Apple Orchard School

ABAR AT A GLANCE

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
• Monthly theme: **Family** • hang up family boards • pass out caregiver surveys • Hispanic Heritage month	• Monthly theme: **self identity** • community Sukkot build • Indigenous Peoples' Day • Diwali celebration • Affinity Group: 10/26	• Monthly theme: **community** • grandparents & special friends day • school wide community service project • Affinity Group: 11/16
DECEMBER	**JANURARY**	**FEBRUARY**
• Monthly theme: **gender identity & expression** • winter holidays & celebrations • connect with BIPOC families at conference	• Monthly theme: **race & skin tone** • Lunar New Year • Affinity Group: 1/25	• Monthly theme: **disabilities & inclusion** • Black History Month school wide • Art Show • Affinity Group: 2/22
MARCH	**APRIL**	**MAY/JUNE**
• Monthly theme: **immigration & world studies** • Holi celebration • Women's History Month • Affinity Group: 3/8	• Monthly theme: **environmentalism** • connect with BIPOC families at conferences • Affinity Group: 4/19	• Monthly theme: **activism** • school wide outdoor classroom cleanup • Pride month • Asian Pacific American month • Affinity Group: 5/24
NOTES:		
	ABAR GUIDE:	

Books showing Diversity and ABAR subjects we have in our library

-Can I play too? by Samantha Cotterill - Diversity of ability/friends

-It was supposed to be Sunny by Samantha Cotterill - Diversity of Ability/ Autism/Diversity of Color

-This Beach is Loud! by Samantha Cotterill - Sensory issues/Diversity of ability/Diversity of color

-Nope. Never. Not for me! by Samantha Cotterill (these four books are all from the same series about dealing with sensory processing.) - Sensory issues/ autism

-Sometimes All I need is me by Juliana Perdomo - Family/Feelings/self-esteem/ Diversity

-The Tantrum that Saved the World by Megan Herbert & Michael E. Mann - Climate Change/ Rhyming/Diversity

-Mamma and Mommy and Me in the Middle by Nina LaCour - Family/Diversity/ Diversity of Color

-All moms by Sarah Kate Ellis and Kristen Ellis-Henderson - Family/ Love/ Compassion/Diversity

-The Girl who Planted Trees by Caryl Hart - Planting/ Trees/ Diversity

-What's in your Pocket by Heather L. Montgomery - Nature/Diversity of color

-I am Thinking my Life by Allysun Atwater - Concepts/ Self concept/ Diversity of color

-Thank you Neighbor! by Ruth Chan - Friendship/ Diversity/ Multicultural

-Finding Om by Rashmi Bismark - Multicultural/ Mindfulness

-Milk and Juice a Recycling Romance by Meredith Crandall Brown - Recycling

-Friends are Friends, Forever by Dane Liu - Pond Life/ Friendship

-Stacey's Extraordinary Words by Stacey Abrams - Feelings/ Self-esteem/ Determination/ Diversity of color

-A Hundred Thousand Welcomes by Mary Lee Donvan - Houses/Multicultural/Diversity

-Calvin by JR and Vanessa Ford - Gender Expression/Diversity of Color

-Nosotros means Us by Paloma Valdivia - Multicultural/Spanish/ Poetry

Cheltenham Elementary School	We Are All Alike...We Are All Different
Lavelle, Kari	We Move the World (2 copies)
Fritsch, McGuire, & Trejos	We Move Together (2 copies)
Ibrahim, Hudda	What Color is My Hijab?
Kim, Jamie	Where are You From?
Larocca, Rajani	Where Three Oceans Meet (2 copies)
Fox, Mem	Whoever You Are
O'Hair, Margaret	You Are Enough (2 copies)
Thomokins-Bigelow, Jamilah	Your Name is a Song (2 copies)

Khan, Hena	Under My Hijab
Reynolds, Peter	The Word Collector (2 copies)
Choi, Yangsook	The Name Jar (5 copies)
Udry, Janice	What Mary Jo Shared
Harris, C.M.	What If We Were All The Same?
Lukoff, Kyle	When Aidan Became A Brother
Deenihan, Jamie	When Grandma Gives You A Lemon Tree
Wilt, Joy	You're One-of-a-Kind
Collins, Harold	Signing at School
Schaefer, Lola	Some Kids are Deaf
Collins, Harold	Songs in Sign
Penfold & Kaufman	All Are Welcome
Jackson, Ellen	It's Back to School We Go!
Walker, Tricia Elam	Nana Akua Goes to School

Walker, Tricia Elam	Nana Akua Goes to School	
Freeman, Mylo	Princess Arabella Goes to School (3 copies)	
Ancona, George	Ricardo's Day	
Paul, Miranda	Speak Up	
Woodson, Jacqueline	The Day You Begin (2 copies)	
Wing, Natasha	The Night Before the 100th Day of School	
Hubbard, Rita lorraine	The Oldest Student	
DiAngelo, Robin	WHITE FRAGILITY WHY ITS SO HARD FOR WHITE PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT RACISM	
De La Pena, Matt	Carmela, Full of Wishes (3 copies & 1 in Spanish)	Diversity/ Birthday
Otoshi, Kathryn	One	Colors/anti-bias/social justice
Verde, Susan	Hey, Wall A Story of Art and Community (3 copies)	Art/Diversity of color/ Community/Family
Kranz, Linda	Only One You	Family/ Being Yourself
Kranz, Linda	You Be You	Diversity/ Being Yourself
De La Pena, Matt	Carmela, Full of Wishes (3 copies & 1 in Spanish)	Diversity/ Birthday
Fogliano, Julie	When's My Birthday?	Birthday/Diversity

Black History Month - LINKS for Teachers
February 2022

Please choose a couple of these online books, musical performances, baking projects, or games to share with your students. Black lives and history is a big focus this month, BUT this list is welcome all year long in our classrooms. Sandwich Club too!

Read Alouds by Black Authors

https://www.netflixbookmarks.com/
Bookmarks celebrating black voices

https://youtu.be/vuibTOuzg2Q
Sulwe – Lupita Nyong'o

https://youtu.be/ag-QXWYFgVY
Shade of Cocoa - Marquita B.

https://youtu.be/n0d0SGoeiTI
The Princess and the Pea (retold) -Rachel Isadora

https://youtu.be/JIpNhfOorWg
What if we were all the same - Georgias Sweet Potato Pie Company

https://youtu.be/KDs5d_qFbEs
The Day you Begin - Jacqueline Woodson

https://youtu.be/82h3PV807Iw
Change Sings - Amanda Gorman / Read by Mrs. Bernard

https://youtu.be/a_I4ieZH84k
I am enough - Grace Byers

https://youtu.be/WGw-pCfpdq8
You Matter - Christian Robinson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDs5d_qFbEs
The Day You Begin - Jacqueline Woodson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJDH4qt8heE
We March - Shane Evans

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ_MUs_MCkg
The Word Collector - Peter H. Reynolds

https://youtu.be/k9UtYtbCOrk
Karamo Brown Reads "I Am Perfectly Designed" | Bookmarks | Netflix Jr

Music

https://youtu.be/ddLd0QRf7Vg
What a Wonderful World - Louis Armstrong

https://youtu.be/LiouJsnYytI
Lean On Me - Playing for Change

https://youtu.be/8Lu41LxlQos
Celebration (Kool and the Gang) Playing for Change

https://youtu.be/MDBgOyEN2OU
Stand by Me - acapella

https://youtu.be/8cF0tf35Mbo
You Make Me Feel - Aretha Franklin - For the Obamas- 2015

https://youtu.be/A6yNI5yiBLE
Ain't No Mountain High Enough - Diana Ross - 1983

https://youtu.be/CLz-noiQ34g
Classical Muscian

https://youtu.be/szltLGiDTxs
Black History Month - Sesame Street -2021 - Listen/Act/Unite

https://youtu.be/HyTpu6BmE88
Thats What Friends Are For - Dionne Warwick and Friends -2013

https://youtu.be/9AjkUyX0rVw
We Are The World - 2010 - (Tina Turner, Micheal Jackson, Lionel Richie + more)

https://youtu.be/mEy02qPqIK4
Be Happy - Bob Marley - School Music Club -2019

Olympians - Winter Olympics Bejing 2022

Erin Jackson - 2022 Winter Olympian - Speen Skater
https://youtu.be/rTM3qtGvQig (skating)
https://youtu.be/sbV018K8V7I (awards presented)

Ayumu Hirano - Halfpipe - Triple Cork -End of video
https://youtu.be/tsWzaJl2F7g (snowboarding)

Activities / Cooking / Instruments

Make an African Shekere (Shaker Instrument)
African Gourd Bead Shaker/Percussion| DIY Project https://youtu.be/CNcdyk-535g

Traditional African Cookie - Nigeria - Benne Wafers
Tools Needed - Oven - Large Bowl - Baking Sheet

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sesame seeds, toasted
- ¾ cup butter, melted
- 1 ½ cups brown sugar, packed
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp baking powder

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.

2. Toast sesame seeds by placing them on an ungreased baking sheet and toasting at 375 for 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned.

3. In a large bowl, mix brown sugar, butter, egg, vanilla extract, flour, salt, baking powder and toasted sesame seeds together until well combined.

4. Drop the dough into teaspoon-sized balls onto a greased baking sheet. Spread the cookies out so that there are 2 inches of room between each cookie.

5. Bake at 375 for 5-6 minutes, until the edges are lightly browned. Remove the cookies from the oven and allow them to sit for 2-3 minutes. Store any leftover cookies in an airtight container. Makes 1 dozen cookies.

Games

• Mancala – Believed to be the oldest game in the world, Mancala has been played in all the counties on the African continent. To play, you need a Mancala board with holes arranged in either two or four rows. Traditionally pebbles were used but commercial versions use marbles and the aim of the game is to move your stones around so that you can capture your opponent.

• Zamma – is a popular game in North Africa. Some boards have been found that date back to 1400. You use a 9x9 or 9x8 square board to play. Each player has 40 pieces, black or white and just like checkers, the pieces are set up on either side of the board with the center-left empty. The black pieces are the men and the white are the women. The player who captures all the opponent's pieces is the winner.

• Butterfly – is a very popular game in Mozambique and also resembles checkers. The unusual board is consisting of two triangles that look like a butterfly. Two lines cross the width of the triangle and one runs down the length forming 19 intersection point that pieces are played on. Each player has nine pieces and the goal is to capture all of your opponents' pieces.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

BY AGE: **YEAR 0-5**

3-6 MONTHS

- Can discern racial features
- Babies prefer features from certain racial groups

18-24 MONTHS

- Toddlers recognize gender differences and start using gender labels

0-2

- Chronic racial stress can affect infants through maternal stress and intergeneration al trauma.

0-2

- Infants recognize race and gender but rely on parental influence for identity formation

2-3

- By age 2-3, children strongly identify with gender and develop gender stereotypes

3-5

- By age 3-5, children start categorizing people by race and showing racial biases

AGE 5

- By age 5, racial discrimination is linked to heightened stress responses and early mental health concerns.
- Parental racial socialization (teaching children about race) can buffer against racial stress.

QUESTIONS/PROMPTS

- How comfortable are you talking about your identity in terms of your religion, race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.?
- Have you had any conversations at home? What were they? How did you feel having them?
- What questions are your child(ren) asking?
- How often during your day do you encounter people who are different from you in a material way? What kind of interactions do you have with them? Are they substantive or transactional?

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

BY AGE: **YEAR 6-10**

6-7

- By ages 6-7, children's attitudes about race influence their perceptions of fairness and ability

7-10

- By ages 7-10, children understand systemic inequities and develop stronger class biases

6-10

- By ages 6-10, children develop a deeper understanding of gender identity and begin to recognize non-heteronormative identities

7 YEARS

- A strong racial identity can serve as a protective factor, promoting resilience and well-being.

LATE CHILDHOOD

- Children's understanding of sexual orientation also emerges in late childhood, even if they do not yet have a personal identity label

10 YEARS

- Physiological stress responses (elevated cortisol, inflammation) are common in children facing racial discrimination
- Strong sense of identity can help

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD

- Curiosity-based questions
- WHAT are they asking about (actually)
- WHY are they asking
- Answer questions straightforwardly
- Model and coach humility, curiosity and delight about difference
- Kids look to US to see how we react
- Asset's-based language
- **Be mindful of children's media**

CHILDREN'S MEDIA

- Not always good for kids BECAUSE kid's media spends **more minutes** on problematic behaviors to "illustrate" moral lessons
- Before age 6, children can't follow plot
- Children's books about diversity often use a **deficit model.** (X had a difference that was hard to deal with, but they 'overcame' their terrible difference and were accepted.)
- Research shows that *Friends* is better for kids to watch that *Spongebob.*
- *We can't sanitize history for young children.*

SOURCES

"Adults Delay Conversations About Race Because They Underestimate Children's Processing of Race," by Jessica Sullivan, PhD; Leigh Wilton, PhD, Skidmore College; and Evan P. Apfelbaum, PhD, Boston University, Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, published online Aug. 6, 2020

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Seaton et al. (2011) - Adolescents with a strong racial identity experience fewer negative effects from racism. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01651.x

Shutts et al. (2016) - Children continue to associate wealth with intelligence and competence. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149360

Hussak & Cimpian (2019) - Children essentialize social categories, believing race/class differences are innate. https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12758

SOURCES

Hughes et al. (2006) - Parents' discussions about race help children develop resilience to discrimination.
📌 https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.5.747

Pachter & Coll (2009) - Racism negatively impacts child mental health, leading to anxiety and depression.
📌 https://doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0b013e3181a7b782

Shutts et al. (2016) - Young children use visual wealth cues (clothing, possessions) to assess others.
📌 https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149360

Martin & Ruble (2004) - Preschoolers actively seek gender cues and show rigid gender role beliefs.
📌 https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.00276.x

Heard-Garris et al. (2018) - Examines how vicarious racism (experienced by parents) impacts infant health.

Zosuls et al. (2009) - Infants begin acquiring gender labels before age 2, influencing play behavior.
📌 https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014053

Kelly et al. (2005) - Three-month-olds, but not newborns, show a preference for own-race faces.
📌 https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7687.2005.0434a.x

All scenarios come from Learning for Justice, with a few modifications.
https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/speak-up/among-family

SPEAK UP

WITH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

CASUAL COMMENTS

A white man plans to marry a South American woman; his friends make incorrect assumptions about her race, religion and family background. "The question we never stop getting is, 'Do Carrie's parents mind?' When we question the question, we are told that 'Indian families' like their daughters to marry their 'own kind.' How can we respond?"

A Chicago woman who is adopted, still grieving the death of her mother, is told, "Oh, so that wasn't your real mother who died?" The woman writes, "I was so hurt by this I didn't know what to say."

A Chinese American woman often finds herself asked by friends, "What do Chinese people think about that?"

Approach friends as allies.

When a friend makes a hurtful comment or poses an offensive question, it's easy to shut down, put up walls or disengage. Remember that you're friends with this person for a reason; something special brought you together. Drawing on that bond, explain how the comment offended you.

Respond with silence.

When a friend poses a question that feels hurtful, let protracted silence do the work for you. Say nothing and wait for the speaker to respond with an open-ended question: "What's up?" Then describe the comment from your point of view.

Talk about differences.

When we have friendships across group lines, it's natural to focus on what we have in common, rather than our differences. Yet our differences matter. Strive to open up the conversation: "We've been friends for years, and I value our friendship very much. One thing we've never really talked about is my experiences with racism. I'd like to do that now."

SPEAK UP

WITH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

OFFENDED GUESTS

A friend stays overnight with a married couple. All three had been part of a beer-drinking crowd in college but when offered a beer that evening, the guest politely declines.

In the morning, the husband offers the guest a cup of coffee. Again, the guest declines. Attempting humor, the husband asks, "What are you, Mormon or something?"

The guest explains that, yes, he has married since college, to a Mormon woman, and has converted.

Be proactive.

Before houseguests arrive, ask if they have any special dietary restrictions or other needs. Also, share any household traditions or practices you have that may affect them.

Pay attention.

When we miss or ignore social cues and clues, we can stumble into awkward moments. Pay attention to subtleties of communication, a hesitancy from a guest before beginning a meal might indicate a need for a moment of silent prayer, for example.

Focus on behavior, not beliefs.

If you feel the need to ask questions, center it on behavior rather than beliefs. "John, you used to drink in college. Have you stopped?" This may open, rather than close, a conversation.

Accept information at face value.

If someone declines one thing, offer another without judgment or inference. "Would you like a soft drink instead?" Or, "We also have milk or juice; would that work?" Be gracious. Aim to please, not judge.

Take responsibility.

SPEAK UP

AMONG FAMILY

IMPRESSIONABLE CHILDREN

A woman's young son tells a racist "joke" at dinner that he had heard on the playground earlier that day. "I immediately discussed with him how inappropriate it was. I asked him to put himself in the place of the person in the 'joke.' How would he feel? I discussed with him the feeling of empathy."

A New Jersey woman writes: "My young daughter wrapped a towel around her head and said she wanted to be a terrorist for Halloween — 'like that man down the street.'" The man is a Sikh who wears a turban for religious reasons. The woman asks, "What do I tell my daughter?"

Focus on empathy.

When a child says or does something that reflects biases or embraces stereotypes, point it out: "What makes that 'joke' funny?" Guide the conversation toward empathy and respect: "How do you think our neighbor would feel if he heard you call him a terrorist?"

Expand horizons.

Look critically at how your child defines "normal." Help to expand the definition: "Our neighbor is a Sikh, not a terrorist. Let's learn about his religion." Create opportunities for children to spend time with and learn about people who are different from themselves.

Prepare for the predictable.

Every year, Halloween becomes a magnet for stereotypes. Children and adults dress as "psychos" or "bums," perpetuating biased representations of people with mental illness or people who are homeless. Others wear masks steeped in stereotypical features or misrepresentations. Seek costumes that don't embrace stereotypes. Have fun on the holiday without turning it into an exercise in bigotry and bias.

Be a role model.

If parents treat people unfairly based on differences, children likely will repeat what they see. Be conscious of your own dealings with others.

SPEAK UP

AMONG FAMILY

JOKING IN-LAWS

A woman's father-in-law routinely tells racist and anti-semitic "jokes" at family gatherings. "It made me very uncomfortable," she writes, "though at first I didn't say anything to him about it." After having children, however, she felt compelled to speak up.

Arriving for her next visit, she said to her father-in-law, "I know I can't control what you do in your own house. Your 'jokes' are offensive to me, and I will not allow my children to be subjected to them. If you choose to continue with them, I will take the children and leave. And I'm informing you that racist 'jokes' or comments will not be allowed in my own home."

Describe your family's values.

Your spouse's/partner's family may well embrace bigoted "humor" as part of familial culture. Explain why that isn't the case in your home; explain that principles like tolerance and respect for others guide your immediate family's interactions and attitudes.

Set limits.

Although you may not be able to change your in-laws' attitudes, you can set limits on their behavior in your own home: "I will not allow bigoted 'jokes' to be told in my home."

Follow through.

In this case, during her next visit, the woman and her children left when the father-in-law began to tell such a "joke." She did that two more times, at later family gatherings, before her father-in-law finally refrained.

Inclusion Framework

	Low Belongingness	High Belongingness
Low Value in Uniqueness	**Exclusion** Individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group but there are other employees or groups who are insiders.	**Assimilation** Individual is treated as an insider in the work group when they conform to organizational/dominant culture norms and downplay uniqueness.
High Value in Uniqueness	**Differentiation** Individual is not treated as an organizational insider in the work group but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/ organization success.	**Inclusion** Individual is treated as an insider and also allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group.

(Shore, et al., 2011

Moving in the Right Direction

Addressing the Racial Opportunity Gap in Education by Creating Culturally Responsive Early Education Programs

by Toshiba Adams

During the mid-1970s, at the young age of four, I began my early schooling years by helping to racially integrate public schools in Milwaukee. As an adult, I can still recall rising early each morning, walking to the corner of my city-dwelling home, boarding the yellow bus and arriving at my predominantly white school in the suburbs. I can also recall how attending predominantly white schools caused me a great deal of anxiety. I was the only Black child in my class—none of my classroom peers or school staff looked or talked like me. And my white classmates seldom included me in their daily play groups. I felt like I had been transported to a foreign land. While in this distant land, I was expected to acclimate to the school's mainstream culture and excel socially and academically. Yet, this rarely happened for me.

Toshiba Adams, Ph.D., serves as a full-time instructor and instructional chair of early childhood education at Milwaukee Area Technical College. Her research and teaching focus includes examining the relationships between structural inequalities and a child's growth and development; school desegregation; and Critical Race Theory. From 1998-2008, Adams served as the founder and co-owner of an NAEYC accredited early childhood education center.

In this foreign land, I felt different and I struggled to operate within this system of difference. For example, I found it difficult to abandon my Ebonics language (i.e., "Black" English,) and was often reprimanded by my teacher for using words that were not found in Webster's Dictionary. To encourage my use of standard English, my teacher informed the entire second grade class that she would only serve a treat on Friday if "...Toshiba earns 100 percent on the Spelling Bee." I remember feeling humiliated and ashamed of my academic shortcomings. Ironically, though my teacher's strategy for motivating me to become a better speller was inappropriate and offensive at best, her gesture eventually influenced me to become a more proficient reader, writer and speller. Despite my progress, my teacher informed my parents that I was not performing academically as well as my white peers. She strongly recommended that I repeat the second grade so that I could "catch up." Of course, my parents respectfully declined her recommendation. Despite my academic progression and my parents' hands-on involvement in my school affairs, inequitable learning experiences became the norm for me as I continued my academic journey in predominantly white school systems.

Reflecting back, I now realize that I missed valuable school-based opportunities that could have potentially supported my overall development. I missed the opportunity to develop meaningful social relationships with my peers and school staff; the opportunity to feel as though I mattered within my school's environment; and the opportunity to learn within a culturally affirming school context. Such missed opportunities negatively influenced my social, emotional and academic development.

Our Faltering Education System

My early education experiences transpired during the 1970s. What about now? Recent studies show that, even today, inequitable school-based policies and practices result in Black children missing multicultural classroom instruction and their academic needs being unmet. For example, in 2017, studies reported that Black preschool-aged children were 3.6 times more likely to be suspended

and expelled than white preschool-age children (Trent et al., 2019; United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2019). Dr. Walter Gilliam and his colleagues studied the implicit biases of early education teachers, meaning the attitudes and stereotypes that they held toward different groups of children. Regarding discipline measures, they found that teachers more vigilantly observed Black children, especially boys, because they expected them to misbehave (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Teacher biases are also noted in the design of preschool assessments. For example, teachers often underestimate the academic abilities of Black children (see Trent et al., 2019), which leads to Black children receiving a watered-down version of the classroom curriculum. While implicit biases are perceived as unconscious cognitive processes, the impact of racial prejudice is quite severe and long-lasting, resulting in Black children missing valuable learning time and opportunities that support their holistic development. These missed opportunities lead to a difference in schooling outcomes across racial groups, which is referenced as the racial achievement gap (Aratani et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2012).

The inequitable ways that Black children have historically been disregarded within the educational system have implications for early education teachers. This discussion should influence early educators to build equitable learning environments that support the development of all children during their early years, but especially Black children, since research shows that racial bias against this group of children continues to be pervasive and harmful. Culturally relevant pedagogy serves as one approach for addressing the racial opportunity gap noted within the early education literature.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy is an educational philosophy that grounds one's approach toward teaching. As a pioneer of CRP, Ladson-Billings (1995) discusses how CRP rests on three fundamental concepts. All children must 1) experience academic success, 2) develop cultural competence and, 3) develop a critical socio-political consciousness. These concepts are interwoven, meaning that a culturally relevant teacher cannot simply focus on one concept. Instead, culturally relevant teachers intentionally determine ways to incorporate all concepts within their teaching approach.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy, or a practice of teaching, that extends from the central ideas associated with CRP. Below, I provide examples as to how early education professionals can align their teaching approach to a culturally relevant framework.

Academic Success. Culturally responsive early education teachers ensure the academic success of children by viewing them as capable learners. Teachers should challenge children by providing them with age- and developmentally appropriate activities that guide learning across all domains of development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally responsive teachers also understand that culture is central to the process of learning (see Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). As such, teachers serve as "cultural bridges" (Gay, 2004), building learning that affords all students opportunities to see themselves, their families, and their communities represented within the classroom curriculum.

When developing learning experiences, culturally responsive teachers realize that children arrive at their programs with a predetermined set of knowledge, abilities and experiences. By observing young children in natural play settings and recording their strengths and areas for improvement, teachers better understand how to scaffold their approaches to integrate new learning concepts that guide children toward meeting new developmental milestones. Observations also inform teachers about how to differentiate learning to meet the unique developmental and cultural needs of each child.

Cultural Competence. In order to build cultural competence within young children, teachers must first build cultural competence within themselves (see Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992), meaning they must understand and experience different cultures in order to teach young children through a multicultural and anti-racist lens. Teachers also become culturally competent by reflecting on their own worldviews, cultural practices, social norms and biases, and by expanding their understanding of diversity beyond their personal realities. From here, teachers become equipped to build lessons that guide children's understanding of their own culture, which not only builds self-identity but also increases the child's ability to respect and understand the cultural perspectives of others. According to Ladson-Billings, a culturally competent child is also "bicultural," meaning able to navigate between home and school environments (Delpit, 2002, p. 111).

Socio-political Consciousness. Since young children love to explore through language, early education teachers can support children's development of socio-political consciousness by building learning experiences that allow children to analyze and discuss societal worldviews, customs and

norms. Children should be given permission to ask questions that challenge societal norms from multiple perspectives, such as questioning inequalities and inequities that are based on race, racism, poverty, language, gender, class and immigration status.

Thought-provoking questions lead to a deeper understanding and valuing of differences. However, many teachers are uncomfortable discussing concepts of race and racism and claim to "not see color." This colorblind approach is actually harmful to the psychological and identity development of young children, because many children of color, and their families, encounter racism on a regular basis. Furthermore, when teachers refuse to "see color," they are actually deeming young children to be invisible beings. Since race (along with gender and class) is actually a socially developed construct used to grant social and political advantage to people based on their association with the dominant culture, it is important to engage young children in discussions about how they are similar to and different from one another in meaningful ways that dismantle racial hierarchies. Allowing children to openly and honestly engage in difficult discussions empowers children from all racial and ethnic backgrounds to "develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Tips for Building a Culturally Responsive Early Education Teacher

You may be wondering, "How can early education teachers create learning opportunities that align with a culturally relevant pedagogy?" I have compiled ten practical tips that will get you moving in the right direction! Culturally responsive teachers:

1. Avoid gender biases and support young girls in assuming a positive self-esteem by ensuring that women are portrayed in a variety of positive leadership roles. Teachers can intentionally display pictures of men and women who assume diverse professional roles and invite guest speakers to speak with children about their careers.

2. Include cultural artifacts that represent people from around the world. For example, your dramatic play area should include a diverse variety of foods, dolls, cookbooks, clothing, puppets, wall displays, ethnic restaurant menus and cooking utensils for play and exploration. Teachers should ensure that dolls and figurines represent diversity in age, race, skin tones, hair texture, ethnicity and abilities.

3. Observe children during play time with a goal of better understanding their interests, abilities, cultural styles of communication and experiential knowledge. Teachers can use this information to build learning opportunities. In a culturally responsive classroom, children serve as co-teachers, subject matter experts and presenters of information.

4. Design environments with comfortable sofas, chairs and pillows that can easily accommodate adults, including family members. Furniture choice and set-up encourage cooperative play between children and interactions between children and adults.

5. Infuse the arts within your programs, including music, songs, instruments, poetry and dance activities that represent a variety of genres from around the world (i.e., jazz, classical, gospel, rap, Latin beats, Afro-Caribbean beats, and so on).

6. Encourage use of the family's home language. In a culturally rich environment, children and adults speak in multiple languages; written labels and wall displays are posted throughout the classroom in various languages; and children sing songs, recite poetry and read books in multiple languages.

7. Learn from children, families and the community. Invite family members to share stories about their cultural norms and traditions; serve as language teachers; lead cooking activities, and read stories. Teachers can extend their learning through home visits, conferences, community and cultural events, parent questionnaires, two-way communication and local field trips.

8. Include beautifully designed books that reflect children's interest and display positive messages. Books should also promote self-love and positive self-identity. Good examples include "The Color of Us," by Karen Katz, which teaches children about the beautiful shades of brown skin, and "Sulwe," by Lupita Nyong'o and Vashti Harrison, which discusses how a dark-skinned Black girl learns to love her skin color and herself.

9. Speak openly and freely with children about societal power structures that marginalize particular groups of people. Encourage children to ask questions and build lessons that spark discussions regarding historical and current events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. In response to the social inequalities that are discussed, children should be guided toward social justice action. For example, it would be age appropriate

for preschoolers to decorate signs that advocate for social justice and march around their school's neighborhood showcasing their signs.

10. Incorporate technology within the program in meaningful ways. For example, encourage children to use technology to learn about people from different cultures and to develop personal and family biographies as a way to share their identity with their classroom peers and teachers.

Opportunity gaps in early education exist when we, as educators, fail to provide all children with equitable opportunities to develop within and across developmental domains. Inequitable learning opportunities can negatively impact children during and after their preschool years. To counter racial inequalities, early education professionals must be willing to explore the possibilities of educating young children in environments that are rigorous and culturally affirming.

According to the late Martin Luther King, Jr., the purpose "...of education is to teach one to think intensely and to think critically—intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education." Dr. King's sentiments align with a culturally responsive teaching approach. Early education professionals who adopt a CRT approach support young children's brain development when they encourage them to think critically, reflect on their thinking and ask thoughtful questions; prepare children to engage in a diverse and ever-changing world; build compassion and empathy in children; and build positive self-esteem, by helping children feel confident about their differing abilities and cultures. Taken together, these actions prepare young children for social and academic success.

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Preparing the Environment

Using your anti-bias lens, highlight the social indicators or identities that are being affirmed, centered, and represented in your classroom books, curriculum, and teaching materials.

Indigenous	Disabled	Male
Black	Islam	white
Latino/x	Judaism	Middle-class
Pacific Islander	Hindu	Non-disabled
Asian	Neurodivergent	English-speaking
Gay	Immigrant	Natural-born citizen
Lesbian	1st & 2nd gen.	Christian
Trans	Deaf	Neurotypical
Non-binary	Limb Difference	Nuclear family
Poor	Female	Cis-gender
Working-class		

*Please note this is not an exhaustive list. Feel empowered to add additional social identities to the lists.

Questions to Ask:

1. Am I affirming this identity in my classroom?
2. When am I affirming this identity in my classroom?
3. How am I affirming this identity in my classroom? (passively or actively)

Classroom Interventions & Accommodations

CLASSROOM EXAMPLES:

UNIVERSAL SUPPORTS

All learners with or without IEP's receive

SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS

Learners with IEP's who need minimal/moderate assistance

INTENSIVE SUPPORTS

Learners with IEP's and significant delays who need maximum assistance

Descriptions and Examples of Tiers of Support

Universal Supports are high quality early childhood strategies that can be used for all children, those that are identified as needing special education and typically developing children. These strategies take into consideration all learning styles and include the selection of curriculum, materials and resources that all children can use, providing support for diverse abilities, learning preferences, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

Examples of Universal Supports:

- Presenting instruction in multiple ways (visual, auditory, tactile)
- Using classroom wide visual schedules
- Organizing the classroom to meet all children's needs
- Engaging children based on their interests and choices
- Repetition of verbal directions
- Increased wait time for responses

Specialized supports may be needed for children who have been identified as having delays in their development and needing special education. These supports may be used for children who need minimal to moderate assistance to meet their IEP goals and objectives and to access and participate in the preschool curriculum.

Examples of Specialized Supports:

- Presenting instruction specific to child's learning based on IEP information, goals and objectives
- Using prompting levels specific to child's chances of success
- Using visuals specific to child's needs, goals and objectives
- Repetition of verbal directions along with additional support (prompts, visuals, etc.)
- Extended wait times along with prompting when response is not given or correct
- Specific organization of classroom, arrangement of classroom areas and/or materials

Intensive supports may be needed for a smaller subset of children who have been identified as having significant delays in their development and needing special education. These supports may be used for children who need maximum assistance to meet their IEP goals and objectives and to access and participate in the preschool curriculum.

Examples of Intensive Supports:

- Presenting instruction specific to child's learning based on IEP information, goals and objectives, including break down tasks into steps
- Using high level of prompting and consistent prompting to complete tasks
- Using motivating and consistent reinforcement specific to the child
- Using modified or adapted materials/equipment that is specific to the child's needs
- Giving directions in the mode of communication the child uses (pictures, signs, gestures, etc.)

All children have unique needs.

Even children identified as needing special education vary greatly in the types and levels of assistance they need to be successful.

Their needs are ever changing and supports/interventions may need to be adjusted depending on the activity, goal, time of day, preferences, etc.

It is important to ensure that a child does not become over dependent on adult or peer assistance and that the prompt levels used are always working toward independence. (Click on the links below for further information)
Prompting Hierarchy - Supporting Children in the Development of Independence (voiced powerpoint)
Prompting Hierarchy -- Supporting Children in the Development of Independence (pdf document)

Please take some time to explore our Topics of the Month as they will now include a ***Supports, Accommodations and Adaptations*** section, which provides more specific examples and resources.

Additional Resources (links):

Adapting Children's Learning Opportunities - DEC Recommended Practices - ECTA Center

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Examples of adaptations for preschool children with special needs:

- Modifying the physical environment
- Adapting materials
- Simplifying the activity (breaking it down, decreasing the number of steps)
- Using child preferences (favorite toy, favorite activity)
- Using special equipment or adapted devices
- Using adult support
- Using peer support

Always remember

The special education process requires that **individual** supports and interventions for children be based on their strengths, weaknesses, and identified needs.

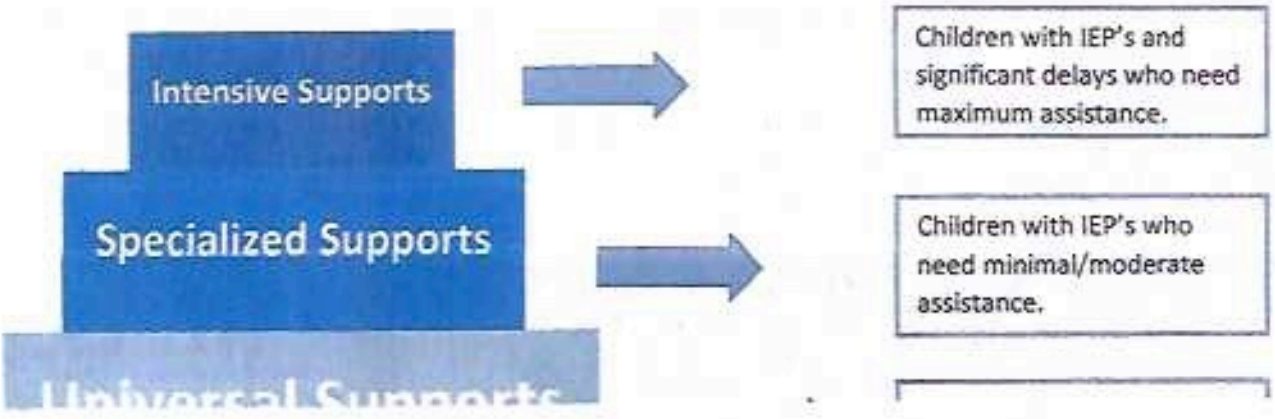
These should be reflected in the following sections of their Individual Education Plans (IEP):

- Present Levels of Performance,
- Goals and Objectives,
- Supports and Services,
- Accommodations

The IEP document should be referred to often when planning activities and instruction.

Levels of support Pre-K ESE:

When planning interventions and supports, it is important to take into consideration the amount of assistance a child needs to be successful. In both general and special education, it is becoming common to use tiered support frameworks. These are referred to by many different terms. Again, when working with preschool children the terminology is not so important; but the concept of providing the correct amount and type of support to increase chances of a child's success is essential.



Preschool Special Education Interventions

Overview of Specially Designed Instruction in IDEA

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA), some preschool children (3 years of age through 5 years of age) who have undergone the evaluation process, may be determined eligible and in need of special education.

According to IDEA:
Special education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

IDEA further defines *specially designed instruction* as:
(3) Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction –

(i) To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and

(ii) To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children. [§300.39(b)(3)]

Adaptations, modifications and accommodations are all **types of support** given to preschool children with special needs under the overall umbrella of specially designed instruction. The terms are often used interchangeably but there is some agreement to their meaning and use.

For preschool children the differences in meaning and use may be more subtle, as they are working on a wide variety of developmental skills in many areas. In older children the differences may be more defined, as they are working on specific assignments and with specific materials.

When working with preschool children, it doesn't really matter what terminology you use. As long as you are carefully planning the individualized interventions and supports that the child needs to participate in the curriculum/activities and to make progress toward their IEP goals you're on the right track!

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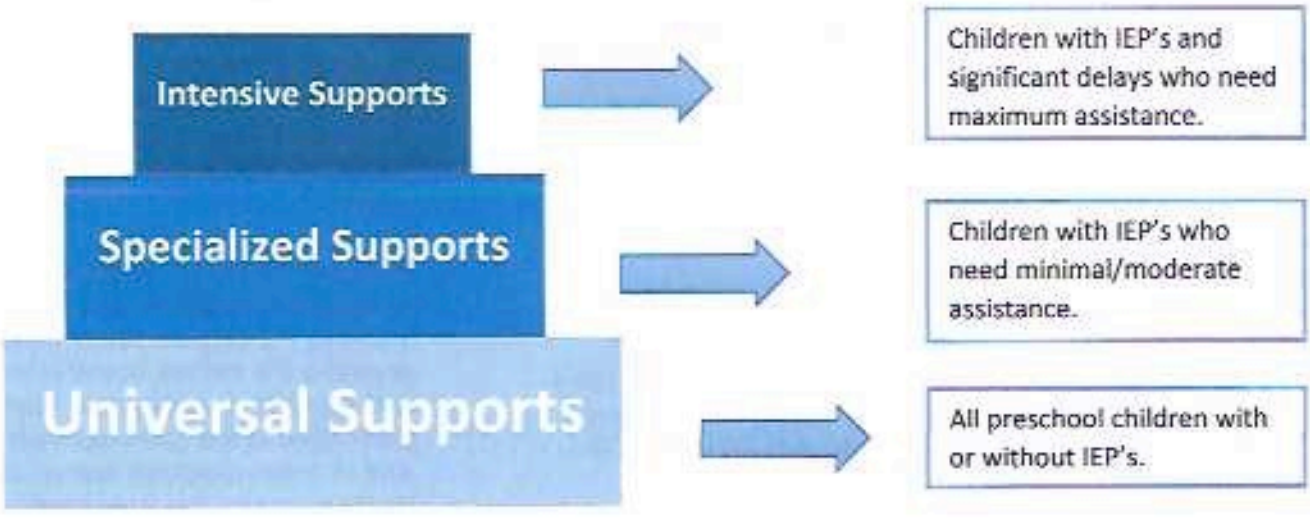

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Gender Identity and Expression in the Early Childhood Classroom: Influences on Development Within Sociocultural Contexts

VOICES OF PRACTITIONERS | Volume 11, Number 1
Jamie Solomon

Voices of Practitioners: Teacher Research in Early Childhood Education, the online journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, has been published since 2004. Starting in July 2016, one Voices of Practitioners article will be published in each issue of Young Children as well as online.

Voices of Practitioners is a vehicle for dissemination of early childhood teachers' systematic study of an aspect of their own classroom practice. Deeply involved in the daily lives of children and their families, teachers provide a critical insider perspective on life in their classrooms through communication of their investigations, the results, and their reflections.

Visit Voices of Practitioners to learn more about teacher research and to peruse an archive of past Teacher Research articles dating back to 2004.

During the past 10 years of teaching in the early childhood field, I have observed young children as they develop ideas about gender identity. I soon came to understand gender expression as a larger social justice issue, realizing how external influences were already at work inside the preschool classroom, impacting children's interactions and choices for play and exploration.

This matter became a great priority in my professional life, leading me to look for ways to advocate for change. Some of this eagerness stemmed from my own frustrations about gender inequity and how, as a woman, I have felt limited, misunderstood, and pressured by societal constructs. These personal experiences inspired me to help further discussions about gender development within the early childhood field so that, one day, young children might grow up feeling less encumbered by unfair social expectations and rules.

Teaching preschool for six years at a progressive school, I was able to engage in ongoing learning opportunities, including observation and reflection. The school's emergent curriculum approach required me to pay close attention to the children's play in order to build the curriculum and create environments based on their evolving interests.

Early one semester, while on a nature field trip, I noticed great enthusiasm coming from a small group that consisted mostly of girls. They attempted to "make a campfire" using sticks and logs. After observing several other similar play scenarios and listening to their discussions, I began building a curriculum based on the children's evolving interests. I started by offering opportunities to encourage this inquiry—for example, through drawing activities and providing tools to more closely explore the properties of wood. Several weeks later, I was gratified to see that among those most deeply engaged in our emerging curricular focus on wood, fire, and camping, the majority continued to be girls. The

girls' behavior and interests involved characteristics historically categorized as masculine: joyfully getting dirty, doing hard physical work (in this case with hand tools), and being motivated by a perceived sense of danger acted out in their play—for example, pretending that a fire might erupt at any moment.

These exciting observations prompted me to investigate how a particular curriculum might encourage and support children to behave outside of society's gender constructs. My understanding of gender influences built over time; each year I noticed the power and presence of these influences in the classroom.

These questions guided my study:

- How can I offer a curriculum that provides children with more opportunities for acting outside of traditional gender roles?
- How can I encourage and support children who wish to behave outside of traditional gender roles?
- How can I foster increasingly flexible thinking about gender among 4- and 5-year-old children?

The following study highlights excerpts not only from our major emergent project on camping and firemaking, but also from examples drawn from all of my teaching experiences that spring semester.

Literature review

Young children are continually making sense of their world, assimilating novel information and modifying their theories along the way. Most influences in the lives of young children—both human and environmental—reinforce existing stereotypes (Ramsey 2004).

Without prominent caring adults helping them consider perspectives that challenge the status quo, children, left to their own devices, tend to develop notions that conform with stereotypes (Ramsey 2004). If children are regularly exposed to images, actions, people, and words that counter stereotypes—for example through books, photographs, stories, and role models—they are likely to modify and expand on their narrow theories (Brill & Pepper 2008).

Thus, educators of young children should offer their student different perspectives, including those that counter society's confined constructs, to allow children access to a range of roles, expressions, and identities (Valente 2011). Without such efforts, we stymie young children's development, keeping them from realizing the extent of their potential.

During this teacher research project, I found many examples of girls crossing traditional gender role boundaries but only a few examples involving boys. Some researchers believe this phenomenon, a common finding in gender studies, results from our male-dominated culture, in which being male or having male characteristics is associated with power, opportunity, and prestige (Daltsman 2011).

Many young boys demonstrate awareness of these desirable qualities and perhaps worry about losing such advantages if they were to cross gender lines. Accordingly, educators must take an active role in providing both boys and girls counternarratives, and helping children question the status quo. Forman and Fyfe (2012) show faith in our human capacity to evolve, describing our understandings of the world as malleable. They write, "We hold that knowledge is gradually constructed by becoming each other's student, by taking an inquiry stance toward each other's constructs, and by sincere attempts to assimilate or reconcile each other's initial perspective" (247).

My goal is that this research will prompt educators to work on softening the system of gender rules that surrounds and governs our children. As Brown and Jones (2001) explain, "Changes in attitudes will not be achieved until certain fundamental dichotomies, which currently regulate aspects of classroom life, have been shifted" (143).

Methods

This study took place at a progressive San Francisco Bay Area preschool offering a full-day, year-round program. The school serves 2 1/2 - to 5 1/2-year olds. I conducted the study in my classroom of twenty-one 4- and 5-year-olds.

The children were from diverse backgrounds racially, culturally, and socioeconomically and represented a wide range of family compositions. While all 21 children in my class were observed during the research process, particular children and groups of children became more visible in the data for various reasons. Some children stood out to me as particularly conforming or nonconforming to traditional gender roles, as compared to their peers. Alternatively, I also focused on cases where I felt I had witnessed a child break from their typical role or gender expression. I was the lead teacher and worked alongside and collaborated with two coteachers.

During the spring semester when this study was conducted, the children spent most of the morning hours in unstructured play time with the choice of working indoors or outdoors. We also spent at least one hour of every morning engaged in more structured activities, including circle time. The afternoons also included choices for indoor and outdoor play. Weekly field trips had long been integral to the school's program, so my class left the campus each Wednesday to embark on a local adventure together.

Beginning this study in the Spring, I benefited from having established relationships with the children over the first five months of the school year. By the time I began this teacher research, I had met with their parents during fall conferences and spent countless hours observing the children, connecting with them, learning their idiosyncrasies, and building trust. In fact, I had already come to know many of these children the year prior when preschoolers from various classrooms intermingled while playing in our shared yard.

My data sources included field notes and reflective notes, video and photos, and weekly journaling. The field notes generally consisted of my observations, which were recorded during natural discussions and spontaneous events. After leaving the classroom I revisited the field notes to fill in contextual holes or other missing information. Fully detailed, my field notes offered vivid samples that I could use to effectively recall experiences for analysis. I believe in many cases I reproduced conversations accurately. At other times, I captured more of the flow of an event. Excerpts from my field notes, in the upcoming Findings section, reflect this range of detail.

My analysis uses a theoretical lens suggested by Rogoff (2003), which holds that human thinking and behavior should be understood within its particular sociocultural context, that is to say an environment greatly influences those who live and learn within it and vice versa. Thus, the data is viewed in consideration of situational factors such as structured versus unstructured play, children's varied personalities, and larger societal influences like the media. My analysis also includes self-reflection, as I continually questioned my views on gender, knowing that my data had been gathered through my personal feminist lens.

The data collected—notes and images capturing young children's expressions, behavior, and interactions—was examined for evidence of gendered thinking and possible influences that caused it. After first organizing my data chronologically, I proceeded to go through it, jotting down one to five words to describe each data sample. Moving slowly, I regularly returned to previous samples, making comparisons between records and reevaluating the descriptions I was making. As new words or "codes" came to mind, I again returned to previous data samples to determine whether this concept was visible throughout the data. Thus, the process continued, moving forward and backward to compare, reevaluate, confirm new patterns, and then review.

Next, I studied my list of codes and pulled those that seemed most encompassing to serve as overarching themes. The three themes that resulted, in relation to gender, were (1) influences of materials and teacher expectations; (2) children's desire and search for power; and (3) expressions and behavior illustrating children's state of mind and development. In the following section I explore these themes, illustrating each with supporting data excerpts and my analysis of them.

Findings

Influences of materials and teacher expectations

Many factors influence children's learning experiences in the early childhood classroom. This first theme examines how the available materials—whether closed or open-ended—might guide the children's work and interactions with one another.

I primarily focus on the props and tools that I, the teacher, provided the children, the intention behind the materials offered, and my expectations on how they might be used. Of course other compounding factors should be considered here as well. For example, how our school's philosophy plays out in our classroom, the physical environment, and the emergent curriculum topics we teachers have chosen. Such factors combine to create a stage upon which the children and teachers act.

Data collected on two different days revealed contrasting behavior among the children. The first excerpt focuses on two girls exploring new materials inspired by our emergent unit on wood, camping, and fire. During this play they assume less conventional female roles.

In the second sample, the subjects of my observation include three boys whom I observed handling baby dolls—props available throughout the year in our classroom—in a manner congruent with stereotypical gender norms.

Also included in this excerpt is a girl who was seeking to interact with me while I watched the boys. The first data sample stood out to me during analysis and I have included it for the reader because it caused me to consider how

some curricular materials might offer children opportunities for acting outside of traditional gender roles. In contrast, the second sample made me think more deeply about the types of materials that we typically offer children (e.g., baby dolls), how many of these play props have strong associations with only one gender, and how open-ended materials might be less limiting for a child's self-expression and learning. (See "Field Notes, February 12, 2014.")

When the children approached the camping activity table, I gave very little instruction. Instead I explained I had seen them working with wood recently, and I wanted to give them more time and tools for their investigation. Whenever I share such observations about children's work and express curiosity, it seems to validate their interests and encourage their exploration. The group readily experimented. The activity was approachable, open-ended, and afforded a safe place to try out new ideas, actions, and roles.

The girls appeared empowered and stayed with their work for as long as possible. Their verbal expressions resembled those I had heard more often from boys in my classroom. For instance, Caitlyn and Stella deepened their voices noticeably as they loudly delighted in each discovery, saying, "OHHH" and "WHOA!" Apparently, this natural wood paired with carpentry tools served as entry vehicles into the vigorous roles that the girls assumed.

The logs were like those they had been gathering on our field trip when they tried to make fire, while the hand tools suggested new ways to transform the wood. Something about this scenario obviously captivated them, as the girls' interest in working with wood and dramatic play related to campfires and camping continued over the next several months.

In organizing this activity, I had expected more boys to be drawn to the wood and hand tools. On reflection, I see these expectations were based on my own gender-biased assumptions. Instead, this activity attracted more girls, providing them the opportunity to further explore an interest outside of traditional female roles. Such traditional roles are reinforced when girls role-play motherhood, princesses, or female characters commonly found in popular movies and other media—activities far more common in my classroom than these girls' work with wood.

On a separate occasion, much later in the school year, I found myself drawn to a group of three boys working in the dramatic play area—Robby, Peter, and Mason—during unstructured play time. I noticed that they had picked up the baby dolls, and I was intrigued, as I hadn't seen them use the dolls before. They had also brought over a roll of tape.

Perching on a nearby stepstool, I grabbed my camera, a notepad and pen, and began recording. Meanwhile, I was slightly distracted by Ella standing next to me, as she simultaneously began sharing her future plans for motherhood. (See "Field Notes, April 11, 2014"—the following dialogues are presented side by side, as they took place.)

These data samples stood out to me because of the coincidence of these two concurrent stereotypical portrayals of gender roles. While observing the group, I had perceived Ella's dialogue as disruptive, unrelated to what I was in the process of capturing. In the moment, I was not fully focused on her thoughts and did not consider them significant to the situation. When I later reflected, however, I realized that Ella had noticed I was observing this group of boys and their rough play with the dolls. Looking to connect with me, she offered her perspective on babies and caregiving.

Upon reflection, the boys' behavior reminded me of teacher researcher Aaron Neimark's description of his preschool boys playing what he called "basketball babies" (2012). Through his studies, Neimark (2012) noticed how young children often use objects in silly ways that diverge from the expected or intended use—for instance, pretending that basketballs were babies—and that this sense of creativity and comedy is an important component of peer culture.

While there seemed to be an element of humor as the boys played with the baby dolls during my observation, I further wondered about possible gender-related influences that may have caused them to interact with the props in this way. Though connecting the babies to plates and flying them around was a creative idea—a divergent one from how I had expected children to use dolls—I felt that their gender role expressions guided their actions more than simple imagination. The girls in my class didn't play with the dolls often, but when they did, their play was typically nurturing and gentle. I wondered if the boys had a tacit understanding that playing with dolls in a school setting is only acceptable if it is clearly distinct from the typical female version of such play (Brown & Jones 2001).

I find myself caught between a feminist perspective and that of the progressive teacher I sought to be: one who embraces each child's unique interpretation of an activity or idea (Brown & Jones 2001). The gender roles that children assume, as defined by our culture, affect their play, from determining their interests to deciding how to play and how to make use of props (Meier & Henderson 2007). The data samples in this section suggest that the type of materials offered to children may provoke them to assume roles that are more or less stereotypical and could thereby

influence their social interactions and learning. For instance, because baby dolls are socially constructed as feminine toys, they are less accessible for young boys.

With an understood purpose for caregiving role-play, young girls can feel comfortable behaving in line with their stereotypical gender role while playing with dolls. Boys, on the other hand, are perhaps implicitly excluded from using these toys, lest they should act outside of their traditional gender role. If they do use such materials, I have observed that their play usually deviates from the expected purpose. As a result, I find such gendered toys to be limiting for both young girls and boys. In contrast, materials that are less gendered and more open-ended—for example, natural materials such as sticks, pinecones, shells—encourage more creativity, stimulate imagination and allow for endless interpretations. Accordingly, open-ended materials are more likely to further children's cognitive, physical and artistic development (NAEYC, n.d.).

Children's desire and search for power

This second theme explores the human desire for control and power. I noticed that the children sought and expressed power, for example, using it to exclude or include others, to influence a situation in their favor, or to feel strong. As with the first theme, the key data samples occurred on different days. I chose examples that involved one child across two similar events: first in a position of subordination and then in a place of power. The first event took place at school and the second on a field trip.

Both events occurred during structured playtime and both observations involved a group of three children—two had already established their play when a third approached and tried to join in. As teacher researcher Chris Taaffee (2012) found, such triangulated situations often prove challenging for the third child. The excerpts from the two field notes (See "Field Notes, February 24, 2014" and "Field Notes, April 9, 2014") demonstrate complex desires for power and how children learn approaches for exercising control.

In the field notes from February 24, Violet used her knowledge of gender constructs and her understanding of her friend Cora's somewhat conforming gender expression to control the situation. Violet did not offer Cora any role, like a sister or mom role, other than a monster. She knew that playing the monster is a less conventional option for a girl, and thus, a choice that Cora would probably not accept. Cora seemed to be penalized here for acting within her predictable gender role, which I found thoughtprovoking, as acting within one's gender role is frequently considered desirable and conducive to acceptance. Yet in this case, Cora's preference to express female gender conventionally gave Violet an easy way to exclude Cora.

More than a month later, on April 9, I was fascinated to see Cora try a similar tactic with Lillian. This time, however, the interaction played out quite differently. Lillian readily seized the opportunity to become the monster, and I was pleased and surprised that Cora and Eddie were completely open to her involvement. While Violet's intentions in the first scenario seemed clear to me, I was uncertain about Cora's motivation. I had observed that unlike Cora, Lillian assumed nonconforming roles on a regular basis. If Cora really didn't want Lillian to join the pair, she would have had to make a different kind of proposal.

Both scenarios demonstrate the complexity of young children's interpersonal relationships within the sociocultural contexts influencing their lives. I and many other teachers have observed countless interactions involving a small group of children trying to protect their harmonious play from outsiders who could potentially disrupt the often fragile unity of young friendships (Neimark 2012; Taaffe 2012). I have witnessed children employ various strategies to exclude others and now realize how frequently they use their understanding of gender and culture to successfully block others from the play and determine who is permitted membership to the group (Brown & Jones 2001).

Like Cora, some children can be understood as behaving from within a dynamic process that includes learning from peers and the media, experimenting with ideas, and making sense of gender roles and relationships.

Expressions and behavior illustrating child's state of mind and development

I have noticed that around the age of 4, children can become resolute in their thinking and uncompromising on their theories about the world, as they try to organize experiences and concepts into neat, often dichotomous categories. The following data sample typifies the kind of shortsighted perspectives children might adopt. Left unchallenged, these early views may be reinforced and become more permanent convictions. (See "Field Notes, February 25, 2014.")

Addie has two younger brothers, one of whom is a very active 3-year-old and, according to Addie, "causes a lot of problems." I thus attributed Addie's concern mostly to her experiences at home. Still, I wondered about her belief that boys don't like her. Where did this conviction come from? Teddy quickly disavowed Addie's notion, and I noted how eager he was not to be implicated in an unfair assumption made about his gender.

In an effort to counter such gender stereotyping, my coteachers and I began implementing activities to acquaint children across genders, such as coed lunch seating arrangements and partnered projects. We also began performing

childauthored plays in which crossgender roles were common (Paley [1984] 2014).

Discussion and implications

I began this study wondering how I might offer young children more opportunities to act outside of traditional gender roles. In the end, I realized that the children were working through complex ideas about the world. Our curriculum on fire and camping had encouraged some girls to step outside of gender roles, but it didn't have a widening effect on all children—no single approach would. My findings showed that we needed a broader approach to advance children's ideas about identity.

Accordingly, I selected the following strategies to modify my practice and undertake future teacher research:

- nurture flexible thinking across all situations
- find opportunities for children to step outside their comfort zones in regard to activities, peer relationships, and personal challenges
- foster advocacy skills in oneself and others

If people have the capacity to consider unconventional ideas and bend their thinking, our interactions with one another might look very different and be healthier for individual identity development. Furthermore, I realized that exploring and understanding gender identity shouldn't be concentrated on the experiences of a select few, such as the girls who were so interested in the camping project. Rather, my goal should be to expand everyone's mind, thereby making more room for children to express themselves individually across the identity spectrum.

While this research provides insight into the processes of children's identity development, my findings are based upon one study I conducted independently over a spring semester. My feminist lens and personal perspectives influence all areas of my study—from gathering data to analyzing for interpretations, and deriving conclusions.

However, such subjectivity is inherent in teacher research and considered an advantage of the methodology, as it offers an honest insider's perspective of a practitioner in action (Meier & Henderson 2007).

Conclusion

According to Meier and Henderson (2007), "Since early childhood is the foundation for young children's views and experiences with getting along with one another, and with understanding and taking a stance toward the world of relationships, a focus in teacher research on social justice will deepen our character/social curriculum" (178). I began this research project to take action on a social justice issue, but, over the four months of this study, most of my work focused on first making sense of what I was seeing. I ended up generating more questions than answers. Yet, it was this process of questioning that helped me to deduce some useful ideas for how best to continue identity work with young children.

I hope this study encourages other early childhood teachers to question gender issues that they might have otherwise accepted at face value. Looking critically at gender can allow teachers to have broader perceptions and interpretations of daily classroom events, thereby allowing children more space as they develop their gender identities.

My data shows the complexity of this topic, including compounding factors, influences, and considerations. It also demonstrates how pervasive socialized ideas about gender roles and expression are in our lives. While my findings need to be considered within the study's limitations, I feel that I have successfully achieved a personal goal of sharing my feminist thinking with a larger audience within the field of early childhood education.

Accordingly, this study gives voice to an important issue, and its value lies in my efforts to question the world, ease rigid thinking, and counter oppressive constructs (Valente 2011). Hopefully my teacher research "charges and challenges us to renew our commitment to an active, inclusive feminist struggle" (hooks 1994, 74).

Thoughts About the Article | Barbara Henderson, *Voices* coeditor
Gender is an element of identity that young children are working hard to understand. It is also a topic that early childhood teachers are not always sure how best to address.

It's not surprising, then, that Jamie Solomon's article is the third teacher research study *Voices of Practitioners* has published that focuses directly on gender, joining articles from Daitsman (2011) and Ortiz, Farrell, Anderson, Cain, Fluty, Sturzenbecker, & Matlock (2014). Jamie Solomon's teacher research demonstrates how pedagogy that takes a critical stance on gender stereotyping is a social justice issue because the performance of femininity still maps directly onto disparities in opportunity within our society.

Further, she suggests how the male/female gender binary remains a default perspective and suggests how a more inclusive view of the gender spectrum can enhance and inform our practice and worldview. Her work interprets instances that arose naturally in her teaching, and it displays how teacher research is simultaneously a study of our

professional and our personal selves.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jamie Solomon, MA, worked in the early childhood field for over 10 years, teaching at the preschool and college levels in San Francisco. Her teacher research projects have focused on gender development and emergent curriculum. Jamie has recently relocated to Southeastern Michigan.

Many thanks to Voices coeditor Barbara Henderson, executive editors Frances Rust, Andy Stremmel, and Ben Mardell, and the Editorial Advisory Board for their continued support of Voices and teacher research. Read more Voices articles at NAEYC.org/publications/VOP.

MAKING CARING COMMON PROJECT

BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES

Creating an Anti-Bias Classroom

This set of guidelines outlines a set of practices that educators can incorporate into their daily practices to foster a respectful and inclusive classroom.

Anti-Defamation League

http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment.html#.UtVUotJDtyw

Speak Up at School

This guide for educators provides guidelines and strategies for responding to remarks made by students and by other adults and gives guidance for helping students learn to speak up as well. The guide also focuses on preparing adults to speak up themselves and act as models for students.

Teaching Tolerance

http://cdna.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/Speak_Up_at_School.pdf

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Understanding Stereotypes

Students will learn to understand that assumptions can lead to stereotypes and unfair judgments about individuals and groups, and how stereotypes and biases affect our lives.

Discovery Education http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/pdf/stereotypes/stereotypes.pdf

"Claim It!" Differences and Similarities: Creating a Climate of Inclusion

"Claim It!" provides a simple lesson plan for exploring diversity in the classroom. This activity helps reveal the many differences a classroom of students has, despite the classroom appearing homogenous at first glance.

RaceBridges for Schools

http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Claim_It_LESSON_PLAN_FINAL.pdf

In My Other Life

What would it be like to grow up in another culture? Students work together to venture outside the borders of their own experience to try on an alternative cultural identity. Groups research other cultures and present their findings.

Edsitement

http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/my-other-life#sect-activities

Character Lesson: Respect

In this unit, learners explore the relationship between "respect" and definitions and examples of prejudice, bias, racism, and stereotype. Students learn to recognize prejudice and examine how they perceive others. Learners also discover how prejudices are learned and reflect on how to be more respectful of others.

Learning to Give

http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit488/

*see website for additional lesson plans by grade level

WRITING AND REFLECTION ACITIVITIES

What's Your Frame?

This activity encourages students to reflect on their individual cultures and histories, their backgrounds, the things they grew up with (some that may have been in their control and others that they had no choice about), and their values. In the end, students will begin to enlarge their perspective and recognize diversity of belief and background.

Teaching Tolerance

http://www.tolerance.org/activity/reflection-what-s-your-frame

Challenging Biased Language

The Anti-Defamation League created this set of guidelines and suggestions to help individuals recognize and challenge their own biases and teach them how to respond to offensive behavior or language.

Anti-Defamation League

http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/challenging-biased-language.html#.UtVSRtJDtyw

MOVIES AND VIDEOS

Big Enough

"Big Enough" is an hour-long documentary that re-introduces viewers to five short-statured individuals filmmaker Jan Krawitz met in her 1982 film "Little People." Through interviews done in 1982 and interviews done some 20 years later viewers are given an opportunity to see into the world of a little person. This lesson provides students with an opportunity to explore and discuss issues of identity, stereotypes and diversity in our society/culture. Students will examine the impact that intolerance has on groups in our society.

PBS

http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/5dee5e53-f866-4747-b6ab-5fd34a3523fa/5dee5e53 f866 4747-b6ab-5fd34a3523fa/

Race: The Power of an Illusion

A teacher's guide to the video series "Race: The Power of an Illusion." Includes "Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race," facilitation and discussion tips, and suggestions for viewing.

PBS

http://www-tc.pbs.org/race/images/race-guide-lores.pdf

http://www.pbs.org/race (online companion resource)

http://newsreel.org/video/RACE-THE-POWER-OF AN ILLUSION (to purchase the video for $25)

Created Equal

The NEH Created Equal project uses the power of documentary films to encourage public conversations about the changing meanings of freedom and equality in America. The four films that are part of this project tell the remarkable stories of individuals who challenged the social and legal status quo on issues including slavery and segregation.

EDSITEment

http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/created-equal

Building Respectful School Climates: Webinar Series

This series of webinars, created by the Anti-Defamation League, provides practical strategies and tips for addressing bias and bullying and creating a positive school climate.

Anti-Defamation League

http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/education-webinars/#.UtVRD9JDtyw

HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

Hate Crimes Legislation

Increasingly diverse school populations mean that campuses are not, unfortunately, immune to hate crimes. The U.S. Department of Justice addresses the needs of teachers and school administrators in "Preventing Youth Hate Crime: A Manual for Schools and Communities," available online in PDF form. This resource provides ideas both for immediate action and long-term policy responses to hate crimes, as well as a list of successful programs on campuses around the nation.

Teaching Tolerance

http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/hate-crimes-legislation-high-school

Whites, Blacks, and the Blues

"Whites, Blacks, and the Blues" enables students to explore and measure the distance between black people and white people in the past and present United States. By thinking about the intersections of whites, blacks, and others around the blues music, students will deepen their understanding of discrimination and prejudice. They will also come to understand the ways in which music can, or cannot, create opportunities for people of different cultures, and with varying degrees of power, to relate to one another and find common ground.

PBS

http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/intwhitesblacks.html

JFK, LBJ, and the Fight for Equal Opportunity in the 1960s

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to study and analyze the innovative legislative efforts of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson in the social and economic context of the 1960s. By reading and listening to Kennedy's and Johnson's statements, students will examine their intentions for mounting the fight for equal opportunities for all Americans. Students will use online primary source documents to examine and analyze the Americans' struggles over social and economic rights in these tumultuous years.

EDSITEment

http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/lesson-21-new-frontier-great-society-and-fight-equal-opportunity 1960s#sect introduction

Islam in America

In "Islam in America", students explore some of the religious and cultural variations within Islam, as well as the relation of Muslims to members of other religious groups. There are five videos for this lesson. A segment on the influx of Somali Muslims into a town in Maine highlights the tensions that can occur when a group of Muslim immigrants settles in a community unfamiliar with Islam. Other videos look at the relation of African-American Muslims to Muslims who immigrate from Asia and Africa; and similarities between Islamic Halal and Jewish Kosher traditions.

PBS

http://mass.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/islam08.socst.world.glob.lpinamer/islam-in-america/

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Mix It Up

Mix It Up at Lunch Day is a national campaign launched by Teaching Tolerance that encourages students to cross social boundaries and interact with someone new at lunch. The website provides information on how to facilitate a Mix It Up Lunch as well as other activities and suggestions for increasing interactions across groups and decreasing prejudice.

Teaching Tolerance

http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/what-is-mix

Getting Out of the Box

Students will define stereotype, discrimination and prejudice. They will brainstorm a social action plan to heal racism.

Learning to Give

http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit137/lesson3.html

WEBSITES

Anti-Defamation League
http://www.adl.org/

Discovery Education
http://www.discoveryeducation.com/

EDSITEment
http://edsitement.neh.gov/

Learning to Give
http://learningtogive.org/

Multicultural Education Program
http://mep.berkeley.edu/

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems
http://www.nccrest.org/

PBS
http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/

Teaching Tolerance
http://www.tolerance.org/

Zinn Education Project: Teaching a People's History
http://zinnedproject.org/

MAKING CARING COMMON PROJECT

HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Here is an example of a name story worksheet. You may have ways you want to change it to work for you.

Here is the link to this one:
https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/teachers/blogs/alycia-zimmerman/migrated-files/pdf-of-name-research-interview-form-1.pdf

Name _____ Date _____
"The History of My Name" Family Interview Research
Interview a parent or other family member to learn about how you got your name. Use what you learn from your interview to answer the questions on this page. Try to answer as many of the questions below as possible. Write your answers in complete sentences.
Who picked out your name?

How did they decide on your name? Is there a story behind your name?

Does your name have any personal or cultural meaning to your family?

What would you have been named if you had been born a boy/girl (opposite of what you are)?

Name _____ Date _____
Does your family call you by any nicknames? How did you get your nicknames?

What do you like about your name?

Did you learn anything that surprised you?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did you learn anything else that you'd like to share?

_____

_____

_____

Note to families: To provide a personal context for learning about history, we are beginning our first "historical research" at the closest personal level – history as it pertains to our own lives. By researching the history of their names, the students are laying the groundwork to understand historical concepts in increasingly broader contexts over time.

Your child is going to interview you about the story behind his/her name. Please elaborate as much as possible.

INCORPORATING

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

IN SUBJECT AREAS

HISTORY

Explore the rich history of African civilizations, including pre-colonial societies and great empires like Mali and Songhai. Delve into the impact of the transatlantic slave trade, resistance movements, and the achievements of African Americans in various historical periods, including the Civil Rights Movement.

LITERATURE

Immerse students in the literary contributions of African American writers such as Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, Zora Neale Hurston, and James Baldwin. Analyze their works, which often reflect the struggles, resilience, and cultural richness of the African American experience.

SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

Highlight the contributions of African Americans in the fields of science and medicine, from pioneers like Daniel Hale Williams, the first person to perform open-heart surgery, to modern researchers making advancements in various scientific disciplines and medical research.

VISUAL ARTS

Celebrate the vibrant world of African American visual artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Explore their unique styles, themes, and contributions to the broader art world.

MUSIC

Immerse students in the diverse and influential history of African American music, from the roots of jazz and blues to the global impact of hip hop. Explore the works of musicians like Louis Armstrong, Aretha Franklin, and contemporary artists shaping the music industry.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Examine the key events, leaders, and milestones of the Civil Rights Movement, including figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and the impact of landmark events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the March on Washington.

POLITICAL FIGURES

Learn about prominent African American political figures who have shaped the course of history, from trailblazers like Shirley Chisholm to the historic presidency of Barack Obama. Explore their contributions to politics, advocacy, and social change.

ENTREPRENEURS AND INNOVATORS

Celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit and innovations of African Americans such as Madam C.J. Walker, the first female self-made millionaire, and Garrett Morgan, inventor of the traffic signal and gas mask. Explore their impact on industry and society.

SHAPES AND STORIES

Create a vibrant artwork using simplified shapes and bold colors, inspired by African American artist Jacob Lawrence.

SUPPLIES

Scissors
Glue stick
Various colors of paper

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1: Look at examples of Jacob Lawrence's work.

STEP 2: Find ideas and insipration to create your own design, based on Lawrence's style. Emphasize the use of bold and contrasting colors.

STEP 3: Cut out simple shapes from the construction paper. These shapes will be used to represent different elements in your artwork. Arrange the cutout shapes on a blank sheet of paper to create your chosen scene or story.

EXTEND ACTIVITY: Add details using markers or crayons; add details, such as facial features, objects, or background elements, to enhance your artwork.

JACOB LAWRENCE

Jacob Lawrence was an amazing artist who painted pictures that told stories about African American people and their experiences. One of his most famous works is the Migration Series, where he painted 60 pictures showing how African Americans moved from the southern part of the United States to the northern cities. His paintings are colorful and use interesting shapes to tell important stories. Jacob Lawrence's art helps us understand the history and feelings of different communities. He was a special artist who used his paintings to share important messages.

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Supplies:

- Construction paper or colored cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers or crayons

Instructions:

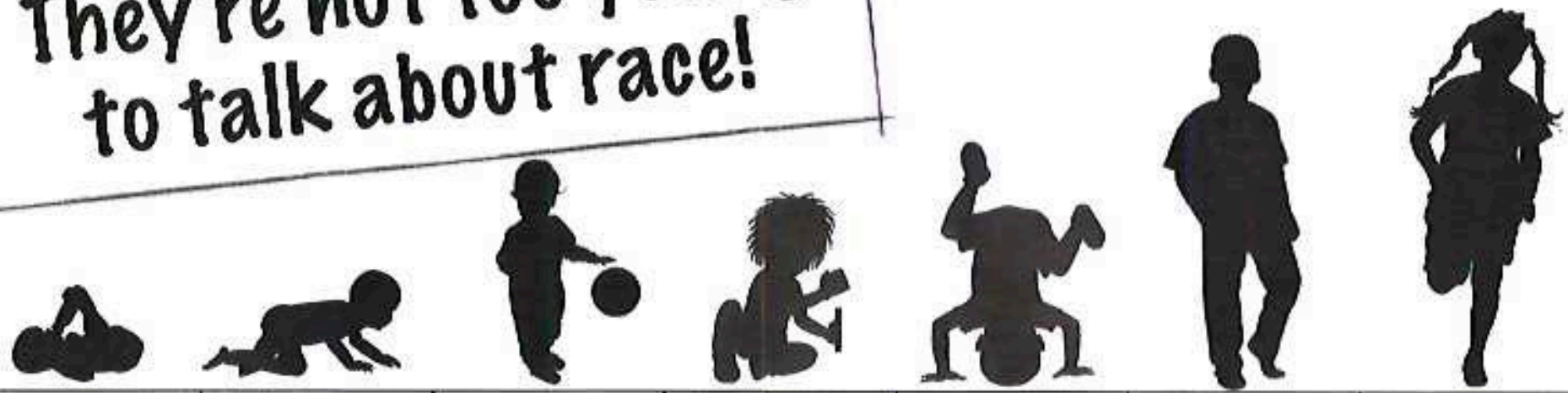
STEP 1. Cut out simple shapes from colored construction paper. These shapes will be used to represent different elements in the artwork.

STEP 2. Have the kids arrange the cutout shapes on a blank sheet of paper to create their chosen scene or story. Encourage them to experiment with different arrangements until they are satisfied.

STEP 3. Glue the shapes onto the paper.

STEP 4. Optional – Use markers or crayons to add details, such as facial features, objects, or background elements.

They're not too young to talk about race!



0	1	2	3	4	5	6+

At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers. (Kelly et al. 2005)

Children as young as two years use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008)

By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008)

By five, Black and Latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al, 2006)

By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold – they have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016)

Explicit conversations with 5–7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. **Silence about race reinforces racism** by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—but only if we talk about it!

Do some learning of your own to get ready for conversations with children. Here are some good places to seek *information* and *training*:

- Teaching Tolerance — tolerance.org
- Raising Race Conscious Children — raceconscious.org
- Embrace Race — embracerace.org
- Teaching for Change — teachingforchange.org
- AORTA Cooperative — aorta.coop
- Fortify Community Health (CA) — fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com
- Delaware Valley Assoc. for the Education of Young Children (PA) — dvaeyc.org

The Children's Community School
1212 South 47th Street, Philadelphia PA 19143
childrenscommunityschool.org

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH ON REDUCING PREJUDICE AND BIAS IN CHILDREN – SUMMARY

When does stereotyping and prejudice start?

- Babies notice race as early as 3 – 6 months.[1]
- Children start to apply stereotypes between the ages of 3 – 5.[2]
- Even preschoolers use racist language intentionally.[3]
- Elementary school students understand that stereotypes lead to discrimination.[4]
- Everyone is susceptible to implicit biases.[5,6]
- Adolescences, when looking at African American faces, show higher levels of activity in the amygdala – the area of the brain known for its fight-flight reactions.[7]

Why is it important to discuss prejudice, bias and race in school?

- Increase academic achievement and well being by valuing diversity.[8]
- If bias is not interrupted, students believe it is accepted.[9]
- Harmless objects may be mistaken for weapons.[10]

Research proven ways to reduce prejudice and bias:

- Real conversations about race with students make a difference.[11]
- Emphasize similarities across race and differences within race.[12]
- Show interracial interactions with books.[13]
- Showing images of people that run counter to stereotypes.[14]
- It's important for students to see others being an ally and to experience for themselves.[15]
- By age 8 – 9, children can help peers reduce prejudice.[16]
- Intergroup contact generally reduces intergroup prejudice.[17]
- Develop positive self-worth to reduce biases and to help handle discrimination.[18,19,20]
- Key developmental skills for reducing prejudice:[21]
  - Seeing beyond external differences. Realizing that although things may appear different they can be similar.
  - Have the ability to see that someone could be a member of many different groups at the same time.
  - Understanding that other people can have different and equally valid perspectives. Develop empathy.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH ON REDUCING PREJUDICE AND BIAS IN CHILDREN (WITH DETAIL)

When does stereotyping and prejudice start?

Babies notice race as early as 3 – 6 months: Infants living in a homogeneous neighborhood show preferences to faces from their own racial group while infants in heterogeneous environments do not.[22]

Children start to apply stereotypes at a very young age: Between the ages of 3 and 5, children begin to categorize people by race and express bias based on race.[23]

Even preschoolers use racist language intentionally: Children as young as preschool are able to use racist language to create social hierarchies, evoke emotional reactions by victims, and produce harmful results.[24]

Elementary school students understand that stereotypes lead to discrimination: By age 7, about 30% of children understand that stereotypes can lead to discrimination. By age 10, this figure rises to 90%.[25]

Everyone is susceptible to implicit biases: Most Americans, regardless of race, display an implicit (or unconscious) pro-White/anti-Black bias.[26] By 6 years, children demonstrate implicit biases about race.[27]

Adolescences, when looking at African American faces, show higher levels of activity in the area of the brain known for its fight-flight reactions: By age 14 both African American (AA) and European American (EA) children show heightened amygdala activity (a subconscious emotional response) when viewing AA faces relative to EA faces. This difference is not present in earlier childhood. And responses to EA faces remained stable across the ages studied (ages 4 – 16 years.)[28]

Why is it important to discuss prejudice, bias and race in school?

Increase academic achievement and well being by valuing diversity: The perception of the value and emphasis on cultural diversity in the school setting, multiculturalism, is associated with more positive outcomes such as better academic achievement and psychosocial well being.[29]

If bias is not interrupted, students believe it is accepted: If name-calling or other discrimination happens at school and goes either unnoticed or is not discussed by adults, students infer that the behavior is widely accepted.[30]

Harmless objects may be mistaken for weapons: Based on a number of studies, people are more likely to mistake harmless objects for weapons when held by or in the presence of Black people relative to White people and in the presence of men relative to women.[31]

Research proven ways to reduce prejudice and bias:

Real conversations with students make a difference: Age-appropriate conversation about race, racial differences, and even racial inequity and racism are associated with lower levels of bias in young children.[32]

Emphasize similarities across race and differences within race: When discussing race, it is important to emphasize the similarities across race and the differences within a race, as these are harder for children to see who tend to focus on more noticeable differences.[33]

Show interracial interactions with books: Books that portray interaction between children who are similar to the audience and children of different races or cultures have more impact on attitudinal changes than books that only portray people of other races and cultures.[34]

Showing images of people that run counter to stereotypes: Exposing students to counter stereotypic individuals builds new associations in people's minds – for example male nurses, black inventors, or gay heroes.[35]

It's important to see others and to experience being an ally: Providing examples of allies working to end bias based on race shows models of effective action and can alleviate feelings of guilt.[36]

By age 8-9 children can help peers reduce prejudice: Caucasian third and fourth graders with lower levels of prejudice who discussed their racial attitudes with peers who had higher levels of prejudice peer were able to lower their peer's prejudice.[37]

Intergroup contact generally reduces intergroup prejudice: Children from racially mixed schools are less likely to develop race-related favorable in-group biases and negative out-group biases.[38] Some key conditions are important for positive effects of intergroup contact, including individuals sharing equal status and common goals, a cooperative rather than competitive environment, and the presence of support from authority figures.[39]

Develop Positive Self-Worth:

- When someone's own self-worth is affirmed, they are less likely to judge others negatively based on race or ethnicity.[40]
- Middle-school students with a stronger racial identity report less stress related to racial daily hassles.[41]
- A positive ethnic identity helps promote educational success in the face of perceived discrimination.[42]

Key Developmental Skills for Reducing Prejudice:[43]

- **Seeing beyond external differences / Realizing that although things may appear different they can be similar.** For example understanding that a tall, thin glass of water could have the same amount of water as a short, wide glass.
- **Have the ability to see that someone could be a member of many different groups at the same time.** For example, a child could be a girl, a Latina, a student, and an athlete.
- **Understanding that other people can have different and equally valid perspectives.** For example, some kids like recess because they can run around while others like recess because they can hangout and talk with friends.
- **Develop Empathy:** Learning to perceive and share the emotions of another person.

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What Is Ableism? How To Identify and Challenge It

July 18, 2023

What is ableism? And how can we discuss it with our children in productive ways? Ableism, the discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities, pervades our society subtly and overtly. Believe it or not, it's all around us. And as a non-disabled person, I didn't start to notice how social structures can create barriers for individuals with disabilities until adulthood. But I don't want my children to wait until adulthood to learn about ableism. I want my children to be aware of this issue—so we take time to notice, name it, and move to action. Keep reading if you're interested in developing the skill set to notice, identify, and dismantle structural ableism as a family.

Understanding Disability

According to the CDC, 25% of adults in the United States, or 61 million people, have a disability that makes it difficult to participate in everyday activities. This includes disabilities that affect mobility, vision, hearing, cognition, and independent living. As people age, the risk of developing a mobility disability increases.

About 40% of adults age 65 and older have a mobility disability.

As a parent, it is important that I help my children understand that disability can be visible, non-visible, or undiagnosed, that it happens on a spectrum, and that it can change over time. A disability could refer to a person's physical, cognitive, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, or emotional state.

People with disabilities experience discrimination on a macro and micro level. The macro level focuses on accessibility and inclusivity (lack of elevators, lack of accessible parking spots, or broken infrastructure). Whereas the micro level focuses on personal treatment, including the attitude, language, and verbal harassment ("crazy," "stupid," "dumb," "slow") a disabled person experiences. This blog post will focus on the former, but be on the lookout for a follow-up blog post focused on the latter. As we learn, we can hold each person in our family accountable.

What Is Ableism?

Ableism is discrimination that targets people with disabilities. It is based on the assumption that typical abilities are superior and that people with disabilities are inferior. Ableism can take many forms, including:

Stereotypes and Assumptions

People with disabilities are often stereotyped as helpless, dependent, or incapable. They may be considered less intelligent, less capable of work, or less worthy of respect.

Physical Barriers

Buildings, transportation, and other public spaces may not be accessible to people with disabilities. This can make it difficult for them to participate in everyday activities and access services.

Attitudes and Behaviors

People with disabilities may be treated differently than others and may be subjected to discrimination and harassment. They may also be denied opportunities because of their disability.

Ableism has a significant impact on people's lives. It can limit their opportunities, restrict their access to services, and make it difficult for them to participate in society fully. It can also lead to feelings of isolation, shame, and depression. You can do many things to help mitigate this societal oppression.

How We Can Challenge Ableism Together

Keep in mind the following ways that we can challenge ableism, together:

Challenge Stereotypes and Assumptions

It is important to challenge stereotypes and assumptions about people with disabilities. We must recognize that people with disabilities are just as diverse as any other population group.

Make Public Spaces Accessible

Buildings, transportation, and other public spaces should be accessible to people with disabilities. This can be done by making buildings wheelchair-accessible, providing accessible transportation, and making sure that information is available in accessible formats.

Change Attitudes and Behaviors

People with disabilities should be treated with the same respect and dignity as anyone else. This means we check our assumptions, attitude, language, and entitlement. We do not ask strangers about their impairment or disability. We do not park in accessible parking spots, even if we're going to be quick. We do not doubt a person's disability, even when it's a non-apparent disability. We need to challenge discrimination and harassment against people with disabilities.

Challenging ableism is an important step toward creating a more inclusive and accessible society. By working together, we can make sure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else. Keep reading for ideas on how to discuss ableism with your children and how to dismantle ableism as a family.

Dive Deeper: Ableism In Everyday Activities

Affiliate Disclosure: I only recommend products I would use myself, and all opinions expressed here are my own. I am an affiliate of Bookshop.org and Amazon. I will earn a commission if you click through and purchase Bookshop.org or Amazon.

In the following passages, I delve deeper into structures in our society that uphold ableism in subtle and overt ways. While the examples are interwoven with my family's anecdotal experience, I hope that you notice how ableism is pervasive in all parts of our society, often going unnoticed by able-bodied people going through their days.

My wish is to help you notice the injustices happening around you, and empower you to create lasting change in your community to help battle ableism in your settings.

Here's how you can start to identify and challenge ableism with children:

1. In Our Neighborhood

As a family, we often walk to new parts of our neighborhood to walk our dog, Butter, or to get a cup of coffee. When I stumble upon a broken sidewalk, I pause, notice it, and share the impact with my children.

- "Look at this sidewalk. I wonder how this happened?"
- "While we can simply step over the crack, who might not be able to do so? Who might have to go into the street to get around?"
- "Sidewalks make neighborhoods safe. But what happens if we have to use the street? Who does that harm, and how?
- "Who can we tell? How can we advocate for change?"

My children have built the muscle to quickly identify the impacts of broken sidewalks, unmarked crosswalks, faulty crosswalk lights, and the lack of stopped-controlled intersections. If it's a high-traffic area, we use our local 311 to call and report these dangers. This is only one example of using our non-disabled immunity to make our neighborhoods more accessible and safe.

Take a moment to think of other obstacles that able-bodied people don't think twice about as they navigate daily life. In cities like Denver, Colorado, where Lime and Lyft scooters litter the sidewalk, often blocking pathways, how might that impact someone who uses a wheelchair? Keeping your eyes peeled for daily injustices such as these can help you to become more aware of ableism in everyday life, and inspire you to do something about it.

2. During Playtime

We love playing with Magnatiles and Legos in our home. Sometimes our children already know what they'd like to build, like the Spiderverse or a WWE arena. Other times we come up with an idea together. No matter what, I casually ask them questions to encourage their inclusivity skills:

- "Where could we put the ramps for people who use wheelchairs?"
- "Can I put the elevator here?"
- "Let's make this hallway wide enough for everyone to move through it. Can it be this wide?"
- "Will we have a parking lot? How many accessible parking spaces should we build? Can we have golf carts to bring people to the door?"
- "Oh, we need a bathroom for service animals. What about over here?"

The more casual, the better. Soon your children will be building structures that are more inclusive and accessible.

I love incorporating a "people basket" with all kinds of people into playtime. We're enjoying this set and this set of figurines. I throw them all in a basket and allow my children to use them as they wish.

3. At The Playground

When my son Cobe and I started homeschooling, we enjoyed exploring parks around the city. One day, we stumbled upon a community center offering various services, including an indoor basketball court, and outside playground. As we entered the gym, we noticed no one else was there, so Cobe began playing basketball. Shortly after, an employee approached us and inquired if we had any disabilities. I was puzzled; no one had ever asked me before. The employee informed us that the gym was reserved for disabled individuals, but we could use the

inclusive playground outside. Cobe was disappointed, and I felt embarrassed. Maybe even a little excluded.

Quickly, I realized that my initial feelings of defensiveness and entitlement were the problem, not the multicenter. Instead, I concentrated on the situation as I gathered our things.

By having a conversation with Cobe, I helped myself unpack my privilege.

- "I wonder, how many gyms are designed for our abilities? And how many were made for people with disabilities." I recalled how many indoor gyms we've tried as he thought about this.
- "Do you realize we've never had to call to ask if they have what we need to play and work? But some neighbors have to call to ask if they have ramps, accessible showers, benches, and equipment. What's that called?"

On our way to the playground, we talked about our ableism and entitlement and how it contributes to the discrimination that disabled people face. We also discussed the importance of affinity spaces and why they *should not be* available to everyone.

Affinity spaces are places where people gather because of a shared interest, identity, or passion.

Affinity play spaces are crucial for children's socialization, development, and learning. It's important to have inclusive spaces available for all children and affinity spaces available for disabled children.

4. In The Media

Our children are constantly consuming some types of media. Whether on their phone, tablet, school laptop, or a good old fashion book, they're receiving messages, but how accurate and honest are those messages?

My family and I often discuss a topic called "inspiration porn." Stella Young, a disability rights activist, coined this term to describe a type of media portrayal of disabled people.

Inspiration porn is a commonly witnessed phenomenon on social media, where people with disabilities are portrayed as extraordinary individuals for accomplishing ordinary tasks. This portrayal fails to recognize their individuality, diversity, and the full range of their capabilities beyond their disability. Hence, it reduces individuals with disabilities to mere objects of inspiration for non-disabled people. The primary purpose of inspiration porn is to make non-disabled viewers feel uplifted and inspired, but it doesn't consider the feelings and experiences of disabled individuals.

If you're curious, please watch Stella Young's TED Talk from 2014 together as a family. It's a great way to explore this topic further.

In my book, Raising Antiracist Children: A Practical Parenting Guide, I provide a checklist for identifying inspiration porn with children.

Working Together Against Ableism

Thank you for taking the time to understand ableism better to teach your children about it and fight against it to create a more inclusive world. I hope you leave this article with at least one piece of information you did not have before and a new perspective on approaching the subject with your children. Stay tuned for more content and resources around ableism coming up, including ableist language to avoid and their alternatives.

If you enjoyed this article, consider buying me a cup of coffee. I'm Britt, a Black bi-racial momma, author, and anti-bias facilitator, who provides free resources to families on subjects ranging from ableism to antiracism.