

DRAWING DIFFERENCES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Can you use **Drawing Differences** with young children? Yes, absolutely!

Many caregivers shy away from talking about race with young children, but research shows that infants as early as 3 months old notice racial differences, and racial biases often develop before kindergarten. No child is too young for inclusive and empathetic art activities that affirm themselves and others around them as unique, beautiful, and worthy of being celebrated.

Consider using the tips and suggestions below as a launching point for adapting **Drawing Differences** for young children!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Watch the videos. The videos show you how to do the activities: take them in and note which parts you can imagine showing and/or doing with your child.

Read the **Big Ideas** and **Big Questions to Explore** at the beginning of each activity guide. These focus on the core of the lessons. We want kids to practice and experience:

- **Looking closely** at someone they're drawing, whether it's themselves, you, a friend, or even a picture of someone who looks different from them.
- **Noticing skin color differences and talking about them.** How is your skin color different from or similar to the people in your family? What about your neighbor or classmate? What makes our skin look darker or lighter? How are race and skin color different?
- **Noticing, talking about, and trying to draw facial features – hair, eyes, nose, face shape, etc. – that together make us each unique.** Don't worry about trying to achieve realism! The point is to get them noticing, talking, and trying to draw.
- **Comparing and contrasting** how people look similar and different from each other.

Take a look at the **Conversation Tips** included for each lesson. Although the responses provided are geared towards older kids, they can be broken down so that young children can understand, too. We suggest dividing the concepts into smaller ideas to focus on, and using simple language and familiar examples to explain each part. For example, young children are very aware of what's fair and unfair. Use this to explain the concept of racism and ask children how that makes them feel and what we can do about it.

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TIPS FOR ADAPTING

- The most adaptable lessons for young children are **We Look Closely (Introduction)** and **We See Color (Affirmation #1)**.
- Reduce the activities to make them manageable for your child. For example, blend 4 or 8 different skin colors rather than 18; draw 2 people instead of 8. Ask yourself, what could we do in 15 minutes or less today?
- You don't have to do the lesson all at once! We know young children have shorter attention spans. Spread it out over a day or two or even a week, reinforce the **Big Ideas**, and spend time asking the **Big Questions to Explore**.
- Explore other art mediums like finger paints, play-dough, and clay for mixing and blending to create different skin tones. Encourage children to look closely at their own facial features using mirrors.
- Look at a variety of books and art by various illustrators and professional artists. We recommend using the books **"Our Skin"** by Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli, and Isabel Roxas, geared at preschool and early elementary, and **"The Colors We Share"** by Angélica Dass, for children 6+. Both of these books are recommended in Affirmation #1. While exploring these books, point out different skin colors and introduce the concept of melanin.
- Interweave these themes and affirmations into other parts of your classroom curriculum. Explore physical facial features and melanin in a science unit; introduce new vocabulary like "blending," "tone," and other color vocabulary in language arts; sing songs about skin color in music.

LEARN MORE

For more on engaging young children in learning about race and difference, check out these **EmbraceRace** resources:

- Article: ["Seeing, Noticing, and Talking about Differences with Young Children"](#) by kindergarten teacher Madeleine Rogin
- Webinar: ["Why and How to Talk to Young Kids about Race"](#) with Dr. Nicol Russell