

# Family

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

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It is a given that parents, the world over want the very best for their children. Immigrants from Africa and other parts of the world are no different, rather they wish above all that their children would be better equipped, through education and other life experiences to excel and progress even more than they could manage in their lifetime.

Living in the Diaspora can be a humbling experience, as well as an eye opener for a parent. It is not only the environment, culture and general way of life that has to be adjusted to but also the educational needs of children. It is thus, the responsibility of parents to see that these smorgasbords of needs are met, for the welfare of the children.

When it comes to education, The African Diaspora has the better of two worlds. One in which opportunities abound and most importantly, child-centered and on the other hand, a culture that is rich in teaching through examples, experiences as well as handing down of values and moral teachings from their homeland.

It is therefore the parents' responsibility to not short-change the children by leaving out this rich heritage. They need to have a proper sense of who they truly are and grow from there with the confidence of who they can become. As parents, we need to take advantage of our knowledge and experiences from both worlds (Africa and the West) and give our children a solid foundation, built on diversity and acceptance.

In Early Childhood Education, the Parent is seen as the primary (first) educator of the child. This stage is important to the wellbeing of a child because it encompasses the education of the whole child; their mind, body and emotional health. It is at this stage that a child is molded into appreciating learning

through play. So, while we may think the child is playing he/she is learning through exploring, problem solving, sharing, taking turns and manipulation of provided toys, which teach things like, math, geometry and reasoning. It is therefore the duty of the parents to make sure that they provide appropriate fun and educative toys. Also, as parents, we should not just provide resources for our children but should be on hand to guide them in these primary learning experiences, guiding them in the right direction to maintain a longer attention span as they continue to grow.

There is a quote that says "Training teaches us specific skill. Education teaches us to think" If we model a good example for our children to follow, as they grow it will hopefully remain with them as adults and influence how they relate to others as members of community and their own children in future. So it is needful as parents in the Diaspora to not just leave the educating of our children to others, but, be actively involved in it. Research and choose the right schools, where academic excellence and the total welfare of your children are upheld. Go for a site visit. Do you like the environment? Do you see children who are like your own children there? This is to prevent your child from becoming ostracized and withdrawn. However, most important in being involved as primary educators is to help nourish, nurture and extend what the children are taught outside the house. So we need to re-orient ourselves on helping and checking our children's homework and having discussions on what was done in school.

While as Parents we might be short of time due to work demands, it is important to create a little window of time to take care of the teaching of our children. We should learn from the western world to make use of every opportunity; weekends, shopping, cooking, and dinnertime can all become learning experiences to pass on our rich cultural values and experiences. Make it all fun and engaging by involving your child in choosing things that interest them, all within reason of course (age appropriate). By encouraging their involvement you help maintain their attention span and engagement longer. This not only helps your children value education

