

*Everyone is kneaded out of the same dough
but not baked in the same oven.*

Yiddish proverb

Character Pillars



Respect



Responsibility



Caring



Citizenship



Fairness

Appreciating Diversity

BACKGROUND

In this lesson, students will be exploring their skin color and the skin color of other students in their class. This lesson requires the educator to balance facilitating students' thoughts while addressing misconceptions. Even though your students are young, they may bring assumptions and stereotypes to the lesson. Their ideas and questions should be addressed head on. For instance, if a child asks about why skin colors differ, refrain from saying, "Skin color doesn't matter, we are all the same on the inside." This response addresses similarities while the child is asking about differences. Instead, explain that we all have melanin and the amount we have in our bodies determines our skin color. The goal is to create an environment that is safe for students to respectfully question and appreciate differences.

For more detailed information on how to respond to difficult questions that young children might ask, see *Teaching Young Children to Resist Bias: What Parents Can Do* by Louise Derman-Sparks, María Gutiérrez and Carol Brunson Phillips of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (<http://www.cccpre-school.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Teaching-Children-to-Resist-Bias4.pdf>).



SCHOOL

Elementary



OBJECTIVE

Students will recognize and value the different skin tones in their classroom.



MATERIALS

- *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz (book)
- AV equipment to show a video
- Paint chips from a local paint store that represent the different skin tones of the students in class. If there are multiple colors per paint chip, cut them into individual squares.

Procedures

NOTE

For more detailed information on melanin, you can read *Skin Color Adaptation* by Dennis O'Neil of the Behavioral Sciences Department at Palomar College (https://www2.palomar.edu/anthro/adapt/adapt_4.htm).

NOTE

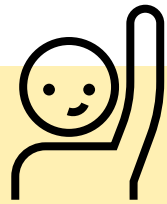
The book *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz is the story of a girl who begins to notice and appreciate the different skin tones of the people around her.

- 1 Explain to the students that people have different skin colors because of a pigment in our skin called melanin. How much melanin we have in our skin determines our skin color.
- 2 Model your comfort discussing skin tone by describing your skin tone to students and how much melanin you have in your skin. This will help to normalize the conversation and to create a comfortable atmosphere.
- 3 Read the book *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz to your class. Lead a group discussion using the questions below. Alternatively, you can show a video of students reading *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz (<https://youtu.be/679Sw4IACAk>; 4:15).
 - Think of a person in your life. How would you describe their skin color?
 - How would you describe the color of your own skin?
 - What are some reasons you like your skin color?
- 4 Display the paint chips on a table. Ask the students to find the paint chip that best matches the color of their skin.
- 5 Once they have their paint chip, sit in a circle and have the students read the name of the color on the paint chip aloud to the group. If the paint chips have only numbers, skip to the next step.

- 6** Ask the students to take the paint chip home and bring something in the following day that is the same color as the paint chip. Tell them they will not receive the item back so they should make sure it is not something meaningful to them.
- 7** Create a class sculpture using the items the class brings in to represent their skin colors. Title the sculpture “The Colors of Us” and display it proudly in the classroom.
- 8** After the sculpture is created and displayed, lead a large group conversation using the discussion questions.

NOTE

If you do not want to create a class sculpture, you can alternatively use the paint chips to create a collage or mosaic that you can then title “The Colors of Us” and display in the classroom.

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

- 1** Who has the same or similar skin color as you, either in or out of the classroom?
- 2** Why is it a good thing that there are different skin colors?
- 3** Has anyone ever heard someone say something mean about a person’s skin color?
- 4** What can you do if you ever hear someone say something mean?

Putting into Practice

JOURNAL PROMPT



Think of a time when you met a person who was different than how you see yourself. Were they from a different culture, did they speak a different language or have parents who worked in a different job than your parents? What made you curious about this person? What questions would you want to ask them? What makes you different from other people in your school and community?



HABITS

- ✓ Welcome students daily to the class using different greetings in different languages, including American Sign Language and any other languages spoken in the community.
- ✓ Have the class develop interview questions in order to get to know staff members throughout the school. Invite aides, lunchroom workers, custodians, secretaries and others to periodically attend your class to be interviewed. The students will then have the opportunity to get to know them more personally and learn to appreciate them on a different level.
- ✓ Set aside a designated time for a few students to explain why they appreciate a difference they have with someone else in the class.



SCHOOL

Middle/High



OBJECTIVE

Students will gain awareness and appreciation of the different socioeconomic statuses of families around the world.



MATERIALS

- Computers, tablets or smartphones with internet access (enough for small groups to work online)
- *The Dollar Street* handout (a copy for each student)

Procedures

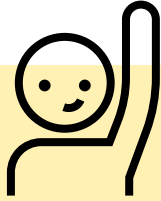
- 1 Explain to the students that the term “diversity” is often used to describe differences but that it has various meanings. Ask the students to brainstorm some ways the students in your school are diverse. List these differences on the board or on chart paper.
- 2 Tell students one way in which people are diverse, or different from one another, is socioeconomic status. Ask the students to explain what socioeconomic status means. Share the following definition with them:

socioeconomic status:

According to the American Psychological Association, socioeconomic status is a classification of an individual or a group based on a combination of their income, education and occupation.⁵¹

- 3 Explain to the students that socioeconomic status varies from culture to culture.
- 4 Introduce the students to The Dollar Street website. Explain that The Dollar Street is a project where every day items in 264 homes in 50 countries were documented and photographed and sorted by income.

⁵¹ “Socioeconomic Status,” American Psychological Association, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status/index>.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What were your feelings or reactions as you learned about the different families?
- 2 What information that was not included on The Dollar Street website do you want to know about the families?
- 3 As you looked at the images, did you find yourself judging the families and/or having empathy for the families? Why is it important to be aware of this?
- 4 Why is it important to acknowledge and talk about diversity? When does talking about and acknowledging differences become a problem?

Procedures (continued)

- 5 Have the students form small groups of two to three students. Each group should have a computer to work with. Share the web address for The Dollar Street (<https://www.gapminder.org/dollar-street/matrix>), and ask the students to pull up the website.
- 6 Distribute a copy of *The Dollar Street* handout to each student, and have them work in their small groups to complete the handout.
- 7 In a large group, have the students share their answers to question 5 on the handout.
- 8 Have a large group conversation using the discussion questions.

Putting into Practice

HABITS

- ✓ Have the students choose a family from The Dollar Street website and research the economics of the region. This can be done with multiple families through the school year, and comparisons can be made by region, economics, lifestyle, etc.
- ✓ Using news sources from different regions around the world, examine current events in different languages. You might look at the news of a single region or take one news event and examine it from different perspectives. Google translate can help with the language.

JOURNAL PROMPT



Think of a character, a movie or a story that you have read that takes place in a culture different from your own. Imagine yourself going to that place and having a conversation with the people who live there. What about how the people live would you wonder about? What questions would you imagine they would ask about you and your background? What types of things would you imagine you have in common?



LESSON HANDOUT

The Dollar Street

Directions: Using The Dollar Street website (<https://www.gapminder.org/dollar-street/matrix>), find the following families and answer the corresponding questions.

NOTE

You may want to use the search bar on the main page (www.gapminder.org) to find the specific families by name.

1 Find the Chaurasia family that lives in New Delhi, India.

- What is their monthly income? _____
- What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family? _____
- Find the picture of the water outlet in the home and use three words to describe it. _____
- What is the next item they plan to buy? _____
- Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? _____

2 Find the Raju family that lives near Thanlyin in Myanmar.

- What is their monthly income? _____
- What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family? _____
- What is the heat source for cooking? _____
- Describe the table they use for entertaining guests. _____
- What is the next item they plan to buy? _____
- Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? _____

3 Find the Xi family that lives in the Yunnan province of China.

- What is their monthly income? _____
- What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family? _____
- What do they use as fuel for their stove? _____
- Use three words to describe the plate of food in their home. _____
- Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? _____

4 Find the Poma family that lives in the La Paz region of Bolivia.

- What is their monthly income? _____
- What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family? _____
- What do they dream of purchasing? _____
- Choose one of the pictures of their home and describe it. _____
- Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? _____

5 As a group, choose a family not listed above. Have a conversation using the following questions:

- What are some major differences between their lives and yours?
- What are some similarities between their lives and yours?
- What were some feelings you had when looking at the items in their home?
- What do you think children in this family, or culture, do for fun?
- What are some challenges you think this family faces?



LESSON HANDOUT

The Dollar Street Answer Key

- 1 Find the Chaurasia family that lives in New Delhi, India.
 - a. What is their monthly income? **\$753**
 - b. What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family? **graphic designer**
 - c. Find the picture of the water outlet in the home and use three words to describe it.
 - d. What is the next item they plan to buy? **house**
 - e. Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? **middle**
- 2 Find the Raju family that lives near Thanlyin in Myanmar.
 - a. What is their monthly income? **\$45**
 - b. What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family? **rice farmer**
 - c. What is the heat source for cooking? **wood**
 - d. Describe the table they use for entertaining guests.
 - e. What is the next item they plan to buy? **car battery to power the home**
 - f. Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? **bottom**
- 3 Find the Xi family that lives in the Yunnan province of China.
 - a. What is their monthly income? **\$781**
 - b. What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family?
postman and runs a restaurant
 - c. What do they use as fuel for their stove? **electricity, natural gas and wood**
 - d. Use three words to describe the plate of food in their home.
 - e. Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? **middle**
- 4 Find the Poma family that lives in the La Paz region of Bolivia.
 - a. What is their monthly income? **\$265**
 - b. What is the occupation of the primary wage earner in the family? **carpenter**
 - c. What do they dream of purchasing? **refrigerator**
 - d. Choose one of the pictures of their home and describe it.
 - e. Where do they fall on The Dollar Street income scale? **middle**