

CONVERSATION TIPS

What if children only draw family and friends who are the same race as them?

This will definitely happen sometimes. Due in large part to patterns of segregation in the U.S., people often end up with few close ties to people who are from different racial backgrounds. Here are a few tips:

- 1) Don't assume. Unless you know for sure, don't assume that children's family members are all the same race. Ask children about similarities and differences between themselves and their family members. Noticing and positively highlighting physical differences is a valuable practice, whether they are explicitly race-based or not.
- 2) Share your observation with the child. For example, "I'm noticing that all the people you've drawn have light-colored skin, similar to yours." Help them expand their thinking by asking questions. "Who could you include in your portrait book that has a very different skin color than you?" If needed, you can prompt students to think about their friend group, characters in books and movies, or other contexts.
- 3) Use that information in the future. If a child is struggling to identify people to draw from different backgrounds, maybe they have not yet had enough exposure to diverse people or representations. As an adult in their life, you can play an important role in highlighting visual representations of people from many different backgrounds who look different, from artwork to books, magazines, and more. For more tips, check out the EmbraceRace action guide, "[5 Ways to Raise Inclusive Kids Despite Living in Segregated Neighborhoods](#)."

Just as all children benefit from reading about people and communities alike and unlike themselves and their communities, all kids could benefit by spotlighting and drawing others who do and don't look like they do. When it comes to race, it's also true that because White characters are greatly overrepresented in children's media and other media, all kids would benefit by spotlighting and drawing similar and dissimilar characters of color. Use conversation and pictures to encourage them to draw diversely. Not all kids will take you up on it, and that's OK. You will have planted a seed!