



Be the Best that You can Be

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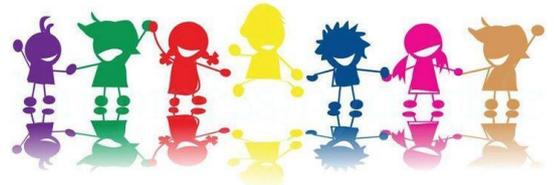


## Anti-Bias

Children are not born with prejudice; they develop it. Their early care, education and home environment can create an atmosphere where they learn prejudice and bias. Anti-bias is an active approach to the identification and challenging of prejudicial and discriminatory practices in relationships between people.

The explanations and definitions espoused above paint a picture of a dynamically changing world today. In some quarters, anti-bias is seen as political correctness and in a negative light. The example being set by some world and local leaders has encouraged a proliferation of prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour, including hate speech. The rise of neo-nazism and open racism and reverse racism, espoused in the speeches of empowered leaders, does not bode well for the future. This is, however, the time for anti-bias activism. It is an opportunity for us all to examine our own attitudes and beliefs towards difference. We need to ask ourselves what our innate, often unconscious prejudices are and how they are reflected in the manner in which we interact with the world and thereby impact on our children.

When I see you through my eyes,  
I think that we are different.



The anti-bias movement has its origins in the early 1980's and the multi-cultural movement. Whilst the multicultural curriculum taught the basics about different cultures, awareness of true and specific difference was lacking. Many western cultures were seen as promoting 'white privilege' in schools and in society, whilst the demographics of those societies were changing. Civil rights movements around the world have actively and vocally driven conversations, empowering previously marginalised sectors of society to stand up for their rights. Prejudices such as racism, sexism (gender bias), ageism, ableism and homophobia have become highlighted in the past few years, with governments and organisations being held accountable for entrenched systematic bias in laws and policy. Even traditionally conservative societies, such as those in the Middle East, have begun to change with the times.

When I see you through my heart,  
I know we are the same.

~Doe Zantamata

The anti-bias movement has begun to morph into an anti-bias curriculum. Schools and education departments around the world have targeted early years schooling as the key to changing conversations. *Anti-bias curriculum advocates claim that varying degrees and layers of oppression exist in educational institutions, and that a biased curriculum perpetuates oppression, interferes with interpersonal relationships, and impedes the acquisition of skills and knowledge. The anti-bias*



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*approach urges teachers to be aware of these social limitations and to eliminate them. The anti-bias approach is intended to teach children about acceptance, tolerance and respect; to critically analyse what they are taught; and to recognize the connections between ethnicity, gender, religion, and social class, and power, privilege, prestige, and opportunity.*

Despite the poor example being set and encouraged by some world leaders, the tide of anti-bias activism is rising. Change in society will be driven by the attitudes of the young. I challenge parents and teachers alike to be part of this change.

## **References**

Derman-Sparks, L (1999) "Creating an anti-bias environment"

Biles, B (1994). "Activities that promote racial and cultural awareness"

"What is anti-bias education? ([http://www.adl.org/tools\\_teachers/tip\\_antibias\\_ed.asp](http://www.adl.org/tools_teachers/tip_antibias_ed.asp))

## **Books recommended for children that will help embracing differences:**

- Its ok to be different: By Todd Parr
- The boy with pink hair: By Perez Hilton
- My princess boy: By Cheryl Kilodavies
- A fire engine for Ruthie: By Leslea Newman
- Jacob's new dress: By Sarah and Ian Hoffman
- Roland Humphrey is wearing what? By Eileen Kiernan- Johnson
- I am Jazz: By Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- Pinky and Rex and the Bully: By James Howe
- The Princess Knight; By Cornella Funke
- Prince Cinders: By Babette Cole
- Oliver Button is a Sissy; By Tomie dePaola
- The different Dragon; By Jennifer Bryan



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