

Dear NELC Families,

In January, we are starting a *Unit about Identity, Diversity, Injustice, and Standing Up For What's Right*. We're excited for our students to learn more about themselves, respecting others, living in a multicultural world, and using their voice. We hope to expand student's self understanding and social awareness, and help them practice relationship skills that will serve to create a more just and inclusive world for all.

We'll begin by looking at different parts of our **identities**~ the parts we can see on the outside and parts that may be hidden on the inside. We'll pay special attention to the concept of race and ethnicity. We'll use books like [The Color of Us](#), [All the Colors We Are](#), [The Skin We Live In](#), [It's Okay to Be Different](#), [We're Different: We're the Same](#), and [We All Belong](#). We talk about how all identities are unique and beautiful. The purpose is for students to understand more about themselves and to celebrate the **diversity** found in our world. *We encourage you to talk to your child about the many aspects of themselves!*

Other lessons will cover the **unfair treatment or exclusion** of others based on their race or ethnicity. The goal of these lessons are for students to begin identifying when people are being treated differently based on who they are. We'll be using some of these books: [Chocolate Me](#), [I am Everything Good](#), [Eyes that Kiss at the Corners](#), [I Am An Amazing Asian Girl!](#), [Where Are You From?](#), [The Proudest Blue](#), and [Fry Bread](#). *These lessons provide an excellent base should you choose to discuss real life injustices with your child.*

Finally, we will also talk about ways to **speak up** when we recognize someone is being treated unfairly or disrespectfully. We will talk about using our voices to make a difference and how to be caring **allies**. *We hope your family will have conversations and encourage your child to find their own unique way to make a difference in our world.*

**It's never too early to be intentional about these topics.** Research has shown that by *9 months*, children can lose the ability to distinguish between the faces of other races if they're not exposed to diversity. Adults can intentionally expose children to a wide range of people along with positive diverse representation found in toys, books, movies, etc.

Young children already notice a lot -- skin color, race and even injustice and racism. It can be hard to find the right words to answer their questions or start a conversation about race. But when we *don't talk about it*, children often come to their own conclusions, which can include bias and stereotypes because of the world we live in. Simple conversations can help them make sense of their world. The book, [OUR SKIN: a First Conversation about Race](#), is a good place to start the conversation.

While young children are avid observers and questioners of their world, adults often shut down or postpone conversations on complicated topics because it is hard to know where to begin. Research shows that talking about issues like race and gender from the age of two not only helps children understand what they see, but also increases self-awareness, self-esteem, and allows them to recognize and confront things that are unfair.

*Here are videos and books that your family might find useful to further these conversations:*

[Developing a sense of pride in your family's ethnic-racial heritage](#)

Talking about Race with children: [TED TALK by Beverly Daniels Tatum](#)

Talking about Racism with children: [PBS Talk about Race and Racism](#)

Taking Action against Inequality: [Never Too Young](#) by Aileen Winetraub, [Speak Up](#) by Miranda Paul, [Say Something](#) by Peter Reynolds and [No! My First Protest](#) by Julie Merberg

Please let us know if you have any questions. [ann@teensinc.org](mailto:ann@teensinc.org)  
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