

Including and Supporting Children who are Jehovah Witness

© 2008

Within the Early Education and Care setting, children bring a variety of experiences and knowledge from individual cultures. For educators to include the child from a Jehovah Witness background, activities provided need to recognise families beliefs as well as the child's interests, likes and dislikes just like all children.

It is important to acknowledge diversity and differences throughout the program and avoid creating an exclusive environment for only specific children. When working with a group of children from a Jehovah Witness background there may be a number beliefs and practices that are vastly different from the rest of the group. Having knowledge of what is important to the family and child enables staff to provide quality inclusive childcare.

Jehovah Witness, who are they?

They are people and families, just the same as everyone else. Families who have normal problems - economic, physical and emotional. They make mistakes just the same as everyone else. They do try to learn from their experiences and diligently study the Bible. They have made a dedication to God to do his will and in their activities they seek guidance from God's word. It is of vital importance to them that their belief be based on the Bible.

Their Name

Jehovah Witnesses is the way they refer to themselves. It is a descriptive name indicating that they bear witness concerning Jehovah.

Some Facts about Jehovah Witnesses

Jehovah Witness parents want the same for their children as other parents however they are very keen not to compromise their beliefs which are firmly based on the bible and its principles. For example;

- The Bible is God's Word and is truth
- God's name is Jehovah
- Christ is God's son
- Images should not be worshipped

Education is important to Jehovah Witnesses which not only enables training for children for day to day living but also fosters in children the joy of living and becoming well balanced individuals to take their place in society. They recognise the importance of activities outside the classroom including activities such as music, physical exercises etc.

Children of Jehovah Witnesses are taught not to discourage others from saluting the flag of their country. They however do not salute the flag of any nation. They do respect the flag of whatever country they live in and show respect by obedience to the country laws. They do not salute the flag as they regard that as an act of worship and according to their beliefs worship belongs to God.

Generally Jehovah Witnesses avoid celebrating holidays with:

1. pagan roots and traditions e.g. Christmas, Easter, Halloween
2. that elevate the individual e.g. birthdays
3. celebrate the race or nationality e.g. Australia day

Suggested Strategies and Ideas

The following information, ideas and strategies are just a suggestion and will of course depend on the individual child as well as the group.

- Ensure that parents are well aware of the philosophy and policies of the service in regard to acknowledging all beliefs and cultures.
- Ensure that parents are aware of the type of activities offered and work closely with the parents to provide alternatives for their children.
- Discuss all matters with the parents to gain an understanding of how they feel about the involvement of their children in activities provided at the service.
- Provide alternative activities when celebrations are taking place within the childcare service.
- Give prior warning to parents so that the parents can make alternative arrangements for care at that time.
- Encourage Jehovah Witnesses parents to bring special food e.g. cakes on days that aren't acknowledging a specific celebration.
- Be aware that these children often give and receive presents, have parties and go on special excursions. Most children have a basic understanding of the principles involved and don't mind an alternative activity.
- If providing a specific craft activity such as drawing a Christmas tree, suggest that the child may be able to draw their favourite tree or one that they see in the garden.

References:

“Jehovah Witnesses and Education” Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 1995

Consultation with Paul Osborne - Hawthorne Congregation of Jehovah Witnesses. 2008.

“ Jehovah Witnesses Who Are they?” Watch Tower and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2000

Disclaimer

Inclusion Works! provides information to Children's Services upon request. The information provided is obtained from a number of sources e.g. library, other services, resource books and Internet. The information provided is not intended to, nor does it, constitute medical or other advice. Persons access this information assume full responsibility for its usage. Acknowledgement of source of information is required if passed onto a third person.