

Respecting Differences and Celebrating Diversity



As a community, it is important that we continue to work towards being more tolerant of each others' unique qualities. We must respect people of various races, nationalities, ethnicities, religions, sizes, abilities, ages, gender and sexual orientation. Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is committed to making our school community inclusive of all students. Parents can assist in this effort. Listed below are some helpful tips for teaching children to respect differences and to celebrate diversity.

Respecting Cultural and Racial Diversity

1. Attend various cultural events with your child.
2. Read books with your child that celebrate cultures outside of your heritage:
 - *Violet* by Tania Duprey Stehlik
 - *Let's Talk about Race* by Julius Lester
 - *Whoever You Are* by Leslie Staub
3. Visit cultural museums with your child:
 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
 - Alexandria Black History Museum
 - Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
 - Daughters of the American Revolution Museum
 - Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
 - Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian
 - Smithsonian Freer and Sackler Museum
4. Talk with your child about different cultures. Do not let racial/prejudice comments go by without intervening. It is important to let children know from a very early age that name-calling of any kind is hurtful and wrong.
5. Teach your child about his/her own cultural heritage. Research and develop your family tree together with your child.

Respecting Developmental Diversity

1. Discuss with your child the unique strengths of all individuals.
2. Explain to your child that children with special needs have better outcomes in school when they feel included in their classroom and school community.
3. Encourage your child to volunteer in school or in the community to work with students with special needs.
4. Read books with your child that educate them about children with disabilities:
 - *The Junkyard Wonders* by Patricia Polacco
 - *Keep Your Ear on the Ball* by Genevieve Petrillo
 - *Listening for Crickets* by David Gifaldi

Respecting Gender Diversity

1. Avoid sexist language when speaking with your child.
2. Expose your child to books, dolls, toys, TV programs and music that show men and women in non-traditional roles.
3. Read books with your child that educate them about gender equality and families with same sex parents:
 - *When Kayla was Kyle* by Amy Fabrikant
 - *King & King* by Linda De Haan and Stern Nijland
 - *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
4. Tell your child that they do not have to understand an individual's lifestyle choices in order to treat others with respect and dignity. Children develop tolerance and respect for others based on what they are taught at home.

Respecting Economic Diversity

1. Teach your child that income level is not an indicator of ability level or potential.
2. Engage in community activities with families from different income levels.
3. Volunteer with your child at a homeless shelter.

Embracing diversity can be achieved by valuing all students' differences. ACPS is committed to treating all students in an empathetic and caring manner that fosters acceptance and appreciation. For additional information regarding cultural competency, please visit: <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/equity/>.