Future Perspectives on Interfaith Engagement among Children and Families

Future Perspectives on faith and family are mixed in their presentation of the value of faith in society and in regard to attending to diversity within a community. Some resources view faith tradition as a hindrance to progress in regard to social issues. Others view faith tradition as a tool to be used to connect young people with their ethnic background when in a diverse community. Parental involvement can be seen as either negative or positive in regard to passing on faith tradition to their children.

One article that provided a critique of the future perspective on religion is the article, “Critique of the Religion and Spirituality Discourse in Family Articles.”16 The authors propose that traditional religion is being associated in a negative sense with conservative values while spirituality outside of traditional religion is associated positively with liberal acceptance and understanding. This association provides a negative view of religion in general. In regard to student interaction with their peers of traditional faith backgrounds, the fact that their family promotes their faith may be seen as a negative. This can potentially isolate those children of families with strong faith traditions in a community generally viewed as liberal and accepting.

In looking at the urban community, spirituality and faith tradition may be a way in which students are able to embrace their culture. The article, “Spirituality as a Cultural Asset for Culturally Diverse Youth in Urban Schools,” provides a perspective on urban youth and the promotion of spirituality to connect youth with the positive aspects of their family and ethnic

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culture. That, in turn, displaces the negative aspects of promoted as necessary parts of urban culture, such as anger, posturing, and violence.

Coinciding with the two previous articles is research that suggests spirituality as an asset to student development. The article, “School Counseling Programs as Spiritual and Religious Safe Zones,” proposed the idea of student health being tied into some concept of spirituality, whether emphasizing meaning in life or some connection to the divine. Having a safe place to share personal beliefs may provide the structure that helps provide a sense of balance to understand their life as they mature. Interfaith leadership within a local community may be another avenue to provide that “religious safe zone.” Providing parents with tools to know how to address spirituality in the multifaith context of their community may prove valuable in the primary place of development for the student, the home.

In dissecting the research articles listed above which appear to sidestep or dismiss parent to child engagement on the issue of multifaith interaction, one can propose that tools are needed to help parents provide guidance for their children. The past, present, and future perspectives indicate engagement and training on diversity will continue to be performed professionals such as educators, and family therapists with students. These perspectives also emphasize those professionals working with those of minority faith tradition as part of their minority ethnic culture to be able to practice their faith within the majority culture. From the perspective of the


majority ethnic culture and the majority faith traditions, acceptance and understanding should be more than simply tolerance or a dismissal of faith tradition in general. Acceptance and understanding should have as their end goal a greater sense of community among those of various faith traditions and no faith tradition. Parents can prepare their children to celebrate the lifestyle of their friends of another faith tradition. Through respectful curiosity, community with diversity can become more of a reality for our future, if we inspire children to practice positive patterns of engagement today.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Interfaith Engagement among Children and Families

A family therapist has been a main consultant on the resource product as it has developed. She is trusted in the family therapist community, works in the public education system, and has previously worked in local non-profit services for families. She has worked with me to develop an easy to use format to engage students in empathy and understanding during conflict with the acronym. P.E.A.C.E. She sees this issue as one that is dependent upon the personal view of parents and encouraged a self-assessment component to the initial stage of the parenting resource.

The Christian minister of a large inclusive church involved as a major stakeholder to present an inclusive perspective of the majority faith tradition in the area. She would contribute her perspective from her faith tradition concerning the way to demonstrate acceptance of others from other faiths. Her one issue at the outset was wanting the majority of the curriculum to come from a non-religious source such as family therapist or psychologist with the consent and contribution of the various religious leaders on record to avoid contention or favoritism. She agrees providing tools in this parenting format is one way to at least introduce the concept
acceptance and understanding of the faith tradition of other neighbors and classmates. As part of their curriculum for a Middle School faith formation class they visit other faith traditions, but do not engage their parents in those discussions.

Another stakeholder is Buddhist teacher of a large Buddhist center who represents one of the minority faith traditions in the area. Her Buddhist tradition predisposes her to this concept of acceptance and understanding. Her understanding of Buddhist tradition makes awareness of the other a priority. Without wanting to over-emphasize her own tradition within the resources, she did point out a growing acceptance of science based mindfulness techniques being used in counseling and school systems to help with awareness. She wondered if that may be incorporated into the curriculum along with any usual teaching methods.

Parents from various faith or no faith tradition are major stakeholders of the project. One parent comes from of a majority faith tradition. She is a Roman Catholic who is also part of an interracial marriage and whose sister is a married Lesbian. She credits those two facts as a testimony to inclusivity and acceptance being compatible with her faith tradition. Her issue is whether parents would take the time to go through a lengthy curriculum. When a personal assessment for parents was mentioned as an idea, she felt most would not bother unless there was a particular crisis. Working through a personal assessment and dialogue with children would be beyond the average time available for many parents. She also believed that the community had a general culture of acceptance. The difficulty was not knowing the acceptable communication and question methods for parents to teach children. She felt that celebrating the diversity of faith was something that parents and children did not know how to do. Instead she felt that faith was largely ignored for fear of unintended offense.
Another parent stakeholder is part of a minority faith tradition. She felt the issue of interfaith relationships between children needed to be addressed to help with areas of acceptance. Being a devout Muslim wearing traditional clothing of her faith tradition and of a minority ethnicity, she has experienced acceptance and avoidance, though nothing overt. The school system is very conscious of creating acceptance and allowance for her faith tradition with the calendar year and required events. Within those times of avoidance, she felt that often it was not the children that exhibited negative behavior on their own, but fed off the nonverbal cues of their parents. Even in that regard, she felt more acceptance than avoidance, and that avoidance may just be an attempt to not create an awkward situation unintentionally. When I mentioned the idea of parent self-assessment resources at the beginning of the parenting resources she immediately considered that something of value, but wondered if parents would take the time.

An elementary school teacher who is a practicing Buddhist whose wife is a practicing Christian is stakeholder from many aspects. He believed that in our community “acceptance is our religion.” He thought that showing respect for others beliefs was different than acceptance.

Many parents of no faith tradition have a hard time knowing how to talk to their children about the faith of others because it seems to conflict with their strongly held view of God in general. On the opposite end of the faith spectrum, he has scene immigrants with faith traditions tied strongly to their ethnic backgrounds take a “preventionist” approach with their children. By that he meant that they fear their children will lose their heritage in this new country and attempt to deeply instill their faith tradition in their children.

When their children engage with others of a different faith tradition the children are unsure how to demonstrate acceptance without feeling like they are betraying their heritage. He thought that those of us engaging with minorities of that proposed “preventionist” mentality
would help them by simply showing respect and interest in their faith tradition. He felt that would help remove any fear that their heritage would be compromised. More interviews need to take place with religious leaders from other faith traditions before the four weeks of testing and after to review the results of the project and make recommendations.

In regard to stakeholder interviews as they compare with the literature review, several comparisons emerged. The literature describing respect and interest over friendly disregard of faith traditions was affirmed. Parent stakeholders especially saw the need for tools to better be able to engage about faith instead of avoid discussion for fear of unintended offense. Parent stakeholders also demonstrated that in our community the literature of the past had found acceptance and implementation within our school systems. Teachers were working with families of various faith traditions to create an atmosphere of acceptance. They felt the work needed to be done to know how to engage at the personal level. Moving beyond the professional educator emphasis to tools for celebration of faith diversity at the neighborhood level was needed.

Stakeholders see the need for the project to be more specific than simply lessons on acceptance of minority faith traditions for their children. They have affirmed that they need tools for knowing the best manner to engage others of various faith traditions that creates respect and removes awkwardness. They have an emphasis on what the majority can do to engage the minority in positive manner, instead of what resources the minority can use to practice their faith. The responsibility for creating an engaged, accepting community begins with the majority extending a willingness to understand and celebrate the faith tradition of others. The conclusions from both the literature review and the stakeholder interview is that passive acceptance must be replaced with proactive engagement.
Conclusion

The first article of the most important sources from my literature review is “The Language of Friendship and Identity: Children’s Communication Choices in an Interfaith Exchange.” It contains the defining concept of providing tools that will help parents and their children know how to celebrate the faith traditions of their peers with respectful interest. 19 A second article of the most important sources is the “Religion and Non-traditional Families in the United States.” 20 This source articulates the need to address and positively engage religion as a current and crucial aspect of American community. It will affect the lives of families and neighbors. A method for affirming faith and extending acceptance at the familial level seems to be a necessity that will remain.

The literature review affirmed the need to have materials for parents that specifically targeted interfaith engagement. Materials are simply not available for parents to use to teach, discuss, and model positive engagement with their children when interacting with families other faith traditions in the community. The review also affirmed the process needs to be one of proactive engagement with respectful interest and curiosity. Statistics and information on religion is easily found by parents online if desired. A simple guide to process the feelings and perspectives of parents and their children and develop an action plan to encourage interfaith understanding is not easily found. That is the reason for this project.

CHAPTER 3 – Methods Determined with Stakeholders

Project Goal Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

The goal of this Capstone project is encourage positive engagement between families of different faith traditions. The method to accomplish this goal is by providing parents with easy to use engagement materials to generate positive questions, answers, and celebrations of faith diversity in an approachable manner for both parents and their children. Various stakeholders contributed to the aspects of the goal of this Capstone project.

Religious leaders emphasized the goal of community over tolerance. One religious leader advocated for a proactive engagement resource that moved acceptance of diversity forward instead of simply encouraging a basic level of acceptance or to alleviate some conflict. The goal advocated was to move from strength to strength – acceptance to respectful interest and dialogue, but not within an academic forum or adult to adult hypothetical discussion. Instead it is in the context of playdates, and seasonal celebrations, and neighborhood interactions that proactive engagement would occur.

Project goals for materials that included parent self-assessment were mentioned by the founder of the online parenting resource website that will be involved in post-Capstone implementation. More broadly he advocated for a way that the parent, not only the child, would learn about himself or herself and become more comfortable in engaging in interfaith dialogue. He felt it would increase interest in the resource materials from a marketing perspective, if the reader felt they would be growing as a family, not only teaching their children.

The family therapist also recommended a parent focused segment of the materials that allowed them to self-assess their comfort level with interfaith engagement. We collaborated to
create a process that included a self-reflection piece that the parent would go through, then lead their child through. The family therapist affirmed the emphasis on a mindfulness component that would become the first step in the resource materials. The materials developed into a five step process where the parent models each of the first two steps, then leads the child through the same two reflection steps with openness about their personal reflection. The parent and child then collaborate, plan, and experience a positive, proactive interaction with the friend or family of the faith tradition.

A social worker and psychologist in the elementary school emphasized the need for a goal that would engage parents in a way that encouraged them to be proactive in discussing acceptance and understanding. He pointed out the many opportunities created by the school system to celebrate diversity. He felt that parents simply relied upon the school system to instill that sense of tolerance within their children. Those parents who were proactive in one way, would tend to be proactive in any other way presented to them. The social worker proposed the possibility that encouraging “already proactive” parents in using and implementing the materials at home would set a tone for other parents in the community to be engaged. He pointed toward an idea further down for a short term parent group to go over the materials and discuss how to implement together. From the perspective of the social worker within the focus group school system, parents should be the focus of the materials that they would then discuss with their children and implement themselves, instead of having child oriented materials for parents to teach their children what to do in a conflict situation.

The most informative goals came from the parents themselves, who represent the intended user. One goal they mentioned was easy to use resource materials. One parent stakeholder said that a detailed curriculum was not practical in the context of using these tools in
everyday life situations. Attending a seminar or webinar for information does not coincide with the everyday responsibilities and interactions scenario that the project is looking to meet. Another parent stakeholder said that a detailed self-analysis would be interesting but most likely skipped by the average parent. They proposed a simple personal reflection for a short period with a directed question or two. It was felt that a short reflection would be the most time an average parent with practical needs for accessing the materials would spend. A record of the collaborative conversations and processes are documented in Appendix B.

Project Methods Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

The project method was through a focus group based upon the research material the family therapist and I develop. The materials we created as a five step process are the acronym, P.E.A.C.E. Pause. Explore. Ask. Create. Experience. Each of the first four steps are a simplified, user friendly applications of a proven change method. Pause derives from Mindfulness. The goal is to develop awareness by the parent for his or her own feelings, awareness of the feelings of the child, and awareness of the feelings of the other family. Taking a moment to pause can prepare the parent and child to be receptive to those feelings instead of quickly reacting to them. The classic work, Mindfulness for Beginners by Jon Kabat-Zinn and the child focused booklet, Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) by Eline Snel provide further emphasis.21,22 Explore derives from Critical Moments Reflection. In the context of this project, Critical Moments Reflection can mean allowing ourselves to think back to our past.

experiences that may have an impact on how we view faith traditions and other families with
different faith traditions. The work of C. Otto Schamer, *Theory of U*, provides ground work for
this step.\(^{23}\) A website link for reflective parenting is provided within the material for parent
centered focus on Critical Reflection.\(^{24}\) Ask derives from Appreciative Inquiry. This entails
asking positive questions that search for the best in people and, in our context, includes their
faith tradition in that search. This step is derived from the work of David Cooperrider and Diana
Whitney, “A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry.”\(^ {25}\) Create derives from
Design Thinking. Simplifying a five step process to three steps, Empathize, Ideate, Create, we
used the process developed in Stanford for parents and children to engage thoughtfully, from a
place of empathy.\(^ {26}\) Another parent website on design thinking with parent to child relationships
in mind was provided for further reading.\(^ {27}\) The last step is Experience which is a commitment to
put the “Create” plan into action.

\(^{24}\) Center for Reflective Communities. [http://reflectivecommunities.org](http://reflectivecommunities.org)
Figure 1 P.E.A.C.E. in One Step Summary.

We will work with six parents of elementary school age children from the local community. They will have two weeks to work through the five step process and attempt to implement in their everyday life. Each step contains questions and thoughts for the parent to consider. They can be done as a whole unit in one sitting or taken one step per sitting with time in-between. The goal is to have the parent consciously think through the process and move with their child together within the context of their everyday lives. Depending upon the circumstance or personal goals of the parent, each step can be in depth or quick and easy. For example, one option is for the parent to model each of the first two steps, then leads the child through the same two reflection steps with openness about their personal reflection. The parent and child then make a list of positive questions, create an action plan, and experience a positive, proactive interaction with the friend or family of a diverse faith tradition. No child involvement in the focus group would be recorded, simply if the parent felt able to use materials.
Project Measurements Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

After the two weeks we present the six families with a reflection survey based upon some objectives of the group study. The product measurements this Capstone project is using are a reflection survey similar to the Learning Objective Achievement and Reflection survey used in the CLU weekly coursework. I began with a focus group of parents, providing them with resource materials and a set of criteria and objectives. After the parents have gone through the timeframe, I survey them with specific questions addressing the objectives. The objectives below were presented to the focus group.

Focus Group Objectives on the quality of the materials.

By the end of this course, parents will be able to assess the materials as to:

1. Ease of understanding the materials.
2. Ease of engagement with your child in walking through the steps.
3. Completion of all five steps by parent or parent and child.
4. Ease of application in an everyday setting.
5. Actual direct application to real life situation.

Learning Objectives.

By the end of this course, parents will be able to:

1. Identify the process of moving from calm self-assessment to proactive positive engagement through the 5 steps of P.E.A.C.E.
2. Identify personal assumptions and past experiences that have helped create their perspective toward the topic of faith traditions.
3. Develop easy strategies to engage and model P.E.A.C.E. with their children.
4. Create an achievable plan for proactive engagement with another family regarding
faith tradition within their local community.

The Learning Reflections Survey would address each of the objectives above for the focus group to rate from one to five. There would then be a comment section after each specific objective. A question providing the opportunity to comment on the quality of the materials and their own personal learning will also be provided. The final intent is for a brief discussion time for the whole group to present their findings to me directly.

The results of the focus group can then be used in an expanding circle of implementation. Using the reflections from the focus group we present them to key stakeholders and gather suggestions for improvement of the materials or ways to distribution. We then work with another focus group of parents. I then continue the pattern of reflection survey and the expanding multistage implementation process. A presentation of materials could occur with religious leaders for assessment and recommendations. We would perform a similar presentation to educators and religious leaders for their assessment of the results of the objective reflection survey from the focus group. Changes are made to the P.E.A.C.E. resource materials based up the recommendations. A key component may be an official approval of the materials by child care professionals and religious leaders to enhance validity and marketing of the materials.

From there we move toward full implementation online for sustainability of the change project. Evaluation would entail recording hits, parent comments, and parent requests or registration for more interactive sessions on the interfaith topic. An anonymous objective reflection survey would be made available to them at various steps in using the resource materials provided online to continue the evaluation of sustainability.
CHAPTER 4 – Results: Evidence of Change through Project Implementation

Actions Taken by Researcher and Stakeholders

I collaborated with stakeholders specifically to create applicable materials that fit within the lifestyle of the parents. The materials created were a five step process with the acronym, P.E.A.C.E. This was presented as a 25 slide PowerPoint presentation, also given in PDF format that can be viewed in Appendix C.

I presented the project to action oriented parents who were part of a local community volunteer group. From that larger group presentation, a five parent focus group was formed to read through and implement the materials within a three week time frame. The focus group also attempted to go over materials with their children. The focus group attempted to apply the materials to a family situation in which they would naturally interact with a family from another faith tradition, such as a playdate or time on the playground after school. They then filled a survey reflection for results.

Measurements of Results

The results of our learning objective surveys came from two separate surveys. The first survey, labeled P.E.A.C.E. Focus Group Survey Part One, reflected upon the quality of the materials. All five participants completed this first survey. The second survey, labeled P.E.A.C.E. Focus Group Survey Part Two, reflected upon the personal experience of the participants. Four, out of the five, participants completed this second survey.

The first survey upon the materials, P.E.A.C.E. Focus Group Survey Part One, had seven checklist questions, and three reflective comment questions. All five focus group participants filled out the survey.
**Question One:**

I was able to understand the materials as they were presented without difficulty.

![Chart for Question One](chart-question-one.png)

**Table 1.**

**Question Two:**

I was able to engage in the P.E.A.C.E. steps with my child in a way that my child could understand.

![Chart for Question Two](chart-question-two.png)

**Table 2.**
Question Three:

I was able to read and work through the first four steps on my own.

Table 3.

Question Four:

I was able to complete the first four steps with my child.

Table 4.
Question Five:

Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Not</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I was able to find application of the P.E.A.C.E. steps in my interactions with other families/friends of my child.

Question Six:

Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Not</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I found it easy to fit the P.E.A.C.E. steps into my schedule.
Question Seven:

![Chart](chart.png)

Table 7.

The majority of the first seven questions centered on understanding the materials and finding personal application to their child and a real life situation for the participants. The majority agreed that the materials were understandable and easy to follow but was less easy to fit into their schedule and use with their children.

**Question Eight:** General Comments.

Highlighted quotes from participants:

“I like the idea of people who practice different religions engaging in meaningful dialogue about their faith, and look forward to using the framework to facilitate deeper conversations in the future.”

“I was attracted to participating in this project because I thought it would help me in talking about religion to my own children, but I found I needed to go back to something even more basic, i.e. what is religion and why do people practice it. The materials seem
to address families who already practice a faith and are used to discussing faith with their own children. Since our family is non-religious, I felt I needed to take a few steps back.”

**Question Nine:** Positive Comments on the Materials.

Highlighted quotes from participants:

“The exercises are good for many aspects of life! I liked them very much and printed out the summary page as a reminder for every day, in general.”

“All steps were explained well & easy to understand.”

**Question Ten:** Comment on things that were difficult to understand.

Highlighted quotes from participants:

“I can't say I fully understood what I was supposed to do during C. The 3 stage pattern may have required more reflection on my part.”

The reflective comments results were divided into two opinions based upon having a faith tradition or having no faith tradition. Those participants with a faith tradition or current faith practice related well to the materials, and looked forward to using them with their children and other families. The participants with no faith tradition thought the materials were well done, but were confused about some of the steps, especially when considering how they would talk with their children about the topic of religion.

The second survey, *P.E.A.C.E. Focus Group Survey Part Two*, focused upon the personal experience of the participants in attempting to implement the materials. Four of the five participants completed this survey. There was one participation question, five checklist questions and four reflective comment questions.

**Question One:**

Please indicate the number of steps you read through and attempted to implement. All five of the
participants indicated they read through and attempted to implement all of five of the steps.

**Question Two:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolutely</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Absolutely Not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to understand the personal journey directed by the 5 step process (peacefully discovering more about yourself in regard to faith traditions and moving toward active purposeful interest).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Absolutely</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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**Question Three:**

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<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Absolutely Not</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 5 steps enabled me to better understand my conscious and unconscious perspective on faith and interacting with other faith traditions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absolutely Not</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
**Question Four:**

![Bar chart for Question Four](chart1.png)

*I was able to begin creating a plan with my child to encourage respectful interest and engagement with my child.*

**Table 10.**

**Question Five:**

![Bar chart for Question Five](chart2.png)

*I was able to do step 5: Experience. Interact with a family of another faith tradition using the preparation from the first four steps to form a plan of action.*

**Table 11.**
Question Six:

![Bar Chart](image)

Did the 5 steps actually help you to work through the topic of connecting with families/your child’s friends from other faith traditions?

Table 12.

Question Seven: General Comments.

Highlighted quotes from participants:

“I mentioned in the first survey that these materials seemed more geared towards families of faith (those who practice religion already). Since my family is non-religious, I did use your project as a springboard to begin discussing religion in our own household.”

“I have many friends from different religions other than my own. In a sense, it was not very difficult for me to apply these steps to the process.”

Question Eight: Comment on your experience working through the materials.

Highlighted quotes from participants:

“I found the materials to be dense honestly. And I don't know if it was because religion was not something regularly addressed in our family so it made the topic even bigger to tackle. Perhaps if we already had a background in practicing a faith, it would be easier to
talk about different faiths.”

“The materials were clear and detailed. Everyone can benefit from reading through them and practicing every day.”

**Question Nine:** Comment on things that were difficult to apply to your life.

Highlighted quotes from participants:

“I think the steps could be a helpful framework for parents to review, and then, refer back to when a situation presents itself.”

**Question Ten:** Your overall thoughts.

Highlighted quotes from participants:

“I would be more than happy to engage with fellow parents regarding religion and faith when the opportunity presents itself naturally, and appreciate having a framework for doing so. I, however, would feel awkward approaching someone with the end goal of implementing the process, and would be a bit taken aback if someone approached me with a similar intent. As project continues, it might be helpful to follow-up with parents over longer time frame.”

“This is a wonderful project, one from which EVERYONE can benefit, even those with naturally open minds and loving hearts. Sometimes we judge and stereotype unconsciously as we categorize our experiences and perceptions. This project reminds us to take life a beat slower so we can process with care what we learn and experience during interactions with others.”

The participants agreed that they understood the process from self-reflection to positive action, that the materials helped them better understand their personal perspective on faith, and that the felt the experience helped them work through the topic of family interfaith engagement.
Regarding putting the steps into practice with their child and other families, the majority results were negative. The reflective comments reveal that the time frame of two to three weeks for most participants was too short. They did not have time to for a real life interaction with another family to form. As with the first survey, the participants with no faith tradition felt a lack of clear guidance from the materials to create a plan to relate to families of other faith traditions.

Communication of Results to Stakeholders

After the initial pitch was given to a broad parent audience in which interested parents provided their email address for sign up, the entire focus group process was done through email to emphasize the “at home use” of the materials. I provided the survey questions and their answers to the focus group in similar format included in the Measurement of Results section. I also included a summary of my thoughts from the Recommendations for Future Projects section of chapter five. The goal is to set up a face to face dialogue with this group to prepare to launch further focus groups post Capstone project. The other stakeholders including family therapist, religious leaders, and the website owner also received the materials and the survey with results. Further collaboration on refining the materials will take place.

Assessment of Goal Achievement

The goal was to provide easy to use materials for parents to model for their children a way to proactively engage in respectful curiosity with families of other faith traditions. The survey results clearly determined that the materials created attained that goal. The survey results also made it clear that implementation of the materials was lacking in time and in a broader perspective for parents who did not emphasize religion or a faith tradition within their family.
CHAPTER 5 - Final Reflections and Recommendations

Overall Project Summary

The project accomplished a coming together of various community stakeholders to discuss the need to provide materials for parents in the home to help with interfaith engagement among community families. It accomplished the beginning step of creating those materials, and working through them with a few families within the community. There is now a beginning step in place to move through more thorough focus group research, and stakeholder involvement to produce P.E.A.C.E. materials for parents online through a local parenting website.

Consistency of Guiding Values

The list of values in chapter one were based upon the family unit being the starting place of instilling acceptance in children. The first two guiding values listed in chapter one were:

- The family unit is an important place for child development in all areas including acceptance and understanding of diversity of faith tradition.
- Acceptance in the home encourages acceptance in society.

The focus group confirmed that there is a gap in helping parents know how to effectively discuss and model proactive interest and acceptance in the area of interfaith engagement with families of other faith traditions in the community and that parents desire to be able to do so confidently.

- Dialogue, meaning presenting relevant information and opinions to understand the perspective of the other without a desire for a winner, discourages misunderstanding, fear, and stereotypes.
The focus group helped parents discover their own perspective regarding faith traditions, familiar or unfamiliar, and there desire for their children to be able to navigate within the world of faith and no faith diversity.

- When we talk about ideas or people in a positive way, we change the future.

This is one aspect in which the project operationalized the Golden Rule. The materials could be explained in light of the Golden Rule. None of us want to be marginalized over something as significant as the faith tradition of our family. We desire respectful interest from others as they intersect into our everyday living. Parents who work through the P.E.A.C.E. materials will be developing skills to create that atmosphere of acceptance and respectful interest that they desire from others regarding the aspects of their family life that they consider important.

- Participation within the context everyday living forms a habit that is not easily broken.

The schedule of parents was a major focus in creating materials that could be read and worked through fairly easily and quickly. The method of engaging the focus group in their participation at home over three weeks instead of a group meeting in one or two scheduled sittings also displayed the commitment to make the project fit the context of everyday living. The creation of the materials centered upon parents developing a pattern of self-reflection that led to positive engagement.

Project Impact on the Researcher

My personal learning in this project can be seen in the materials that were created for the project. The materials used the four step pattern of mindfulness, dialogue, collaboration, and change, adding a step between mindfulness and dialogue that takes aspects from both concepts.
Figure 2 P.E.A.C.E. in One Step Summary.

The first step, Pause, is directly related to mindfulness. It emphasizes quieting thoughts to create space for awareness of the “other.” Breathing techniques related to mindfulness are detailed for parents and children. Materials are referenced for further reading from Jon Kabat-Zinn and mindfulness.org.

The second step, Explore, combines thoughts from mindfulness and dialogue. It begins by performing asking gentle self-awareness questions designed to have the parent be mindful of his or her feelings, but not identify with them. It then moves into engaging his or her child in gentle dialogue about the experiences of the child. The intent is for both the parent and the child to gain a better understanding of the perspective of the child regarding faith traditions.

The third step, Ask, emphasizes dialogue through Appreciative Inquiry. It is concerned with forming questions that will demonstrate respectful interest in common values of families from other faith traditions. It is asking to understand and stimulate further dialogue.
The fourth step, *Create*, is design to help the parent collaborate with his or her child. The emphasis is on looking at understanding as a project that the family can work on together. An action plan is formed to treat friends and family members of those friends with respect and celebrate common values associated with the faith practice they observe.

The fifth step, *Experience*, is simply a commitment to create change. It is a fifth step because often we will work through concepts, but never look for the opportunity to act. This simple step is intended to create change by having the parent make a commitment with their child to welcome a family in the community from another faith tradition through proactive engagement.

The P.E.A.C.E. materials were done as a collaboration of the process I learned in CLU and discussed with family therapist and social worker stakeholders. The five step process is focused upon moving parents from mindfulness to dialogue, then collaboration, and then finally action to produce change, to initiate positive interaction with a family of another faith tradition in a way that removes awkwardness, stereotypes and avoidance.

**Project Impact on the Stakeholders**

One group of stakeholders that experienced change was the family therapist and social worker. They were inspired to view the parent as a potential source of change in this area by simply providing them with resources they could use on their own schedule, especially with a specific focus upon faith traditions. As referenced in the literature review, Mubina Hassanali Kirmani, and Barbara P Laster suggest that the usual method of addressing interfaith action for children has been through institutions outside of the home. The parents of the focus group changed in that they were able to work through their own feelings upon the topic, they saw the
need more clearly for parent training and for acceptance to be proactively pursued instead of passively allowed. As one focus group participant stated, “Sometimes we judge and stereotype unconsciously as we categorize our experiences and perceptions. This project reminds us to take life a beat slower so we can process with care what we learn and experience during interactions with others.”

Overall Project Assessment

There were several strengths within this project. The five step process of the P.E.A.C.E. materials is lifestyle oriented preparation. It emphasizes parental thoughtfulness and engagement with child over third party institutional involvement. The focus group consisted of parents in the community from a pool of action oriented parents who would be willing to pursue this project further in the future. Their contacts within the community both in non-profit and educational avenues as well as within the parenting community can further develop the project into something of communitywide value.

There are pieces in place in a broad spectrum of our community to address interfaith engagement among families. Stakeholders have been engaged in religion, business, private family therapy practice, non-profit family organizations, local education, and individual parents. This project is designed in a way that is easily accepted by the chosen community.

There are weaknesses within the project as well. The focus group time frame was extremely short for application within a real life scenario. It made it difficult for parents to

implement the P.E.A.C.E. materials within the time allotted. Group discussion of the materials would help with understanding if done as optional.

The materials were designed to encourage parents to overcome discomfort with asking questions about the faith traditions of others. However, there were no surveys or other research materials provided to help them know the comfort level of the families with whom they may be interacting. Surveys on comfort levels regarding questions about their faith practice could have been given to families of minority faith traditions prior to the focus group. Those of no faith need to feel more specifically addressed. There was a lack of affirmation that those of no faith tradition could easily work through these steps. Wordage that specifically addresses the non-religious perspective was needed.

Recommendations for Future Projects

Several recommendations can be made for the future. There needs to be more focus groups over a longer period of time for implementation of the materials with the parents and other families in the community in a natural manner. There needs to be greater expansion of the marketing for why this project is needed and how it can be helpful to children and families in the community.

A further step would be to provide the option for group meetings to overview the steps with explanation and discussion before the participants go through their weeks of implementation.

I should survey local families to gain insight into their comfort level with being asked about their faith traditions and practice, as well as survey to understand the comfort level for those of no faith tradition and compare it to those of a majority faith tradition. I should interview
religious leaders of more faith traditions in the local community for their perspective, current action on this topic, commitment to help revise the material, and eventually willingness to have their name endorse the material. Perhaps another step may be to invite parents of minority faith traditions to practice asking respectful questions.

Regarding parents of no faith tradition, I had an implied assumption that those practicing their faith tradition were doing so, among any other reasons, to instill certain positive values in their children. It appeared for those participants in the focus group who were of no faith tradition, that assumption was unclear within the materials. More research needs to be done on common perspectives of no-faith to faith practicing families.

A final further step is to engage the services of the parenting website, who has agreed to publish and market the materials. Engaging them in the development of the formatting for the P.E.A.C.E. materials will create a more appeal to parents. They also have a well-tested survey program to gauge interest and participation.
REFERENCES


Center for Reflective Communities. http://reflectivecommunities.org


APPENDIX A: Ethical Guidelines

The steps taken to ensure ethical treatment of the stakeholders were simple yet direct. Those being interviewed, especially parents who were sharing personal history of themselves and their children, filled out a Participant Privacy letter. An example of the letter is provided below. The parents that participated in the focus group were asked not to share any details of their children. I only received the name and email address of the participant and new generally speaking that they lived in the same community. The survey they completed after the focus group participation was anonymous.
[Date]

To Whom It May Concern,

I am doing an action research project about interfaith interaction within the community, and I am asking you to be a participant in my research.

I will give priority to your interests at all times. To protect your interests in my final report, I promise the following:

- Your identity will be protected at all times in my final report unless you give me specific permission to use your name.
- You are free at any time to withdraw from the research project, whereupon I will destroy all data relating to you. I will report that a participant decided to leave the project, and reflect on ways the project might have been more conducive for all participants.
- I will make a copy of my research report available to you.

Two copies are enclosed. Please sign both. Keep one for your records and return the other to me.

Tobey Aubert _____________________

Date_____________________

I have received an ethics statement from Tobey Aubert

Signed ____________________ Date ____________________

NOTE: If at any time you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact the Dean of Capstone Studies at Claremont Lincoln University, Dr. Stan Ward. Please contact him by email: sward@claremontlincoln.edu, or call the university: 909-667-4400.
### Appendix B: Stakeholder Collaboration Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Actions and Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Propose collaboration on parenting resource project with founder of parenting website</td>
<td>Founder of parenting website</td>
<td>Met in person to provide initial proposal for project. Enthusiastically agreed to collaborate. He offered the use of equipment or personnel for the final product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 11, 2017</td>
<td>Information gathering: potential perspective and parenting style the online viewer. Connections within the Jewish faith community</td>
<td>Founder of parenting website</td>
<td>Met in person. He provided perspective on providing resources that fit with the majority viewer demographic as stage one with alternate versions of resources from other perspectives or parenting styles as a later stage. Committed to gathering names of prospective leaders in the Jewish faith community with promise of providing connection. Mentioned the idea of a parent personal self assessment to understand their perspective on interaction with other faiths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13, 2017</td>
<td>Project proposal, initial feedback and potential networking</td>
<td>Family therapist who works within school system</td>
<td>Phone conversation. Enthusiastically provided a few potential contacts. Positive feedback on the project with commitment to consider some direction for resource formatting tools. Mentioned a self-assessment for parents on their view of interfaith engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 25, 2017</td>
<td>Following up on feedback</td>
<td>Family therapist who works within school system</td>
<td>Met in person. Provided one presentation method named Pause. Encouraged finding stakeholders who would be able to see blindspots such as racial diversity perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 10, 2017</td>
<td>Initial proposal of project</td>
<td>Christian minister</td>
<td>Phone conversation. Agreed to participate. Questioned who would write the resource material and proposed non-religious affiliated such as school psychologist or family therapist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 12, 2017</td>
<td>Following up on feedback</td>
<td>Christian minister</td>
<td>Met in person. Walked through the interfaith visit aspect of the eighth grade confirmation curriculum. There was no parent component to the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 12, 2017</td>
<td>Initial contact with prospective parent from majority faith tradition</td>
<td>Christian parent</td>
<td>Text conversation. Agreed to further discussion of detail. Excited about the prospect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 16, 2017</td>
<td>Proposal of project and initial interview</td>
<td>Christian parent</td>
<td>Met in person. Agreed to interview and share her story. Assured of her privacy but did not sign agreement yet. Her interracial marriage and Lesbian sister provide a basis for acceptance of alternate beliefs in her Catholic home. Does not know of anything within her church that specifically deals with children interacting with other children of different faiths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 17, 2017</td>
<td>Initial contact with prospective parent from minority faith tradition</td>
<td>Muslim parent</td>
<td>Facebook message. Agreed to interview and share her story. Assured her of her privacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25, 2017</td>
<td>Proposal of project and initial interview</td>
<td>Muslim parent</td>
<td>Met in person. Gave her perspective as a women of minority ethnicity with outwardly visible signs of her faith (clothing, food requirements). Did not have specific teaching for children about interfaith relationships from her religious leaders, but she and her husband discussed dealing with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Contact Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov, 3, 2017</td>
<td>Initial proposal of project</td>
<td>Buddhist teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>questions, potential negativity from others with her oldest child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 6, 2017</td>
<td>Following up on feedback</td>
<td>Buddhist teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email. Presented the project goal and her place in providing a unique perspective as a faith tradition from a non-monotheistic, Abrahamic tradition. Agreed to setting hear further details and tentatively contribute.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 9, 2017</td>
<td>Initial feedback</td>
<td>Buddhist teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email. Had no specific curriculum or teaching for parents to teach children. Mindfulness meditation helps with awareness and emphasizes loving kindness and compassion. Parents teach and lead by example towards people of other faiths, cultures and ethnicities as well as nature. Potential next step after Thanksgiving.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 16, 2017</td>
<td>Gather specifics about important aspects of interfaith teaching</td>
<td>Christian Minister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unavailable until potentially after Thanksgiving holiday. Will think about it in preparation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 17, 2017</td>
<td>Attempting to set up official parent interview</td>
<td>Christian parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very difficult during the holidays. Asked if we could do it after the new year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 17, 2017</td>
<td>Attempting to set up official parent interview</td>
<td>Muslim parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children sick. Set up after Thanksgiving.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 17, 2017</td>
<td>Following up on connections</td>
<td>Founder of parenting website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Busy with end of semester work at college where he works. Looking forward to catching up during the break. Asked for a short blurb he could pass on to connections within Jewish community and his website staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 8, 2018</td>
<td>Meeting with website founder</td>
<td>Founder of parenting website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared plans for interviews with parents and results of interactions with therapist. Committed to helping the project and tying in with the website initiative on common values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 8, 2018</td>
<td>connecting with parent</td>
<td>Buddhist parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>set up interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 11, 2018</td>
<td>Parent interview</td>
<td>Buddhist parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared perspective being Buddhist and spouse Christian. Considered common values most important. Emphasized majority religions initiating interest.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 12, 2018</td>
<td>Parent interview</td>
<td>Christian parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shared faith background and desire for non-awkward interactions. Preferred ease of use for materials over heavy detail.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 24, 2018</td>
<td>Parent interview</td>
<td>Muslim parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared accepting background. Emphasized how her family is taught to work within majority faith community in culture. Emphasized ease of use.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 30, 2018</td>
<td>Contact Muslim center</td>
<td>Muslim Imam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imam out of country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 3, 2018</td>
<td>Collaborate on materials</td>
<td>Family therapist who works within school system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Began ideas together to think through separately and develop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 22, 2018</td>
<td>Minister interview</td>
<td>Christian minister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasized need for tolerance to move to community. Emphasized acceptance within her own work through faith</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Contacted Individual</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3, 2018</td>
<td>Attempting to connect with Jewish Rabbi</td>
<td>Jewish rabbi</td>
<td>Visited synagogue as part of church interfaith visit. Unable to secure a time to interview rabbi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12, 2018</td>
<td>Collaborate on materials</td>
<td>Family therapist who works within school system</td>
<td>Compared notes and finalized outline of materials with the acronym P.E.A.C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 2018</td>
<td>Contact Muslim center</td>
<td>Muslim Imam</td>
<td>Exchanged email to connect. No date set.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4, 2018</td>
<td>Contact Muslim center</td>
<td>Muslim Imam</td>
<td>Imam out of country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17, 2018</td>
<td>Contact Website founder</td>
<td>Website founder</td>
<td>Let me know he would be unable to set up a private part of the website to use for focus group. Also unable to dedicate staff to do a format of materials for focus group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18, 2018</td>
<td>Set up focus group participants</td>
<td>Parent group</td>
<td>Pitched the project to a group of parents who volunteer in the community. There were 14 parents who gave their email for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19, 2018</td>
<td>Received positive feedback from presentation</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Several expressed interest. Six committed to being part of the focus group. Emailed details and ethics guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25, 2018</td>
<td>Prepare the focus group for materials</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Email objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27, 2018</td>
<td>Give out P.E.A.C.E. materials</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Email the P.E.A.C.E materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 29, 2018</td>
<td>Check in on focus group</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Sent email to see who has received materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 6, 2018</td>
<td>Check on progress of focus group</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Detailed steps to reading and implementing for clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7, 2018</td>
<td>Affirm progress</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Affirmed progress and asked for some initial feedback. I was asked to design one page summary for review's sake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15, 2018</td>
<td>Check on progress of focus group</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Emailed focus group to check how the implementation was going. Assessed that an extra week was needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16, 2018</td>
<td>Send results survey</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Sent the learning objective surveys to ascertain results from focus group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23, 2018</td>
<td>Received results</td>
<td>Focus group parents</td>
<td>Received the last of the survey results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: P.E.A.C.E Materials presented to Focus Group


P.E.A.C.E. is a five step guide for parents to model positive interaction with families of other faith traditions in everyday living.

Why are we doing this?

- Because acceptance of diverse faith traditions or no faith tradition is not based on avoidance or ignorance. It is based upon inclusion and understanding.
- Because our positive words change the tone of a playground. Our positive questions invite real life stories of neighbors and classmates. Our everyday conversations bring a human face to a diversity topic that is often too politicized and theorized.
- Because we do not want our kids to understand acceptance as “I like you despite your differences.” We want them to understand acceptance as “I like you with your differences.”
Pause: Take 30 seconds to listen, breath, and let go of any thoughts. Scan your feelings about the potential engagement.

Ask: Thoughtful questions encourage curiosity and receive thoughtful answers. Look for Beautiful Reasons: What are the values this parent desires to impart through a particular faith practice?

Explore: What experiences immediately come to mind when you think of faith traditions? What is your normal reaction in response to those feelings?

Create: Work together to come up with a plan to be intentionally curious, to grow in understanding, to make your “words create worlds!” A three stage pattern: Empathizing, Ideating, Creating.

Experience: Commit with your child to act.

TO BEGIN:

- Create an imaginary situation that could happen in the routine of daily life with your child. It could be a playdate at the home of a new friend that is from a minority faith tradition that has specific lifestyle rules that are different from the majority culture. If you are a person of faith, your imaginary situation could include a family with no faith tradition.

- With your imaginary, yet plausible situation in mind, walk through the steps below. You may want to read through all five steps, then actually process them at a slower pace later on. As you feel comfortable, you can walk through the steps with your child.

- Then look for opportunities in real life situations to bring P.E.A.C.E.
Step one: Pause

Pause derives from Mindfulness.

Pause Thoughts

- The first step is to literally take the time to wait before we react. Instead of instant reaction, we are taking a moment to encourage inner openness. This is an opportunity to acknowledge assumptions, avoidance, awkwardness, curiosity, excitement as a family. The goal is to develop awareness of how you feel, how your child feels, and how the other family may feel. Taking a moment to pause can prepare us to be receptive to those feelings instead of quickly reacting.

Pause
Actions

- **Take a Quiet Moment.** If you can, download a white noise nature app on your phone and use your timer. Pick a favorite nature sound to let go of any anxiety or overthinking regarding asking respectful questions.
- Take 30 seconds to listen, breath, and let go of any thoughts, like leaves drifting away on a stream. “I am not my thoughts. Thoughts come and go.”
- Take 30 more seconds to acknowledge your feelings regarding the situation. Whisper it to yourself, “I feel scared.” “I feel enthusiastic.” Address your feelings. “I am not my feelings. My feelings come and go.”
- Take a deep breath and smile. *(The smile magically helps. 😊)*

Pause
Actions

- **Pausing with your child.** Allowing them time to settle down may help with quality sharing later.
- “Sitting comfortably, take a moment to pretend to be a frog on a lily pad. Our thoughts are like flies buzzing around to high for us to reach them. So we sit still and wait.” *(start the timer)*
- “If we make noise or move we will scare them off. So we listen to nature.” *(white noise app)*
- *(after at least 15 seconds) We listen to our breath. And wait for all of our thoughts to quiet down, all the flies to be still.”
- “Now, let’s ask ourselves some questions.” *(walk child through the Explore step)*
Pause Questions

- Take the time to scan your feelings about the potential engagement. Jot down a word, phrase or even couple of sentences for your own clarity.
- How do you feel when people around you are discussing their faith traditions?
- How do you feel when you consider asking another family about some aspect of their faith tradition? For example: “What are you allowed to eat when you come over tomorrow?” Would you risk asking “Why?”
- On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being awkwardly hesitant, 3 being emotionally disengaged, and 5 being enthusiastically interested, which one describes your feelings in instances of faith interaction?
- Having feelings come and go is okay. They can help us make positive choices no matter what they are.

Step two: Explore

Explore derives from Reflective Thinking.
Explore Thoughts

- Critical Moments Reflection, in our context, can mean allowing ourselves to think back to our past experiences that may have an impact on how we view faith traditions and other families with different faith traditions.
- Being reflective means to take the time to investigate our motivations derived from past experience. That gives us a chance to better understand others, rather than simply reacting emotionally to them. Studied at MIT, Critical Moments Reflection in our personal setting can be simply looking back at our experiences to understand our feelings and reactions better.
- Further Reading: [reflectivecommunities.org](http://reflectivecommunities.org) / [http://www.kstdollkit.org/Critical-Moments](http://www.kstdollkit.org/Critical-Moments)

Explore Questions

- The Explore step emphasizes questions. Jot them down for your own clarity.
- What experiences immediately come to mind when you think of your involvement with your own faith tradition? (If applicable) Do they generally produce positive feelings or negative feelings?
- What experiences immediately come to mind when you think of your involvement with various faith traditions in the past? (If applicable) Do they generally produce positive feelings or negative feelings?
- What experiences immediately come to mind when you think of faith traditions unfamiliar to you or no faith tradition? Do they generally produce positive feelings or negative feelings?
- What is your normal reaction in response to those feelings?
- Is your response different depending upon the faith tradition in the situation?
- Do you recognize ways you carry those positive or negative experiences into engaging with families of other faith traditions?
- Do you recognize ways you carry those positive or negative experiences in spoken or unspoken ways with your children?
Explore Actions

- Exploring with your child.
- Ask your child about their experiences with faith traditions, not what they know academically.
- Ask them about experiences regarding your family faith tradition or something from your extended family.
- Ask how they have talked with their classmates or friends about ways they follow their family faith and have them describe how it happened.
- The goal is just getting them to talk about their perspective from their experience. Being honest about reflections you have had about your past experience will encourage honesty in them.

Step three: Ask
Ask derives from Appreciative Inquiry.
Ask Thoughts

- You are looking for strengths, commonalities, values. This step emphasizes the positive. Appreciative Inquiry, is searching for the best in people and, in our context, includes their faith tradition in that search. You are looking to discover things about being committed to something, like a faith tradition, which demonstrate the best in that friend or family. For example, simply being willing to stay true to one’s faith tradition in very practical ways like diet, or clothes, demonstrates commitment to important values. That is the type of friend one wants to have and to be - a committed friend who remains a true friend, even if other friends are not.

Ask Thoughts

- Here are a few positive thoughts from Appreciative Inquiry to fuel our day!
  
  - **Words create worlds** - Just talking positively about respectful interest with our children or stating a common value that we have with a parent friend of another faith tradition moves acceptance forward.
  
  - **Positive questions lead to positive change** - When we ask a positive question, we invite everyone present on a potential path to understanding! “I am so interested in how you explain your values to your children in this tangible way. Can you tell me a little about it?”
  
  - **What we choose to study makes a difference** - It describes – even creates – the world as we know it. Being curious of including the faith practice of others in our everyday changes the atmosphere of our community.
  
  - **Images inspire action** - Celebrating differences, including the practice of faith different from our own, inspires others to do the same. It is an image, or a picture, of positivity! Awkwardness and fear of misunderstanding dissipates with consistent positive interest.
  
  - Further Reading: [https://appreciativeinquiry.champain.edu/team/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/](https://appreciativeinquiry.champain.edu/team/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/)
Ask
Questions

- Thoughtful questions encourage curiosity and receive thoughtful answers. Developing a habit of asking thoughtful questions takes a little practice.
- **Look for Beautiful Reasons:** What are the values this parent desires to impart through a particular faith practice? Kindness? Self-control?
- For example: “I want to know what I can and cannot serve for lunch when their child visits, but I also am interested in understanding the positive they hope to instill in their child through the dietary practices. I want to be able to share that positively with my child before her/his friend comes over.” We have all struggled to get our children to eat or not eat things; it’s not fun. If this family is going through all this trouble, there must be an important message they want their children to understand. I can celebrate that!

Asking
Actions

- **Asking with your child.** Talk! Asking what they know about their friend and what they don’t know can create positive moments for your child’s play time. We go, go, go setting up playdates and parties, but remember “Words create worlds.”
- Ask your child: “Your friend is important to me. That’s why he/she is coming over today. What are they like?”
- If there are obvious differences, in our context, of faith, asking our children what is different creates a safe place for their own questions. Asking your child these type of questions demonstrates that their friend’s faith tradition is important and is something we accept and like about them. It can help the other family feel at ease later on, and help remove any unknown negatives because they are “different.”
Create
Create derives from Design Thinking.

Create Thoughts

- This is where we and our children create ways to be curious and celebrate our friend’s differences in appropriate ways. We are coming up with a plan to be intentionally curious, to grow in understanding, to make our “words create worlds!”

- Did this imaginary family from a minority faith tradition set up this playdate for us to celebration their faith tradition? No. Should we ignore an important aspect of their life because no one brings it up? No. Let’s create a happy middle ground of respectful interest.

- Design thinking is simply one process for delivering creative solutions. By modifying the steps a bit for parents and children, we follow this three stage pattern: Empathizing, Ideating, Creating,
Create Thoughts

- **Empathizing:** Learning about our friends, and ourselves. (The Pause, Explore, and Ask steps have helped us do this.)

- **Ideating:** Generating a large number of possible options. “What are five ways we can get to know our friends better, from their faith practice perspective?” Not all of them will feel appropriate, and will be discarded. If you are involving your child in this process, it will help field and preemptively redirect awkward “kld” questions during the friend interaction.

- **Creating:** Forming a plan with your child. Call it a prototype, if you’d like. For example: “At lunch we will share something that is important to us that we do in our family, and they can share about their dietary observance in their family.” It could be as simple as that or have a step before and a step after.

- **Further reading:** [https://theinnovativeparent.io/category/design-thinking/](https://theinnovativeparent.io/category/design-thinking/)

Create Thoughts

- Note: You and your child may create a wonderful plan, and for all the reasons that doing things with kids can make our heads spin, the plan does not seem to accomplish anything. BUT, you can share with the parent your desire for your child to understand and celebrate the “cool things” about their friends, especially regarding the topic of faith practice. That conversation is an act of proactive engagement and respectful interest, and really should be considered part two of your plan.
Experience
Experience is a commitment to put it into action.

Experience
Thoughts

- This step is super short on words, but can be big on difficulty at first. Committing to actively look for opportunities to put your Create plan into action in your everyday community interactions can feel like one more thing on a long “parent survival list” for the day.

- One way to assess whether you really ready to do this is... Bring your child on board with the commitment: “Let’s invite your friend over for a playdate this month.” Now you have a constant reminder... A. Constant. Reminder. 😊

- At first you may have to create thesituation, such as the playdate scenario I have been using as an example. You can bring the other family in on the plan. Explain the situation as a little project you are working on with your child. The parent of the other family may be on board to do the same with their child, and you will have a partner in the endeavor. Remember, just bringing it up with that parent is a step of proactive engagement, even if the children get a case of the giggles through everything you do,
Experience
Action

- You have:
  - Paused
  - Explored
  - Asked
  - Created

- Now everyday life is waiting for your positive curiosity, your willingness to spread the good vibes of inclusion and understanding, and your words to create worlds of change for your community and your children’s view of friends, classmates now and for the future!