

ACTIVITY GUIDE

BIG IDEAS

We are all beautiful shades of brown – hundreds and even thousands of different shades of brown. There are many, many more skin colors than there are shades of brown crayons. But we can use what limited materials we have available – brown and a handful of basic colors – to make many different skin colors.

The key takeaways from this Affirmation are:

- There is no such thing as one skin/flesh color crayon.
- We are all beautiful shades of brown.
- Everyone’s skin is different and unique.
- Our skin color comes from our ancestry and melanin.
- We can mix brown with other colors to create a variety of skin colors.

BIG QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

- How do we get our skin color?
- How is our skin color similar?
- How is our skin color different?
- How can we create a variety of colors that represents the diverse spectrum of humanity?

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. Check out the video guide for Affirmation #1 to get inspired.

Decide what clips you might want to share with children during the activity.

2. Plan your activity flow.

Choose which activities you will engage children in and how you will pace them given your specific context and the time you have for the program. Drawing Differences can be adapted as-needed to take place over multiple, weekly sessions, or every day for a week in a classroom, after-school program, or summer camp environment. Consider the developmental level of the children in your care, including how much time they can spend sitting in conversation, and how much time and support they will need to understand certain concepts and figure out the materials.

2. Help children think outside the crayon box!

Fortunately, there are more authentic "skin color" options in boxes of crayons and colored pencils today than in the past, which helps to raise awareness of our many different skin colors. However, the Drawing Differences curriculum goes beyond raising awareness. Humans have many different shades and tones throughout their skin. By engaging deeply in the process of creating our many shades of brown as people from a limited set of materials, children will come to recognize, embrace, and celebrate our racial diversity. If you have "skin color" crayons/colored pencils available, encourage children to use those colors to make even more human skin colors.

3. Learn about Angélica Dass.

During this activity, you have the opportunity to share the artwork of Angélica Dass, an award-winning photographer. Before introducing artists, it is essential to take the time to familiarize yourself with them and their work. You can read more about Angélica Dass on her website or refer to [Activity Sheet 1.1\) Artist Snapshot](#). We also recommend researching her "Humanæ Project" and watching the following TED Talks provide context.

- TED – The beauty of human skin in every color
- TED – What kids should know about race

4. Review the Conversation Tip Sheet.

This will help you anticipate questions children may have and provides suggestions for how to respond.

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HELPFUL VOCABULARY

Ancestors – the people we are related to who came before us: our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on. Some of our ancestors lived a really, really long time ago.

Melanin – Tiny grains of coloring in our skin.

Race* – The idea of grouping people based on certain shared physical characteristics, such as skin color, hair texture and facial features. Race is a made-up idea used to divide people and to treat different groups of people unfairly. Your race is usually determined by how you look. However, people who look similar might identify themselves differently by race, and people who look very different might identify themselves as belonging to the same racial group. This can make race very confusing.

Skin color – The color of our skin based on the amount of melanin it contains.

Value – The lightness or darkness of a color that is used in making art.

*Note: There are many different ways to define the term race. This is a working definition, but one of the goals of this activity is for children to come to individual and collective understandings of the term that make sense to them and satisfy their personal, developmental, and communal needs.

MATERIALS / RESOURCES

Crayons, colored pencils, and/or watercolor paint in the following colors: red, orange, yellow, violet, black, and brown. You may also use any other colors available (such as sienna, pink, peach, and other shades of brown).

Activity Sheets:

- o 1.1) Artist Snapshot: Angélica Dass
- o 1.2) Color Gradient Practice
- o 1.3) BOXES Color Mixing Exploration
- o 1.4) FIGURES Color Mixing Exploration
- o Each activity sheet has an option of 4, 9, or 16 color mixing spaces. For younger children, we recommend utilizing 4 mixing spaces; for older children, we recommend utilizing 9 or 16.

Recommended Books:

- o [All the Colors We Are/Todos los Colores de Nuestra Piel](#) by Katie Kissinger
- o [The Colors We Share](#) by Angélica Dass
- o [Our Skin](#) by Megan Madison and Jessica Ralli

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OPENING ACTIVITY

Welcome children to the space. Today we are going to be learning about skin color. Let's start by observing, or looking really closely, at our own skin colors together.

Ask children to put their hands in the middle, next to each other. Put your hands in, too!

- What do you **NOTICE** about our skin colors?
- How are our skin colors **SIMILAR**?
- How are our skin colors **DIFFERENT**?



We are all shades of brown. Some are lighter, some are darker. Some might look warmer or cooler or like they have other colors mixed in. We all have different skin colors. Different parts of our hands and bodies are different colors.

Ask children to share their own knowledge and ideas:

- How many human skin colors do you think there are in the world? One? Five? Ten? More?
- Where do you **THINK** skin color comes from?
- What, if anything, have you heard about the word **MELANIN**?

During your conversation about skin color, the concept of race will likely come up. Help children speak openly about their understanding of race, and take this opportunity to:

1. gauge where your children are in their conceptual understandings, and
2. provide a safe, open forum to talk about race and how it relates to skin color.

You might have children talk in pairs or as a group about what they think race might mean or how they have heard this word used.

If the concept of race does not come up, initiate the conversation by asking guiding questions such as: What colors can we use to describe skin? Is there Black skin? Is there White skin? Have you heard these words used to describe people?

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ARTIST INSPIRATION

To set up this exploration with children, share the following points.

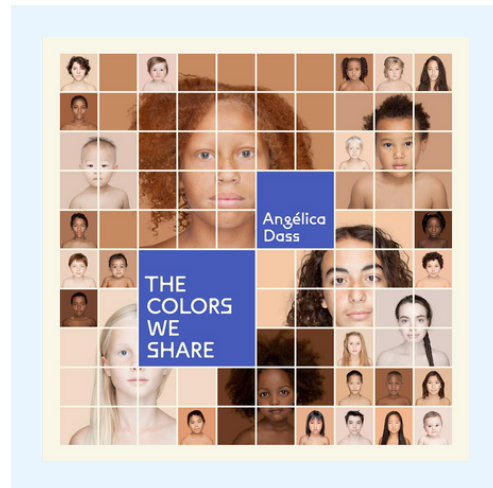
- There are so many different skin colors, and our skin color is part of what makes each of us unique.
- One artist who explores a variety of skin colors in her work is Angélica Dass.
- Today we will be learning a bit of her artwork and using it as inspiration when creating our own art.

Take this time to introduce children to Angélica Dass by sharing a brief biography (see [Activity Sheet 1.1\) Artist Snapshot](#)). Allow the opportunity for questions and conversation.

Share with children a few images from Angélica Dass' '[Humanæ Project](#)'. Lead children through a "[See, Think, Wonder](#)" routine:

- What do you SEE in these photographs?
- What do you THINK about that?
- What does it make you WONDER?

If there is time, feel free to provide more information regarding the project or read '[The Colors We Share](#)' by Angélica Dass.



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LEARNING MORE ABOUT SKIN COLOR

To dive deeper into learning about skin color and melanin, we recommend the bilingual book 'All the Colors We Are / Todos Los Colores de Nuestra Piel' by Katie Kissinger.

During and after reading, engage children in conversation. Remember to provide ample time for children to respond and ensure that the kids lead the discussion.



- **What is SKIN COLOR?**
 - *Our skin color is determined mainly by the amount of melanin in our skin. Melanin is the tiny grains of coloring in our skin. The darker your skin is, the more melanin it contains.*
- **Why do some people have more MELANIN than others?**
 - *The amount of melanin in your skin is based on where your ancestors lived many generations ago. Our ancestors are the people we are related to who came before us. For example, our grandmas have grandmas, and those grandmas have grandparents, and those grandparents have grandparents. Some of them lived a really long time ago! If they lived in a place where there was a lot of sunshine and heat, they likely had a lot of melanin in their skin because melanin helps protect our skin from sunburns. If your ancestors came from colder places with less sun and heat, they likely had less melanin and lighter skin. Our amount of melanin gets passed down from parents to their children. Now, people with different amounts of melanin have migrated all over the world, so we see people with different skin colors in lots of different places.*

Consider...

- Counteracting racist ideas by framing melanin in a really positive light! It helps protect us from the sun — how cool is that! What an amazing, powerful thing to have in our bodies!
- Using the world map image in the Affirmation #1 Slide Deck to help children guess where their ancestors lived based on the skin colors they see in themselves and their family members and what they know about their racial or ethnic backgrounds. Note that the experience of this activity might be different for children who are adopted and/or don't know their biological parents.

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LEARNING MORE ABOUT RACE

To dive deeper into learning about race, we recommend the book '[Our Skin](#)' by Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli, and Isabel Roxas.

During and after reading, engage children in conversation. Remember to provide ample time for children to respond and ensure that the kids lead the discussion.



- **So what is the difference between RACE and SKIN COLOR?**
 - *When someone says that their race is Black, they don't literally mean their skin is black. When someone says that their race is White, they don't literally mean their skin is white. We're all different shades of brown, but we also use these labels to identify ourselves. These labels include words like "Black," "White," "Latine," "Asian," "Native" or "Indigenous," and others.*
 - *RACE is a made-up social category based on skin color, facial features, hair texture, & ancestry. But these are BIG categories that don't always make much sense. For example, when it comes to skin color, people can be in different racial categories and have the same skin color, and people can have different skin colors but have the same racial identity. That's why you can never assume someone's racial identity. If you want to know someone's racial identity, it's best to ask.*
 - *Race was originally made up as a way to make people feel it was okay to treat other people badly. For a long time, and in many parts of the world, people have placed value on being on the lighter end of the skin color spectrum and have devalued people on the darker end. These racist ideas are sometimes called anti-Blackness, White supremacy, and colorism.*
 - *Even though race was made up, it still has a major impact on how we experience life. It can impact the opportunities we have, how we are treated by other people, and how we connect with others through cultural traditions that are linked to race.*

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INDIVIDUAL SELF-REFLECTION

This activity can provide children an empowering opportunity to explore their own identity related to race and skin color. In classroom settings, this activity makes space for children to integrate what they have talked about with their families with what is being discussed in school.

Have children look closely at their own skin and reflect:

- **How would you describe or name your skin color?**
 - You can provide inspiration for children using lists of terms for shades of brown, like [this one compiled by Brownicity](#). (Note that people feel differently about using food-related words to describe skin color—so be mindful that there are many nature-related words to use in addition or instead.)
 - You can also get creative and dive even deeper — consider bringing in paint chips with different shades of brown named on them, or bringing in items that are different shades of brown, like spices, seeds, and nuts, for children to explore with their senses. Let's teach children that browns are beautiful!
- **What does your skin color make you think of?**
- **Are there words that you or your parents use to describe you that are related to skin color or race?**
 - This question provides the opportunity to differentiate between skin color terms (e.g., having dark brown skin) and race (e.g., identifying as Black).

It may be helpful to remind children that there are no wrong answers to these questions — and it is also OK if they are not sure.

Ask for volunteers to share what they're thinking.

Note: This activity generally involves children showing pride and excitement when sharing about themselves, their families, and their backgrounds. If you're not hearing that from the group, or noticing cues telling you that a child is uncomfortable, it's worth reflecting on how the activity and conversations are affecting them. If the group as a whole seems engaged but there are individual children who seem uncomfortable, be sure to quietly follow up with them to check if they're okay and see if they want to talk. Consider also reaching out to the child's family to keep them informed and see what you might learn.

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CREATING DIFFERENT SKIN COLORS

Introduce the activity:

There is no such thing as one skin color crayon because our skin colors are different and unique. Even in a box of different shades of brown, you won't find a shade that matches everyone's skin color.

How do artists create different skin colors?

Artists mix brown with other colors to create different skin colors. Artists also use VALUE to make even more unique shades of skin color.

We are going to learn how we can create a variety of skin colors using the art supplies that we have.

This activity uses **Activity Sheet 1.2) Color Gradient Practice**. To make the activity more manageable, particularly for younger children, consider cutting handouts to provide children with 1 color-mixing strip (3 boxes) at a time.

Depending on your access to materials, choose from one of the following art supplies: crayons, colored pencils, or watercolor paint. We recommend only introducing one material at a time. Depending on your material choice, walk children through the steps on the following pages.

If using crayons or colored pencils, go to pages 10-11.

If using watercolor paint, go to pages 12-13.

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CREATING DIFFERENT SKIN COLORS: CRAYONS & COLORED PENCILS

Modeling and Guided Practice:

1. Since we are all different shades of brown, we will all start with the color brown. Begin to add brown to the top middle square.
2. Move to the top left square. Very lightly and softly, begin to add brown to the square gently. Notice how this brown appears lighter in color. By using less pressure, we can create a lighter **value** of the color brown. Remember that **value** is the lightness or darkness of a color that is used in making art.
3. Move to the top right square. Press down firmly onto your paper, making sure you fill in the entire square with the color brown. Notice how this brown appears darker in color. By using more pressure, we can create a darker value of the color brown.
4. Notice how we could create three unique skin colors using the same color! Artists use different amounts of pressure to create different values of color when using crayons or colored pencils. The softer you press down (less pressure) on your paper, the lighter the color will appear. The harder you press down (more pressure) on your paper, the darker the color will appear.

Provide time for children to practice what you have just demonstrated with the brown color. Ask children if they have any questions and offer support as needed.



Activity Sheet 1.2) Color Gradient Practice: Crayons

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CREATING DIFFERENT SKIN COLORS: CRAYONS & COLORED PENCILS

5. Repeat steps 1-3 with the second row. This time, add the color yellow on top of your brown. Ensure that you do not press down too hard on the left side so that the color appears lighter in value. Press down firmly to make the color appear darker in value on the right side.

Provide time for children to practice what you have just demonstrated with the brown color. Ask children if they have any questions and offer support as needed.

6. Repeat steps 1-3 with the remainder of the colors: orange, red, violet, black.

Depending on where children are in their learning (if you're working with a group), you may choose to continue to model and support their practice for the remaining color combinations, or you may decide that all or some children can now practice on their own.



Activity Sheet 1.2) Color Gradient Practice: Colored Pencils

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CREATING DIFFERENT SKIN COLORS: WATERCOLORS

Modeling & Guided Practice:

1. Since we are all different shades of brown, we will all start with the color brown. Begin to paint the top middle square brown.
2. Move to the top left square. Add more water to your brown and gently add brown to the square. Notice how this brown appears lighter in color. By using more water, we can create a lighter **value** of the color brown. Remember that **value** is the lightness or darkness of a color that is used in making art.
3. Move to the top right square. Do not add any water to your brown, and make sure you fill in the entire square. Notice how this brown appears darker in color. By using less water, we can create a darker value of the color brown. In addition, you can also wait until the brown paint dries and paint a second layer of brown on top to make it appear darker.
4. Notice how we could create three unique skin colors using the same color! Artists use different amounts of water to create different **VALUES** of colors with watercolor paint. The more water you add to your paint, the lighter the color will appear. The less water you add to your paint, the darker the color will appear.

Provide time for children to practice what you have just demonstrated with the brown color. Ask children if they have any questions and offer support as needed.



Activity Sheet 1.2) Color Gradient Practice: Watercolor Paint

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CREATING UNIQUE SKIN COLORS: WATERCOLORS

5. Repeat steps 1-3 with the second row. This time, add the color yellow on top of your brown. Make sure that on the left side, you add more water so that the color appears lighter in value. On the right side, use less water to make the color appear darker in value.

Provide time for children to practice what you have just demonstrated with the brown and yellow colors. Ask children if they have any questions and offer support as needed.

6. Repeat steps 1-3 with the remainder of the colors: orange, red, violet, black.

Depending on where children are in their learning (if you're working with a group), you may choose to continue to model and support their practice for the remaining color combinations, or you may decide that all or some children can now practice on their own.



Activity Sheet 1.2) Color Gradient Practice: Watercolor Paint

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COLOR MIXING EXPLORATION

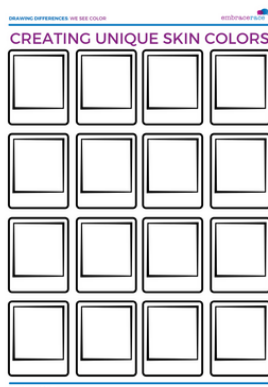
After children have completed A1A) Color Gradient Practice, move on to **Color Mixing Exploration** to practice creating a larger variety of colors that represent the diverse spectrum of humanity. You may use **1.3) Boxes Color Mixing Exploration** template or **1.4) Figures Color Mixing Exploration** template. Each template has an option of 4, 9, or 16 color mixing spaces. We recommend utilizing 4 or 9 mixing spaces for younger children, and for older children, we recommend using 9 or 16 mixing spaces.

Model the Color Mixing Exploration with narration for kids:

- Use a combination of the techniques you used for the Color Gradient Practice to try and create as many different skin colors as you can.
- Sometimes, we may use more than one color in addition to brown. Try mixing 3, 4, 5, or even all 6 colors.
- Explore what happens when you add specific colors beneath and add additional colors on top.
- Discover how you can use different amounts of pressure or different amounts of water to change the value of each color you are adding and mixing.

Now it's the children's turn to practice.

- Provide handouts.
- Allow children to mix as many colors with brown as they would like for their color mixing exploration, and to experiment with creating different color values.
- As children practice, ask if they have questions and offer support as needed.



Activity Sheet 1.3) BOXES Color Mixing Exploration



Activity Sheet 1.4) FIGURES Color Mixing Exploration



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CLOSING REFLECTION

Ask children to share something they learned today. Reiterate that there is no such thing as a skin/flesh color crayon. Everyone's skin color is unique, and we can use what limited materials we have available to make many different skin colors.

Conclude by asking children the following:

- What is something you've learned from this activity?
- What questions do you still have? How can we learn more?

LOOKING AHEAD

Our next affirmation is "WE SEE INDIVIDUALS." During the next activity, children will learn how to observe and draw themselves and others, with a focus on differences among facial features (eyes, nose, mouth, hair, etc.).