

Family Rituals and Traditions

Dear Parents,

This month we would like to shed some light on the importance of rituals and traditions.

There is something about the rituals and traditions that bring families together. A moment of joy, fun, and excitements shared between children and parents.

Rituals and traditions are something special that families treasure because they help create a sense of identity, security, and belonging. They establish a foundation for family values and are a good bonding experience that gives both parties something to look forward to.

I remember as a young girl, growing up in a predominately English-speaking home with English values, and very little affiliation to cultural teachings or awareness. Things like prostrating when greeting adults or calling every elderly person “Uncle or Aunt”, were not essential for me to demonstrate respect.

However, my family ritual of congregating every Sunday at 5 pm to watch “Tales by Moon Light” made all the difference. The TV program, about different African folklore tales on traditions and customs, awakened my curiosity and enlightened my understanding.

During family occasions, we frequently reminisce the memories with great joy. It is a bond I will forever share with my family and one that solidified my sense of identity in my cultural heritage.

Many families have traditions that often produce the fondest memories that everyone cherishes and attempts to carry on from generations.

Do you have one thing that you do with your child that intrigues their curiosity to want to learn more about their culture, something to solidify their identity in their cultural heritage?

Here are a few ideas you can adopt

- Wednesday Nigerian dinner (This can be any day)
- Sunday cultural movies night
- Bedtime Yoruba nursery rhythms
- A word per day (Or per week)
- Made up storytelling about the culture

Happy Black History Month

Dear Parents,

The celebration of the Black History Month began as a way for remembering our history and what we stand for. We seek to use the opportunity to enlighten and educate our children on their history, culture and race.

“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.” - Desmond Tutu

Throughout this month, we suggest you take some time to celebrate BHM with your family. Here are a few ideas.

1. Support Black Organisations and creatives, become a mentor, become an ambassador, donate to a black cause.
2. Rock your natural hair, wear an African attire, accessorise with African accessory.
3. Use this opportunity to talk to your child about their Black features, their wonderful skin tone and fabulous afro hair
4. Cook an African meal at least once a week and get your child involved.
5. Attend or host a Black cultural event in your community

We at AfriKidz Club would be rounding off our Black History month with an artistic day follow us on social media for further details and many more.

Happy New Year 2020

Dear Parent,

Hope you had a wonderful holiday.

The beginning of the year is generally a time for setting new goals, making resolutions, planning and reviewing current habits and goals. This also applies to how we want to raise our children and the achievements we want for them this year.

This can sometimes be tricky, especially trying to marry the English and African culture as we strive to raise balanced children. We do this by instilling etiquette, seeking out good schools, entering them into extracurricular activities that would enhance their learning, confidence and inter-personal skills. These are all wonderful things that we should keep doing.

However, we often overlook the importance and benefit of making our children familiar with their cultural heritage. This year, I urge you to invest some time and effort into exposing and teaching your children about their culture. I can assure you that this will have a positive impact on their confidence, self-awareness and identity.

If children understand their culture, they begin to value it. From there, they desire to learn more and eventually enjoy it.

Here are some simple tips on how you can expose your child to your culture:

- Get them to speak to their grandparents ever so often
- Cook and eat the traditional delicacies together
- Tell them simple stories about your (the parent's) upbringing
- Teach them simple cultural rhythm
- Speak your language in the home and to them
- Watch cultural movies and cartoons

Thank you for your time.

Till next month you have a good one.

Summer Camp 2019

This summer, Ile Eko Club conducted its very first Cultural Summer Camp for two weeks from the 5 - 16 August 2019. The camp boasts of a successful finish. It catered to over 30 Yoruba children ages between 4 – 11 years and the transformation was evidence. Children with very little knowledge of Yoruba were able to introduce themselves, greet properly with the right demonstration, identify their body parts, recite poems & songs, count 1-10, name a few animals, name a few colours, and construct simple sentences in their native language. It was very impressive. All these was achieved through a well thought out curriculum, which had lots of fun and interactive activities such as performing art, art & craft, music & dance, cooking, tie & dye, pottery painting, clay moulding, sports, all delivered in a safe environment, by well trained and passionate teachers.

A typical day in the summer camp was as follows,

Children come in and are encouraged to greet their teachers in Yoruba, 'Ekaaro Oluko' ('Good morning Teacher'). They say this while kneeling as a girl or prostrating as a boy. Breakfast was at 8am, before the children go on to the different sections that we tagged Wonderland. This was our own adaptation of Disney Wonderland where the kids were captivated by what they saw, what they touched and what they heard. Where their curiosity was met with cultural knowledge. This particular activity helped the children learn how to say the different animals, food items, clothes, and games in the Yoruba language. At the end of the day, the child that remembers the new word they learnt was awarded a star and this encouraged the other kids.

The next activity was to divide them into year groups and teach them different things, from songs and dance, to way of life and language of the Yoruba people, to drama. Afterwards, they have lunch, arts and crafts, and do some sports. Rest comes next. During this period, the children watches Yoruba cartoons, listens to Yoruba tales, sing songs about their individual oriki amongst others.

The activity they look forward to the most was cooking. During the camp they made puffpuff and chinchin which are famous Nigerian snacks. They also participated in clay moulding, and tie & dye. These two activities are very common with the Yoruba People, and the kids learnt a lot from these activities. For example, one of their tasks was to mould the shape that Oduduwa-the Yoruba god (superhero) who is believed to have made the first human-moulded. And for the tie and dye (Adire), they learnt that this was a very common method used by the Yoruba women to make different patterns back in the days, and was used for trade. The children were very proud of the adire made and some even wore it on subsequent days during the summer camp.

After the activities was dinner time, all meals consisted of Yoruba meals such as Asaro (yam porridge), Efo riro (vegetable soup), Iresi (jollof rice), Isu ati Ata (yam and fish stew), Gizdodo (plantain & chicken gizzard) etc.

The children had so much fun they looked forward to coming back the next day.

The Summer Camp ended with a Cultural day were over 65 people, friend and family, of the children came to see them embrace and showcase their newfound knowledge with confidence. The children presented a play - The journey to Ile Ife Palace. Where a grandma takes her grandson and friends to Ile Ife to see the Ooni of Ile. The children picked up lots of cultural nugget and the history of Ile Ife. Ending with a riveting and inspiring speech from the Ooni himself, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II. A speech mirrored on his visitation to Aston University, Birmingham, where he encouraged the Yoruba students to take their pride in their culture, to work hard and focus, as they are the future leaders.

Following this, we continued with more informative and encouraging talks from the esteemed Professor Karin Barber. A Professor of African Cultural Anthropology. She has carried out significant research in the Yoruba and is currently working on early Yoruba print culture. Professor Karin gave a talk on the importance of culture and how it plays an indicative print on who we are. This should not be avoided but deliberate effort is required to keep culture vital in our present day. And Mrs (Mummy) Monisola Phillips, who gave us the practical insight of teaching children languages. She speaks 4 languages and have managed to pass that on to all her children. She emphasised the responsibility is on the parents to at least cultivate the interest in their child and seek ways to educate them and consistency is key.

We also used the opportunity to launch our first CD and bilingual book; our CD “Orin wa, Ilu wa” is filled with popular Yoruba nursery rhythms and four original songs. The children enjoyed performing cultural dance to songs. We also launched of our first bilingual book “The Journey to Ile Ife Palace” aimed to teach our children our to start reading Yoruba.

The testimonials from the parents was very reassuring, on the improvement they have seen from their children was immerse. And this encourages us to keep up the momentum to pursue our mission, which is to create engaging and interactive avenues for children to discover their cultural heritage and become future leaders

Here at Ile Eko, we believe children who are connected to their cultural heritage have a stronger sense of self-identity, confidence and a feeling of belonging to their community. Our philosophy is therefore to encourage children to; recognise & integrate with their tribe, learn & understand the language, find their identity in a multicultural world, and celebrate, enlighten others, & share their culture.

Our future plans include creating more centres that would run the discovery sessions monthly, to carried holiday camps, write more educative books, produce more CD and create additional online platforms that support our cause.

1ST ROUND TABLE: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

We recently had 3 round table talk discussing Diversity and Inclusion in Primary school. Joining in the table talk were over 35 parents with children in both Independent and state schools. This round table consisted of two thought-provoking questions, providing insightful discussions regarding the lack of inclusion and diversity within certain schools.

The first question allowed parents to share the experiences of their children's unfair treatment within their schools.

The stories shared by the parents were informative, enlightening, emotional and some surprising.

Parents spoke about their experiences where early judgment was placed on their children based on minor incidents, some of their children have been labelled "disruptive", and some children were wrongfully diagnosed with having learning disabilities, behavioural challenges, mental health issues. Others expressed instances where schools had taking notes on their children without permission. In one instance a child was refused admission without any assessment other than the statement "He would not be a good fit here"

Parents expressed comments their children had shared with them. "Black skin, black skin, when shall you leave" A song shared in school between his black daughter and her best friend. Or a son adamantly dismissing the notion of a black God or black angle.

From the stories shared by the parents, there was some unpopular conclusion that the UK schooling system is against black children's progress. However, the general consensus around the table was that black children are often limited at a very early age and emphasised the constant neglect of their true needs.

This led to the second question which focused on methods in combatting discrimination against black children.

The common response to this question was the need for more education on discrimination. Some parents emphasised the importance of targeting the mindset of children. While others suggested the use of diverse stories books can be significant to teach children how to treat one another equally.

Furthermore, the significance of reconstructing the curriculum was discussed; by changing the curriculum to be more diverse and inclusive will help educate and bring awareness to all children on the different races and cultures. This will ensure children appreciate their identity and cultural heritage without leaving anyone behind or making any child feel insecure about themselves.

Most importantly, there was a recommendation to start to educate children from the private sphere and then move into the public sphere. This idea pointed to the role of the parents in making their children know their self-worth and identity from home. Some gave examples of making their children recite daily affirmations, others pointed to replacing the regular bedtime books to more cultural and diverse books that will inculcate the values and assurance that would make their children identify with their culture

In conclusion, this round table provided insight into the impact of the education system on black children. It shows the failure of some schools in supporting black

children who may be the only black child in the class. Lastly, and most importantly, it reflects the lack of recognition of non-British culture in the curriculum which clearly needs to be addressed.

2ND ROUND TABLE: PARENTS, HOW DO WE MAKE OUR CHILDREN IDENTIFY WITH THEIR CULTURE & ADVOCATE AFRICAN CULTURE IN OUR SOCIETY?

We have had three round tables that discuss Diversity and Inclusion in Primary schools. They consisted of over 30 parents who have had children in both Independent and state schools. The first-round table discussed issues of diversity and inclusion in primary schools. Also, it discussed ways to help resolve it.

This round table expands on the first one. It focuses on how African children can identify with their cultural heritage, and questions what we, the parents, can do as a community to educate our society about African culture.

This question focused on ways to help our children identify with their culture.

Parents shared intriguing and interesting ideas that will help their African children understand and love their culture.

Some parents pointed out the idea of surrounding their kids more frequently with their African friends and families so they grow up with people they can identify with. Other parents shared the importance of having their children's grandparents in their lives to inculcate their traditions and custom.

Other ideas included reading more diverse storybooks and watching TV programs that teach them about their respective country and cultures. Also investing in formal tuition to advance them in their learning and knowledge.

Furthermore, there was a consensus that parents need to be role models for their children. Some parents argued that their children need to see their parents as a “confident woman/man”. Parents believed, by portraying themselves as a desirable model, their children will subconsciously respect and appreciate their culture.

Overall, parents believed that for their kids to identify with who they truly are, the methods to help them need to be deep-rooted. Additionally, there was the agreement that parents also must play a part in teaching their kids to embrace their African culture. It is also important to help them realise and value their culture.

The second question allowed parents to share ideas on ways in advocating African culture in our society.

Parents voiced that for the African community to have an impact on society, they need to be confident in their own culture. However, it was acknowledged that we often view African culture as inferior to others, consequently, we subconsciously start to hide our culture. We, therefore, need to tackle this complex and then be consistent in portraying our culture with pride. Parents cannot give what they do not have.

Parents believed that Africa is often depicted on social media as a poor continent. Consequently, children begin to devalue their culture because of how it is presented in the media. Therefore, parents need to consciously protect their children from the media and well as inculcate cultural knowledge and teachings from the home. It is also warned that parents should not be quick to discard their traditions and customs to “fit it”

Additionally, some parents advised that they tend to isolate themselves and fail to connect with other African parents. Thus, there was a suggestion for African parents to unit and grow a stronger voice, which will be useful when address issues such as Diversity and Inclusion.

Although the consensus around the table was that parents have a significant role in promoting African culture, several parents contended that there was an unfair requirement upon parents and a lack of accountability in the schools. To challenge school for diversity, fairness, equality, and appreciation of our African culture. However, it was also highlighted that the deployment of a fair and diverse curriculum in our UK primary schools will be challenging and requires diligence and persistence.

In conclusion, this round table emphasised that to advocate our culture within society, we, the parents, need to embrace it and show pride and confidence. Also, for our children to grow up identifying with their African culture, we need to show them that African culture is something to be proud of.

3RD & FINAL ROUND TABLE: “POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS”.

The three round tables have allowed parents to voice their thoughts and experiences around the topic of diversity and inclusion. This has allowed the collating of information so that we can make schools aware of the neglect of black children’s needs.

We have had 3 round tables discussing diversity and inclusion in primary schools. They consisted of over 30 parents who have had children in both State and Independent schools. Each round table entailed deep and personal stories from parents and expressed their concern for black children being mistreated within schools.

The last round table provided a summary of all the round tables. It concludes the topic of diversity and inclusion in primary schools, but it opens a chapter of possible solutions that can be taken on board. Again, this round table was based on two questions which allowed parents to share their thoughts and led to thought-provoking discussions.

Question 1

The first question allowed parents to share their thoughts on whether they thought discrimination in primary schools is existent.

Body

There was a consistent theme amongst the parents, they mentioned that their children would tell them cruel comments their classmates made within the classroom. Some parents said their children’s skin colour was called “poo poo” by other classmates. Other parents said their daughters would constantly question, “mummy why don’t I have straight hair?” or “why are angels always white, why aren’t there any black angels?”.

Many parents felt that black children are often neglected by teachers. For instance, when they have problem, teachers tend to ignore them and are dismissive towards them. Some parents acknowledged the fact that teachers ignore the academic aspect of black children when talking about them to their parents. The teachers would say “she is brilliant in music lessons” or “he is very competitive, which makes him great at sports”, ignoring the academic aspect. Consequently, black children cannot benefit the most from schools, because the teachers do not push them to their potential academically.

To add on, parents also mentioned that teachers tend to label their children as “disruptive and loud”. Considering this argument, some pointed to the fact that

children are naturally curious and will challenge things, it is up to the teachers to handle them in a way that will not exclude black children. Parents believed that when teachers label black children early, they begin to act that way.

Conclusion

There was an agreement amongst the parents that teachers should not generalise all black children or put them in a single box. Teachers need to treat black children for who they are, and not assume that they will all act similarly. Some parents argued that parents have a lot of work to do to help teachers understand our cultural background and ensure classrooms are a safe learning environment for their kids.

Question 2

The second question focused on the possible solutions to combat discrimination within primary schools.

Body

Majority of the parents agreed that black parents need to put themselves forward to help educate children and teachers about African culture. Parents need to make themselves visible in the school and communicate face to face with teachers. There was an argument from some parents that teachers lack cultural sensitivity, they need to ask African parents to come to school to teach about their culture. For instance, some questioned that Brazilian mothers teach children their cultural dance, so why can't an African mother do the same?

Primarily, one of the parents stated that, culture is being diluted for those parents who were born and raised in England, so it is essential to ensure our culture is being taught to our children. Others argued that as we are a minority in most schools, parents need to be involved in everything apart from academics.

Although majority of the parents agreed that parents have an essential role in promoting more inclusion within schools, some argued that schools need to take on responsibility as well. For instance, some recommended diversity and inclusion should be incorporated in the curriculum not just in the school itself. This would entail having books in the library's about African cultures and information about different nations in Africa. Additionally, others suggested a network should be built to teach children about different faces of poverty because poverty is everywhere, not just in Africa.

Conclusion

Overall, the three round tables have discussed whether there is diversity and inclusion within primary schools. It has involved insightful, interesting and somewhat devastating and shocking stories from parents regarding their children. It has opened our eyes into the need for cultural reform within primary schools and the extent of change that needs to take place.

Additionally, there has been a consistent theme of the role of black parents in promoting diversity and inclusion within primary schools. This also includes, parents

ensuring their children can identify with their culture by showing them that their culture is something to be proud of. Also, there was a recognition that black parents need to be more involved within schools to ensure that black children can gain the best out of their schools.

The round tables have shown the painful and traumatising experiences black children can go through at such a young age. However, it also showed that there is hope for change if the black community can stand united.