

Reflective Journal #2

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During my employment as a preschool teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation arose that strongly tested my values. I had noticed a double standard in my center's COVID policies regarding the expectations of staff versus the families. If anyone in the staff chose to travel, they were required to quarantine for two weeks without pay upon returning, and/or obtain a negative COVID test before they would be allowed to return to work. This policy made sense to me and seemed important to keeping everyone in the center safe from exposure to the virus. However, the same policies were not applied to the families in our school. On multiple occasions, there were families who went on vacation to states that were considered "hot spots" for COVID at the time. They were not required to quarantine upon returning, nor were they required to be tested for COVID. Their children were simply allowed to come right back into our school.

I took great issue with this, as not only did it risk COVID exposure in our very small preschool, but it violated my values of health, teamwork, and fairness. In my view, everyone in our center, including the families, should have been working together to prevent COVID from entering our school, where it would have undoubtedly spread like wildfire. It would have only taken one infected person to walk through our gates, whether it was a child, parent, or staff. As such, the families should have been held to the same policies and standards as the employees. I valued my health and the health of my coworkers very highly, and I felt as though we were put at serious risk. I assumed the directors chose to operate this way in order to appease the families who wished to travel during the pandemic. I assumed they did not want to enforce the quarantine policy to avoid any potential backlash from the parents. I may or may not have been right about this, as this question went unanswered for me.

The situation felt fundamentally wrong to me. I felt as though our health was being put at risk to spare the feelings of our families. So, I decided to speak up. I expressed how I felt multiple times to different members of the administration, including the owner of the school. I made it very clear why I thought this was wrong and asked for an explanation of the logic behind their lax COVID policies for the families. Ultimately, my concerns were brushed off and I never received any satisfactory answers to my questions. But, even so, I would not have done anything differently. I saw something that conflicted with my values, and I fought against it as best I could. It may not have made me particularly favorable in the eyes of administration, but I am still proud that I spoke up.

In a library setting, I can already think of multiple situations in which supporting intellectual freedom would be difficult for me. One of the “surprises” listed in our textbook involved the use of pornography in the library. My breakout room group and I discussed this at length during class, and we were all conflicted as to how we felt about it. On one hand, we believed pornography did not have a place in the library and could be a slippery slope to situations involving public indecency. On the other hand, we recognized that the library is a place for all, and that not every user has a place outside the library where they can view those materials privately. Ultimately, we came to the conclusion that it may be best to deal with things on a case-by-case basis, rather than applying blanket reactions to things. For example, if someone is crossing the line and being indecent in the library, then it is time to step in.

Another intellectual freedom issue I grapple with is the inclusion of materials containing hateful rhetoric, such as *Mein Kampf*. As one of the students stated in the interview video with Mary Stansbury, I understand why it is important for the library to carry such a work, but it still does not sit well with me. I am afraid that materials like that, when in the wrong hands, can

encourage acts of violence and possibly lead to loss of human life. However, I also believe that in order to keep history from repeating itself, access to things like *Mein Kampf* are needed. The dark parts of history should not be buried simply because looking at them is difficult. I thought the method of re-labeling/classifying works (i.e. labeling Holocaust denial literature as “spurious research”) was a great way of balancing intellectual freedom while being honest with the public. It could help prevent the spread of misinformation which is already prevalent in our time. In terms of intellectual freedom, I am already plagued by so many questions, but I very much look forward to thinking about them further and adding more context as I learn more about the field of librarianship.