Receptive to Race

Normalizing the Discussion of Race with Children in Libraries

CSL In Session
August 27, 2020
Stages in racial/cultural identity development

Infants:
- Respond to skin color at 6 months.
- Form a cultural identity.

1-2 years:
- Learn cultural “rules”.
- Curious about physical characteristics of self and others.

MYTH: Preschoolers are too young to understand race.

Ibram X. Kendi
3-4 years:
• Becoming grounded in cultural behavior.
• Identify people according to physical characteristics.
• Overgeneralize differences.
• Form stereotypes.
• Have a strong sense of empathy.

5-6 years:
• May reject home culture for dominate one.
• Interested in how people get skin color.
• May select to play only with children close to their identities.
• Enjoy exploring cultures; can think critically.

7-9 years:
• Establish group identities and membership.
• Children of color aware of racism.
• Rise in name-calling based on racial identities.
• Learning about their “history.”

**MYTH:** Children cannot develop racial prejudices unless they are explicitly taught.  **Ibram X. Kendi**
ALSC Guidelines

https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2015/12/core-competencies-in-comics/
Storytime

• Why are there Black people?
• Why am I called Black if my skin is brown?
• Why does Ruben speak Spanish?
• Your nose is different because it goes up.

• Why am I called White if my skin is peachy?
• I’m going to eat a lot of melanin so my skin can be brown.
• Why am I darker than other kids?
• You don’t look Black.
• Highlight that physical diversity among people is desirable, and that all colors and shades of skin, hair, eyes, are good.

• Talk about differences in a tone of delight and interest.

• Explore skin color, hair, and eyes. There is ample opportunity to explain the science behind variations (STEM!)
What's going on in this picture?

What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can we find?

These questions affirm that children’s ideas matter and opens the opportunity to discuss differences.
Storytime

Whose toes are those? / by Jabari Asim; illustrations by LeUyen Pham

Who wrote this?

Between us and Abuela: a family story from the border / Mitali Perkins; illustrations by Sara Palacios

Who do you notice on this page?
Offer opportunities for empathy.

Define fair and unfair.
Storytime
What other tips do you have for discussing race in storytime?
Collection Development
Collection Development

Foster visibility:

Will all the children you serve see themselves?

Will all children of color, including those with mixed heritage, see characters with whom they can readily and positively identify?

Collection Development

Avoid tokenism and stereotypes.

Check the storyline for power relationships.

Does your collection include a balance of people who have made important and honored contributions?

Do some of your books about important people include struggles for justice?

Don’t always substitute animals for people.

Don’t expect every book to show diversity. The goal is to have a balanced collection.

Culture is also current and evolving and therefore needs to be represented.
Programming

- Parent education
- Let’s Talk About Race
- Celebrate Peace
- Black Storytime
- Voices of Race/Human Library
- Author Events
- Summer Reading
- Translation services
• What other programming ideas have you tried, or could you envision to contribute to the conversation on race?

Programming ideas
In 14 of 64 of Colorado’s counties, kids of color already make up the majority.

By 2032 children of color are predicted to be the majority among all of Colorado’s child population.

1 in 4 Colorado kids live in an immigrant family (9 out of 10 are US Citizens.)
• What idea(s) from today can you implement at your library?

• What questions do you have?

ALSC Core Competencies in Comics - www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2015/12/core-competencies-in-comics/

Coming Together (Project) – comingtogether.in


Embrace Race – www.embracerace.org


KidsCount in Colorado – www.coloradokids.org


Racial Equity Tools – www.racialequitytools.org

Teaching for Change - www.teachingforchange.org


Tolerance.org - www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies

We Need Diverse Books – diversebooks.org

Resources
THANK YOU

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