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## ***What are the Benefits to Reading Diverse Books?***

Here are some answers from the We Need Diverse Books Campaign:

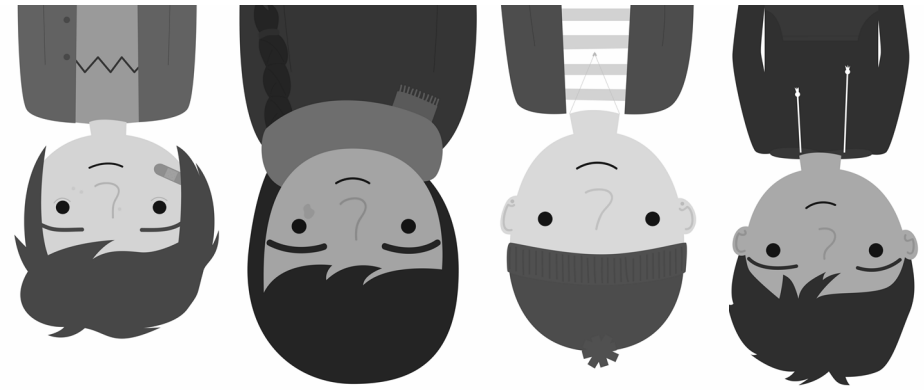
1. They reflect the world and people of the world
2. They teach respect for all cultural groups
3. They serve as a window and a mirror and as an example of how to interact in the world
4. They show that despite differences, all people share common feelings and aspirations
5. They can create a wider curiosity for the world
6. They prepare children for the real world
7. They enrich educational experiences

Only 10-14% of books published for children each year are by or about people of color. One reason given for this is that some publishers/editors think there isn't a market for diverse books. You and your kids can help change that!

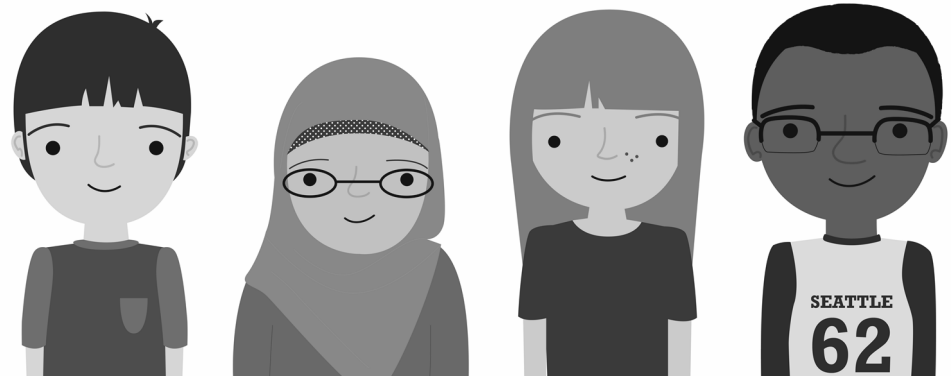
- Look for books written and/or illustrated by people of color and of the cultures they are writing/illustrating.
- Ask your children's librarian for suggestions!!
- Chose books with non-biased depictions of diverse peoples. Bias can hide in beloved favorites. Peter Pan, for example, has a very inaccurate and offensive view of Native Americans. When you encounter bias unexpectedly, explain why it's wrong—interrupt the bias immediately when your child encounters it. Your reaction to bias models for kids how they might respond.

### **References and More Reading:**

Winkler, Erin N. "Children are Not Colorblind: How Children Learn Race." *PACE* Volume 3 Number 3. 2009. <https://uwm.edu/africology/people/winkler-erin-n/>  
Bronson, Po and Ashley Merriman. "Even Babies Discriminate: A NurtureShock Excerpt." *Newsweek*. <http://www.newsweek.com/even-babies-discriminate-nurture shock-excerpt-79233>.  
Agnamba, Lindsey and Je'Kendria Trahan. Webinar: "Anti-Bias Approach to Early Childhood Leadership: Beyond Books and Pictures." March 23, 2016. <http://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.org/webinar-resources> including handout "Stages of Children's Racial Identity Development" by Louise Derman-Sparks.  
Grabmeier, Jeff. "Losing Yourself in a Fictional Character Can Affect Your Real Life." Ohio State University. <http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/exptaking.htm>  
Anti-Defamation League - <http://www.adl.org/> and specifically: <http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood/c/the-question-corner.html>  
We Need Diverse Books Campaign - <http://diversebooks.org/> and specifically <http://weneeddiversebooks.org/faq/>



## **What You May Not Know About Bias in Young Children**



by Blythe Summers, MLIS

## **Bias:**

*prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.*

**Kids are smart, compassionate, and observant but they do need positive guidance and conversation with adults to help shape their ideas about people both like and unlike themselves.** A multitude of studies have shown that “color-blindness” or avoiding discussions of race, gender or physical ability with children, does not result in a child free of bias. Neither does

simply raising a child in a diverse neighborhood or classroom. Children will observe adults, kids, and societal norms and draw their own conclusions with or without help from adults.

### ***Research studies and experience shows:***

- Even 6 month old babies notice and pause to consider faces a different color from their parents.
- By age two, children are already picking up on stereotypes about people both like and unlike them in gender, skin tone, language and physical ability.
- For the next three to four years they begin to notice more, draw their own conclusions—right or wrong, and observe their parents (and society’s) verbal and non-verbal clues about how to respond to people different than themselves. For example if they never see a parent engage with a person of a particular race, they will subconsciously draw conclusions about what that means.
- Young children begin internalizing stereotypes and biases about gender, race and ability, both about themselves and others, and those may be turning into “truths” in their mind by ages 6-8.
- By age 9-10, children’s attitudes have been formed. For some it will take a significant experience to change their beliefs or behaviors after that age.

### ***The good news:***

- By age 4, children can understand that teasing and calling someone a name because of their looks, gender, ability or background is unfair and will hurt someone’s feelings.
- Young kids are widely receptive to adults drawing attention to positive images, and listen when adults interrupt bias. (Interrupting bias means to stop, condemn, and/or correct a depiction, statement, or other occurrence of bias when you encounter it.)
- By age 6, 7, 8 kids are capable of understanding unfairness, equity, and privilege and can begin having those types of conversations with adults.

### ***What can I do to help my child?***

Diverse books can help! See the other side of this handout!

