

DIVERSITY

Variety, miscellany, assortment, mélange, range, multiplicity

"We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race."

--Kofi Annan

It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.

-- Maya Angelou

Diversity encompasses complex differences and similarities in perspectives, identities, and points of view among members of a community. Diversity includes dimensions of human identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, socio-economic status, nationality, citizenship, religion, sexual orientation, ability, and age. These differences are important to understand but they cannot be used to predict any individual's values, choices, or responses.

It is important to instill cultural awareness at a young age. Understanding differences involves recognizing and appreciating the intercultural dynamics, social identities, and the wide range of cultural options that diversity provides for everyone. Recognizing that we have similar interests or beliefs can encourage cooperation and appreciation. Achieving a more diverse learning environment is seen as a way to improve education for all students while promoting respect for each of us as individuals ("What is Diversity?", 2016).

TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. **I love you/我愛你/Te quiero.** Teaching your children words in the native language(s) of your family is a personal way to introduce them to different cultures, as well as family history. What better words to start with than, "I love you"? Moreover, since many classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, consider teaching your child key phrases, such as "thank you" in a language represented in her classroom, which not only models respect for diversity but could allow them to forge new friendships. There are an abundance of apps that translate and speak words in different languages that can support this effort.
2. **Celebrating others.** Children's books are wonderful resources for helping your child develop a sense of his or her own identity, as well as an understanding of those who are different in terms of race, family composition, religious beliefs and ability. Visit your library for culturally diverse books.
3. **Exposure to other cultures brings personal meaning.** While children's books open children's eyes to differences, actual experiences have the most profound influence on what children think and believe. Here are more hands-on activities you can try:
 - o Encourage cross-racial/ethnic/religious/ability friendships.
 - o Expose your children to foods from different cultures.
 - o Attend different events/festivals that celebrate a particular ethnic group, holiday or personal accomplishment.
 - o Watch movies set in other cultures.
4. **The most powerful role model.** While all of the activities listed above have been found to promote cultural awareness and respect, no activity is as powerful as the role model of **a child's parent(s)**. Children become culturally sensitive and respectful when they see adults who are culturally sensitive and respectful, and who take a stand against bias, racism or insensitivity. Lastly, it is important for adults to take a "strengths based" perspective when talking with children about those who are different from the child. This perspective focuses on the positive characteristics of a person and her abilities, what that person is able to do or does (as compared to what he cannot) and how differences make our world a better place.

We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers.
-- Martin Luther King, Jr