Learning About Racial Identity & Fairness

Chapter 6
Racial identity is shaped from the outside and constructed from the inside

The language of racial identity
Children’s Early Experiences and Understanding of Racial Identity

- Infants and toddlers show awareness of skin color
- Preschoolers talk about their own and other’s racial characteristics
- Preschoolers want to know why physical characteristics differ and will create their own explanations
- Preschoolers try to understand the names of and criteria for racial categories
- Biracial or multiracial children and children in transracial adoptive families have additional questions
Children’s Early Experiences and Understanding of Racial Identity (cont.)

- Preschoolers need help resisting harmful messages about their racial identity
- Pay attention to cover as well as overt messages that children hear

Discussion questions – group work p. 79
Exploring skin color, hair, and eyes

- Talk about what these features do for us no matter how they look
- Make a life-size cutout of each child from butcher paper and have children look in the mirror and select crayons and paint to match the colors of their features
- Make a wall chart or book of children’s handprint using skin tons paint
- Take two pictures of each child – one of the child’s back of the head and one of the face and have children match hair with the child’s face
- Read books about the beauty of different kinds of hair and skin color
Focus on children’s confusion about their own skin color

- Consider gently encouraging the child to choose the color closest to his skin color
- If the coloring is playful and the child is relaxed, you don’t need to take further actions
- If you noticed that the child shows signs of rejecting how he looks, speak with the family about what they want their child to know about their racial identity and come up with a plan
Fostering Critical Thinking and Respectful Relationships

- Read books that describe children experiencing unfair treatment based on their racial identity
- Use persona dolls to tell stories, engaging children’s empathy and problem solving skills

Class work – painting with the skin tone paint