

# *A Teachable Moment*

Teaching our children values and understanding of complex social ideas is not a one-time lesson or a single conversation – rather it's a lifelong journey we take with our children. At many points along the way, we all experience uncomfortable moments when our child says or does something considered inappropriate, or comes to us with awkward questions that we don't have an easy answer for. Conversation of the Week is a tool to help you begin some conversations about "hot button" topics and give you some ideas of how to respond to your children when questions come up.



*Fostering an inclusive  
Community*

## Family Conversation and Connections: Poverty and Homelessness

**Scenario:** After coming to a store in Wallingford, a 9 year old tells her mom: "I really don't want to go into this store anymore, because I don't like those guys who sit outside asking for money."

- ◇ What questions might you ask her to better understand her thinking?
- ◇ What would you want the child to understand?
- ◇ What would you say? How would you respond?

### Points to Consider:

- ◆ Teach children to appreciate that material possessions do not define them or anyone else, and that all people are valuable regardless of their material possessions.
- ◆ Reflecting about how to respond to these scenarios would help you to think about your own beliefs and values and the values that you want to see in your children.
- ◆ When thinking about your responses consider the social bias and stereotypes about people whose income is under the poverty line or people who are homeless including:
  - ⇒ They are unsupportive of education
  - ⇒ They are poor through their own fault
  - ⇒ They are not as good at parenting
  - ⇒ They contend with mental illness, substance abuse and incarceration
  - ⇒ They don't try or don't work hard enough

### Questions and Resources to start conversations with your child

- ◇ Why do you think that there are some people who are homeless? How do you think a family becomes homeless? Can you imagine how would it be like not having a home? How hard would it be for a family who is poor to get out of that situation? What could we do as a family? Why families have different incomes?
- ◇ Resources: At the library students will be reading *The Can Man* by Laura E. Williams and *Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts.
- ◇ Adult resources: *Hunger and Poverty in America*. 60 minutes: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR3jQOgs9gc&feature=related>

Please feel free to share comments, stories, and questions with the Parent Diversity Support Team: Suzanne Edison, Katie Renschler, Stephanie Wright, Sarah Sanford, Korene Stokke, Bonnie Tilghman, Elena Kuo, Lisa Smith, Jan Backstrom and Yaneth Vrentas.