

Growing Anti-racist UU's: A Curriculum for Children

www.uucharlotteville.org/anti-racist-curriculum/

MY SKIN, MY HEART - Lesson 1 for Grades K-2

by Elaine Chapman

LESSON OVERVIEW

This first lesson makes kindergartners and first graders aware of the uniqueness of their skin covering, and that skin shade (like other physical characteristics) is different for everyone. Skin shade is the outside cover for who we are as individuals, and yet, it shelters our capacity for love in our heart. In recognizing difference in skin shade, this session ties into the principle of respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all persons.

GOALS

This session will:

- Teach that our bodies are covered in skin which has variations among us.
- Explore various skin shades and our own.
- Experience the first principle of respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every human being, all of who they are. Each one has a different skin shade.

Resources: The-Take-It-Home handout is based on Derman-Sparks, Louise and Edwards, Julie O. 2010. *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children & Ourselves*. 2010.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Connect that their own skin shade varies with that of others.
- Discover that skin is a covering for what is inside - our heart, our feelings, our love.

LESSON-at-a-GLANCE

Opening: (5 min)

Activity 1: Story: *Shades of People* with discussion (10 min)

Activity 2: Examining own faces using mirrors; trying on various shades of stockings on arms and/or legs (10 min)

Activity 3: Story: Drawing Our Face and Hands with Matching Shade (10 min) Another option is to engage children in tracing their hand and then color it by matching with an appropriate shade of crayon. (Note: Crayola makes skin shade crayons.)

Activity 4: Story: *The Skin You Live In* (5 min) (**TEACHERS:** When previewing the story before class, please find places to pause and engage children with a question about a feeling, what might happen, or what the listeners think. This helps children pay attention. Also you may need to define some unfamiliar words used in the story.)

Closing: (5 min) Use typical closing established within this classroom.

LEADER PREPARATION

Think of your own background and how you and your family identified people with an adjective describing their skin shade, or 'color'. Think about when you didn't use an adjective to describe someone's skin. Consider that white is often considered *colorless* in this country. Did these experiences have an effect on how you learned about people and developed relationships with them? Reflect on how truly impossible it would be for you to take on the life and experiences of other persons. Shades of color are vast, and skin shades are varied, even among family members.

WELCOME AND ENTERING

Use typical opening as established by this classroom, i.e. chalice lighting, joys/concerns, circle time.

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter with cloth for centering table
- Mirrors to verify skin shade
- Stockings in various shades - tan, black, brown, white, red, grey etc
- Paper and writing utensils (chalk, pencils, crayon) for drawing faces and hands (see activity above)
- Books:
 - Kelly, Sheila M. and Rotner, Shelly. *Shades of People*. New York: Holiday House, 2010. Print.
 - Tyler, Michael, and Csicsko, David L., *The Skin You Live In*. New York: Holiday House, 2010. Print.

Description of Activity

Activity 1:

- Explain to children that their skin shade is their own unique covering. Read and pause on pages within book *Shades of People*, talk about what shade each child might be. Let children know that they will be able to look at their skin with a different shade by trying on shades of stockings. Look into mirrors to check tone. Discuss briefly the differences among the children in the classroom. Let children do this activity and share materials.

Activity 2:

- Give each child a mirror and ask: What do you see? What does your eyes, your face, your skin show? Have them share with others, looking into the mirrors together and talking about what they see, their unique skin shades.

Activity 3:

- Once the above activity is completed, ask children to draw their own face and hands in their own unique skin shade. You might give children the option to trace their hand and then color it with appropriate shade of crayon. Offer a variety of materials for them to match their skin shade. Some children may need to combine various crayon colors to match their own shade.

Activity 4:

- Read the story: *The Skin You Live In*.
- Ask children to look closely at their family members' shades of skin when they return home.

Closing

Including All Participants

- There may be children who need assistance trying on the stockings. For those who may not enjoy drawing, an adult might take their 'dictation' of what they would like to see, and try to capture on paper for them.

REFLECTION and PLANNING

When class ends, please stop for a minute with your co-teacher to:

- Reflect that today you have taken action today for racial justice. Sometimes the problems seem so huge that we need to find specific actions we can take, and this is one of them.
- Discuss if any children were not included in the lesson and how they might be in the future.
- Note any issues that you want to follow up on in the next class.
- Note any issues that you want to mention to your congregation's racial justice curriculum planners or your religious educator.

Racial Justice Take It Home!

Introduction to monthly Racial Justice for Children ages 4 – 4th grade

One day when my daughter was in preschool I was upset to come in during the reading of a book that dealt with segregation, because I was hoping that being in an integrated preschool, she would learn to be friends with all kids equally before learning about the upsetting history of race in America. Recently I've read a book and articles by Louise Derman-Sparks about Anti-Bias Education and realize I didn't understand the development of racial identity in young children. --Linda Dukes



Below are some ideas directly from her work.

Derman-Sparks explains that two and three year old children do notice differences among people and are curious about them. Noticing differences is natural – it only leads to problems when it is overlaid with messages of one group being better than another.

Young children are also developing a personal sense of self and their multiple social identities (such as race/ethnicity, gender, religion, class). They learn about their social identities by both overt and covert messages.

Overt messages may be hearing statements like “What a strong boy you are!” or “Everybody is important.” Covert messages are trickier to see and can include not only what they hear from media and books (most of the “good” characters – or almost all the characters -- are white, for example) but also the covert messages from home if parents say everyone’s important but only have friends with people like themselves and only go places as a family where most people are like them, too.

Messages of visibility and invisibility are powerful. Who is pictured in children’s books, classrooms, toys, and movies tells a child who is important and who is not, what is right and what is not. Children, for example, who are surrounded by White images come to see White as “normal” and that people with other skin colors are not as good. (The same process works for other social identities. So, for example, if the only family images children see in books, movies, etc. are with a mom and a dad, they come to see families with single parents or with two moms or two dads as “less than” or wrong.)

Preschool children develop “pre-prejudice” as they try to make sense of the world. They may see someone with black skin and wonder about cleanliness or how the skin became so dark. If adults are paying attention, pre-prejudice can be addressed.

By ages 5 and 6, children also begin to notice power dynamics – what type of people are in charge. They begin to internalize oppression or privilege.

Primary school-age children develop a sense of fairness and can be guided to learn empathy for others. During this age it is really important for children to receive active

anti-bias education. By age 9, children with strongly stereotyped attitudes have a harder time absorbing ideas that differ from theirs.

There is so much more! Here are two resources to start with

1) Teaching Tolerance: How white parents should talk to their young kids about race by Melinda Wenner Moyer. Just Google the title and author or go to:
http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/the_kids/2014/03/teaching_tolerance_how_white_parents_should_talk_to_their_kids_about_race.html

2) A talk at the UUA's General Assembly in 2012 by Lousie Derman-Sparks, "Stages in Children's Development of Racial/Cultural Identity and Attitudes." Just Google this title.

FOUR CORE GOALS OF ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION

From Louise Derman-Sparks & Julie Olsen Edwards, 2010. *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children & Ourselves*

1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
3. Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination.

Today: First Racial Justice Lesson



Our first Racial Justice lesson focuses on noticing and appreciating skin colors. The first step in teaching children to talk openly about race is to help them notice and value their own. The second step is to help them notice and appreciate others'. When children are comfortable and knowledgeable about race, they can begin the conversations that will shape the world.