Using Diverse Books in the Preschool Classroom

We live in a constantly changing world, and coexist with people of different abilities, cultures, races and religions. As teachers, we can help prepare children to be productive global citizens, accepting our similarities and differences. One way to do this is to include books with diverse characters and stories in classroom read-aloud time.

Diversity can easily be incorporated into our daily classroom routine. Rather than limiting diverse books to heritage months or commemorative holidays, include books with diverse characters year round. When discussing STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) for example, choose books about inventors with diverse backgrounds.

Children like seeing images of people who look like them in books. It helps build positive self-esteem about themselves and their community.

Here are some ways to incorporate diversity:

- Have books in your classroom library that feature characters of different races, religions, abilities and cultures.
- Choose books that highlight different customs, languages and values. Include stories of people from different cultures living, playing and working together.
- Display posters or artwork that feature a variety of abilities, cultures and races.
- Have multicultural paint, crayons, paper and or colored pencils readily available in the Art Center.
- Stress similarities. Discuss differences openly and sensitively so as to promote tolerance.
- Use “teachable moments” to discuss similarities and differences (on any topic) during circle time.

Written by Rachel Kelly

Diverse Library Books

Find these and many other diverse books at your neighborhood library.

Ada Twist, Scientist by Andrea Beaty
Ada Twist is a very curious girl who shows perseverance by asking questions and performing experiments to find things out and understand the world.

Blue Sky White Stars by Sarvinder Naberhaus
A stirring poetic tribute to the beauty and wonder of America’s symbols, history and landscapes.

City Shapes by Diana Murray
A young girl walks through the bustling city, while a pigeon flies above, both spotting hidden shapes at every turn.

The Colors of Us by Karen Katz
Lena and her mother observe the variations in the color of their friends’ skin, viewed in terms of foods and things found in nature.

Families by Shelley Rotner
Celebrate diversity with a picture book for very young children about the many faces of contemporary families.

Hey Black Child by Useni Eugene Perkins
A lyrical, empowering poem that celebrates black children and seeks to inspire all young ones to dream big and achieve their goals.

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**I Walk With Vanessa: A Story About a Simple Act of Kindness** by Kerascoet
An elementary school girl witnesses the bullying of another girl, but she is not sure how to help.

**Last Stop on Market Street** by Matt de la Pena
A young boy, CJ, rides the bus across town with his grandmother and learns to appreciate the beauty in everyday things.

**Lovely** by Jess Hong
Big, small, curly, straight, loud, quiet, smooth, wrinkly. Lovely explores a world of differences that all add up to the same thing: we are all lovely.

**My Pal, Victor – Mi Amigo, Victor** by Diane Gonzales Bertrand
Two boys experience carefree camaraderie despite one boy’s disability. Fun and friendship overpower physical limitations.

**One Family** by George Shannon
In this story that introduces numbered groups from one to ten, we realize that families can be many things.

**Say Hello!** by Rachel Isadora
A little girl greets people in her neighborhood in many different languages.

**Shades of People** by Shelley Rotner
Explores the many different shades of human skin, and points out that skin is just a covering that does not reveal what someone is like inside.

**Teddy’s Favorite Toy** by Christian Trimmer
Teddy’s mom goes to great lengths to rescue her son’s favorite doll in this delightful tribute to treasured toys—and mothers.

**Up! How Families Around the World Carry Their Little Ones** by Susan Hughes
Around the world, little ones are carried in many different ways: in slings, on shoulders, in backpacks, on hips, in baskets and in loving arms.

**What If...** by Samantha Berger
A child who likes to draw and write stories imagines what would happen if there were no pencils, paper or other tools for being creative.

**The Wheels on the Tuk Tuk** by Sabir Sehgal
In this twist on the classic song, the wheels on the tuk tuk go round and round all over the city in India.

**Yum! Yuck!** by Linda Sue Park
People around the world use various sounds to show their feelings.

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**Library Shout Out: Early Literacy Outreach**

Every year, Fairfax County Public Library’s Early Literacy Services takes the storytime experience into the community through outreach visits to home daycare providers, daycare centers, preschools and Head Start classes. The five Early Literacy Services staff members and 21 volunteers make monthly visits to children who often can not visit the library for storytimes, because their parents work during the day or don’t have transportation.

The Fairfax Library Foundation generously provides funding for giveaway books that most of these children receive each month.

In FY 2018, FPCL library staff made 1,443 storytime visits to 25,924 children and gave away 24,254 free books — 111 more storytimes and 981 more children than in FY 2017! Volunteers made 519 storytime visits to 10,461 children, and gave away 6,820 books — 55 more visits and 145 more children than FY...