



**From Birth to Bias:
The case for the thoughtful racial socialization of our kids from an early age**

10 guidelines for engaging preschoolers on race

1. Get institutional support for the race & diversity work you want to do
 - Establish unit-wide pedagogical and curricular parameters that ensure your administration will “have your back,” as needed. Enlist parents, as possible, when possible.
 - Institute a peer support group to collaborate on this work – from planning to learning to implementation and experimentation to feedback to planning. Share your experiences, feelings, and ideas.
2. Talk about it!
 - Encourage kids to ask questions, share observations and experiences, and be curious about race. Don’t shut down race conversations, including those in which a kid expresses bias.
 - You don’t have to be an expert on race to do this work. It’s okay to say, “I’m not sure” or “Let’s come back to that later, okay?” And DO come back to it.
3. Give your kids language they can use.
 - Teach kids to differentiate between seeing differences and prejudice. Let them know that it’s fine to notice skin color and talk about race, and show them how.
 - Start talking about what racial differences mean and don’t mean. Start building positive associations with racial markers (hair, skin color...)
4. Integrate environments where kids learn.
 - Engage diverse groups of children in cooperative tasks in the classroom.
 - Encourage deeper engagement among kids of different social groups.
5. Build a great classroom library.
 - Include books about children of all different skin colors and types of hair, as well as books that teach children how we get the skin color we have.
 - Include books featuring strong interracial friendships and book with kids of color “just being kids.”

6. Be mindful of your own biases and behavior.
 - Test yourself for implicit bias at implicit.harvard.edu. “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” (James Baldwin)
 - You are a role model to the children in your classroom. We model attitudes and behavior even if we are not conscious of doing so – and do so by saying/doing and by not saying/doing.
7. Help kids learn about and respect others.
 - Study and talk about the histories and experiences of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, immigrants, Muslims, whites, among others.
 - What images are on the walls of your classroom? Consider including images of a wide range of admirable people of color and talk about why they’re there.
8. Be honest with kids about bias and bigotry.
 - Children notice patterns, including racial patterns. Help them make sense of those patterns, acknowledging that bias is part of the story.
 - All stories of struggle are also stories of resistance and resilience. Include women, children and youth among the “freedom fighters” in those stories.
9. Help kids find their ‘voices’ on race.
 - Show children that, while we do face troubling problems as a society, there are people and organizations trying to make positive change.
 - Show children they can help too! Involve them in projects that express how they feel.
10. Plan for a marathon, not a sprint.
 - Race is a topic you should engage routinely and in many ways over time.
 - Integrate this work across the curriculum. Mix paint to find skin tones; use paint chips to compare these colors and come up with poetic names for skin; write poems about their skin (Madeline Rogin)