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Member Spotlight: Tomoko Wakabayashi

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Tomoko was awarded the **Outstanding Service Award** given by the Asian Caucus during the SRCD 2023 Biennial Meeting. This award recognizes an individual or organization who has contributed outstanding service to Asian/Asian American families and children, and the Asian Caucus or those who have represented the Asian Caucus at SRCD.

Who or what inspires you and why (and/or who/what inspired you to go into your chosen field of study)?

Many people have inspired me throughout my career. During my graduate school years, I focused on studying Japanese-English bilingualism. My maternal grandfather was an inspiration for that. He was a Hawaii-born Japanese American who came to Japan for college, then married and stayed in Japan. He was a writer/translator, and his mastery of Japanese and English was incomparable to anyone I've ever met, even now. My decision to shift my focus on early childhood education was inspired by my daughters. I learned so much more from them than any child development textbook!

Do you have a mentor or mentors who have been instrumental in your career and, if so, who and how?

I have a few. Dr. Karen Guskin, now at Prevent Child Abuse America, showed me what compassionate and transformational leadership looks like. I continue to aspire to be like her. Dr. Larry Schweinhart was the President during most of my time at HighScope. He continues to mentor me in my research in early childhood education. Drs. Sherri Oden and Ambika Bhargava at Oakland University supported me during my transition from nonprofit research to academia. And last but not least, Dr. Catherine Snow, for being my role model and mentor throughout and now, for taking me under her wings during my sabbatical at Harvard.

What advice would you give to a Graduate student beginning their Ph.D. studies in Developmental Science or related?

My biggest advice is to find the best match for your advisor. Be proactive in getting to know faculty and get involved in projects. Cherish the support and resources you get during your doctoral years, and don't rush through the program. Getting your doctorate is not the end, all be all.

What is something you learned in the last month outside of your field?

I am currently a visiting scholar at Harvard Graduate School of Education for a semester during my sabbatical. Yesterday, I went to the Harvard Natural History Museum and saw the Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants or the glass flowers. They were incredibly detailed replicas of hundreds of plants built for research purposes over 50 years. I learned that I really did not explore all the amazing resources while I was a graduate student, and so I'm trying to make up for that now.

Why did you join the Asian Caucus and how does it facilitate connection among members all year long?

Dr. Kaveri Subrahmanyam and Puja Patel reached out to me to ask if I'd like to join the SRCD Asian Caucus Social Policy Subcommittee. I've been a Caucus member but was never really involved. I am truly grateful to Dr. Subrahmanyam and Puja, and whoever referred me to them, because the subcommittee became my social support throughout the pandemic. The subcommittee members are from all over the United States and one member is in Singapore. Some of us were able to meet for the first time in-person at this year's SRCD Biennial Meeting.

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ASIAN CAUCUS WEBSITE

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