

# How to Talk to and Teach Your Child About Race and Antiracism

At Sylvan Learning, we believe that education is key to ending the systemic racism that was sewn into our society hundreds of years ago, and still persists.

Although educating our younger generations and having conversations with your family should be an ongoing process, we can all agree that Black History Month is definitely a time we can all pause and reflect on what we can do better. So, we chatted with Emily Levitt, Sylvan's VP of Education, about how parents can educate their children (and themselves) on racism and teach antiracism.

"Racism is complex, deeply embedded and a very emotional topic. That makes it hard to discuss and mitigate. It's extraordinarily important to have those discussions, though," said Emily.

As injustices, violence and protests continue across the world, Emily notes that talking with your child openly is especially important. These conversations will look a little different, depending on your child's age, but avoiding these topics is not the answer.

"The kind of conversation you have with your child depends largely on their age and maturity level. You should give them enough detail so they understand the situation, but not so much that they are overwhelmed," said Emily.

Rooting out racism is a task that takes ongoing, sustained effort over time. There will not be a day when that job is “finished,” and it’s imperative that we keep working toward constant improvement and progress. These conversations should not stop after today’s events move out of the headlines. We need to continue listening to one another, and making space for everyone to feel safe, represented and heard.

To foster continued learning and understanding, Emily recommends that your home have the same kind of atmosphere that you would want at your child’s school: Diverse, a safe place to learn, and having opportunities for plenty of questions and open conversations. To create this kind of environment at home, she has these tips for parents:

### Start having conversations early on.

Sarah Gaither, assistant professor psychology and neuroscience at Duke University was interviewed in CNN’s piece, [Children aren’t born racist. Here’s how parents can stop them from becoming racist](#), and says, “As children develop, they naturally categorize things and people to help them understand the world around them. Kids are more likely to categorize people based on their physical characteristics, so it makes sense that they group by race and gender”

In order to avoid “out-of-group” preferences, foster opportunities for your child to have friendships with children of all ethnicities. You can facilitate playdates, volunteer opportunities, sports activities and carpools with diverse families. Children model what they see, so if you also have a variety of friends and activities they are likely to be more accepting and show empathy for those around them.

### Diversify your child’s books, toys, movies, artwork and other materials.

Representation matters a great deal. It's important to expose your child to books, movies, toys and other material that feature main characters from diverse backgrounds and are shown in a positive light. Being exposed to positive stories can also reduce implicit bias and counteract negative stereotypes.

- Our partner, [Random House Children's Books](#), has put [together an extensive reading list of books written by Black Voices to help educate and inspire kids of all ages](#).
- Plus, check out the [Canadian Children's Book Centre's Black History Month reading list](#), which celebrates stories about diverse families.

### Talk with your child about equity, race, kindness and justice. Repeat.

Studies have shown that many parents often take a “colorblind” or “color mute” approach, presuming if they don't mention color that children will not notice differences and remain unbiased. However, these approaches can accidentally foster implicit bias and racism.

It's important to acknowledge what makes us the same and also discuss the differences between ethnic groups in a positive way. Engage your child in conversations about equity, race, kindness and justice. Keep the conversation flowing and going, these talks should not a one-and-done teaching moment.

### Work on being an ally yourself.

And most importantly, be the example you want your children to follow. Point out injustice when you see it. Actively stand up against racism and show your child how to be an ally. [Here's a great article on how raise allies early on](#).

Together, we have the power to raise the next generation of leaders who will help us ensure enduring change for the Black community and other marginalized communities.

We encourage you to check out the below resources for more information. Let's keep these important conversations going. (And, keep an eye on our social media and blog for more resources and information, coming soon!)

### Talking About Race, a Free Online Learning Portal

The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture launched [Talking About Race](#), an online portal designed to help individuals, families and communities talk about racism, racial identity and the way these forces shape every aspect of society, from the economy and politics to the broader American culture

### Children's Books by Black Voices to Read with Your Kids Now

Check out Random House's recommended [list of children's books by Black writers](#). These books explore themes of race, love and friendship to teach and inspire young readers.

### How to Answer Your Kids' Questions About Race

It's natural for children to ask questions. Experts say that how you answer could shape your children's feelings about race for years to come. PBS Kids has a lot of wonderful [tips and videos](#) for how to talk to your children about race.

### A Guide to Equity and Antiracism for Educators

Teachers wondering how to work for change in our society and schools can check out these [10 resources for teaching anti-racism](#) from ISTE

and review these [lesson plans, videos and other resources](#) from Edutopia.

## Find My Local Sylvan

We'd love to talk with you about how we can help your child reach his or her individual goals!

[FIND MY LOCAL SYLVAN >>](#)