

STREAMin³
integrated | intentional | interactions



Family Activity Guide

Supporting Identity
and Empathy

In This Guide

In the [STREAMin³ curriculum model](#), we are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where each child receives equitable opportunities that are responsive to their strengths and backgrounds. All children deserve to feel accepted, embraced, and valued, regardless of race, culture, gender, religion, social class, language, or ability.

We do this by:

- ◆ Building strong, caring relationships with each child and family. We take the time to know each child and their talents, cultures, beliefs, strengths, and needs. We also seek input from families.
- ◆ Giving each child “a voice” or “a say” in their learning and problem-solving.
- ◆ Using ongoing assessments and classroom observations to individualize support, so each child gets what they need.
- ◆ Using materials (e.g., books, dolls, images) that represent cultural, racial, identity, and social diversity.
- ◆ Coaching teachers to be equitable, inclusive, and accepting in their interactions and instruction.
- ◆ Embracing similarities and differences and responding thoughtfully to children's comments or questions about race, gender, culture, language, ability, or characteristics to promote their positive views of themselves and others.



In the guide this week, we provide suggestions and support for ways to talk to your children about these topics and support their development.

Identity and Empathy



What You Need to Know

Acceptance, respect, inclusion, and equity begin with our youngest learners. In the early years, children are forming their ideas about who they are, how that's the same or different from others, and whether and how that matters. They are also building empathy – imagining how someone else is feeling and responding with care. When adults have thoughtful conversations and interactions with children about topics such as fairness, kindness, stereotypes, and discrimination, children are free to embrace diversity, ask questions, and reject hurtful, harmful, limiting, and unfair language or messages.

How To Support These Skills

Use these strategies to build on your child's natural curiosity and interest in fairness, embrace and encourage kindness, and empower your children to advocate for and defend themselves and others:

Embrace Similarities and Differences

Notice and accept what we have in common and embrace the ways that we are different.

“Yes, their family celebrates differently than ours. I loved how they...”

Prompt Children to Consider How Others Are Feeling

Help your child see and care about other perspectives.

“How do you think they are feeling? How would you feel if that happened to you?”

Empower Children to Provide Care and Justice

Prompt your child to provide care and help them advocate for themselves and others.

“Is that fair? How can we make it fair?”

“They are sad. How can you help?”

Having Open Discussions

Children naturally notice and want to discuss differences. Their comments and questions aren't meant to offend or upset; they are eager for us to help them navigate and understand who they are in relation to their world.

- ◆ Answer your child's questions, comments, or concerns honestly and simply. Do this even though the natural reaction may be to distract or dismiss them.
 - Examples of statements to **avoid**: “Hush, that's not nice to talk about...”, “You're too young to understand,” or, “We don't see color.”
- ◆ Prompt children to explain their thinking and feelings so you know where they need your help or clarification.
- ◆ Children remember what they see and how they've been made to feel. Talk openly with children so they can develop a positive view of themselves and others.
- ◆ It's okay to **not** always have an answer right away; you can say that you may need to read, talk to others, wait until you get home, or think more about their questions before providing answers.

Additional Resources

A town hall discussion with PBS and Sesame Street on Talking to Children Authentically about Race (recording available after the session).


[PBS- Talking About Racism](#)

NPR Podcast and short article about how to handle difficult conversations about racism, diversity, and inclusion.

[NPR- Talking Race with Young Children](#)

Activity Cards

Below are Activity Cards designed to nurture your child's sense of self and identity, encourage them to embrace and accept others, and empower them to defend themselves and others.




Reflection Affirmations

As you and your child get ready, look in the mirror with them and narrate some of their qualities. Encourage them to label things about themselves that they notice or things that they are proud of.

Acknowledge & Affirm Physical Attributes, Interests, & Characteristics

"You have dark brown hair and brown eyes."
"You are kind."
"What do you like about yourself? You like that you are funny! That is right, you are funny."




Is it Fair? Is it True?

Using puppets, pictures, books, or quick scenarios, prompt children to explore and discuss issues of fairness, kindness, and truth related to gender, race, ethnicity, language, culture, or ability.

Prompt children to discuss how they can defend themselves or others in these situations.

For example:

- ◆ "This puppet said that blue eyes are better than brown. Is that true... fair... kind?"
- ◆ "I heard someone say that boys can't be nurses. Is that true? Have you ever been told you couldn't do something because you are a girl or boy?"
- ◆ "A person in the supermarket said that if you live here in America, you should speak English. Is that true... fair... kind?"
- ◆ "This puppet says that you have to be tall to be a good basketball player. Is that true... fair...? What if you are not tall?"



How Do They Feel?

With your child, make up or tell stories about people, characters, or animals. Ask your child how the person may be feeling and/or what they may need. A few examples are listed below, but think about the interests of your child as you create these stories.

Prompt Children to Consider the Needs/Feelings of Others

- ◆ "In the story, they worked for hours on a puzzle and then it got knocked over. How do you think they felt? What do you think they should do?"
- ◆ "I watched the best show last night! (Character) saved the day by... How do you think they were feeling? How do you think the people were feeling before they got there?"
- ◆ "The neighbor's cat got stuck outside last night. How do you think they were feeling? What did the cat need that it was missing?"

Book Readings

Book readings are a wonderful tool for sparking meaningful conversations with your child around race and diversity. Books open the window for children to embrace characters or situations that may be similar or different from their own experience. This helps build understanding, acceptance, and empathy. It's important to select books that represent a variety of races, cultures, languages, gender roles, abilities, or family structures in ways that avoid negative stereotypes so your child can see themselves and others in books.

You can use the books you have at home or explore these lists:

- ◆ [PBS-13 Children's Books About Race and Diversity](#)
- ◆ [Parentbook Antibias and Equity: Resources for Children and Teens](#)

Some books will directly address issues of race or differences. Lean into these conversations. For example, "Happy in Our Skin" by Fran Manushkin is a great book that helps children to be proud of themselves and to embrace others.

As you read: Pause to acknowledge and embrace differences.

Read: "Ginger-colored babies, peaches and cream, too – splendid skin for me, splendid skin for you!"

Comment: "Skin comes in many different colors or shades. Sometimes, it can remind us of food like cocoa, honey, or peaches."

Read: "What a wonderful world! Such a hullabaloo – with all of us in it! See the splendid view."

Comment: (*pointing to the illustration*) "Every person in this picture has skin. I see skin that is light, tan, and dark. Every shade of skin is beautiful."