

MSCF Minute



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Words Have Power

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Like many of you, my mind has been spinning with thoughts since November 8. The one overwhelmingly loud message this election has reminded me of is that **WORDS HAVE POWER!** They influence our beliefs, shape our views, contribute to our actions and build our character. As an early childhood faculty, I teach, and many times preach, this concept and practice in regards to young children. The words we use with them have tremendous power and influence and so we need to be careful and intentional in what we say and how we say it. Somewhere along the way, I had forgotten how powerful and influential words can be with adults, until recently. The frightening thing with words is that the more we hear, read, or say words, the more power they have.

Every day over the past week I have seen reports on social media and in the news involving acts of hate across the country, some right here in Minnesota at high school and college campuses. Many of these acts mirror words and messages used during the presidential campaign. Like many people out there, I have had the urge to take a hiatus from social media, turn off

the news and shut out all the anger and hate being spewed. However, I have not. No matter how difficult it is to read and listen to, I have obligations that compel me to learn and lean in, not bury my head in the sand.

Burying my head in the sand will not stop the hateful words from being said. Burying my head will not stop my children from hearing these hateful words in the media, at school and out in the world. Burying my head will not prevent my daughter from being a target of sexist or objectifying language. Burying my head will not stop my son from being called anti-Semitic slurs based on a physical attribute. Burying my head will not help me teach my children about their white privilege and how to use that privilege to be active in supporting others and pushing for social change. Burying my head will not help me teach them that their **WORDS HAVE POWER**. Burying my head will not help me teach my students that one must think critically about who is using words and what the motives are behind those words. Burying my head will not allow me to use my words that also **HAVE POWER**.

I knew I needed to do more and wasn't sure where to start. One blog article really opened my eyes on ways I can do more now, "[How to easily be a white ally to marginalized communities](#)". This article is a straightforward, no-holds-barred message on how to no longer be a passive, or token supporter. Did it make me uncomfortable to read? Yes. Did it point out how I had not been as progressive and supportive as I would have liked to think? You bet. Did it make me take a real, harsh, honest look at myself? Absolutely. After self-reflection, I am now committing myself to doing these things moving forward:

- Being intolerant of intolerance
- Seeking out marginalized voices and perspectives
- Confronting my racism and not being fragile
- Using my privilege to support marginalized movements
- Giving my time and money
- Being proactive about inclusion in my daily life
- Avoiding segregation
- Doing the work to be inclusive

This is not the time to sit back and wait to see what happens. I simply cannot *hope* for something better when the dust all clears. I realize there is much more I should, no... will be, doing. I realize there is a difference between showing support and being actively engaged in support. I realize it's not going to be easy. I realize it's going to make me uncomfortable at times. I realize it's going to make others more uncomfortable. Most importantly, I realize it's necessary. I have been reminded that **WORDS HAVE POWER**. Use them and use them wisely.

"Our lives begin to lose meaning when we become silent about things that matter"

~ Martin Luther King, Jr

