



## **Teaching White Privilege in Early Childhood**

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Ashley Park

This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
Pre-K classes

**Keywords:** privilege, shades (of skin color), race

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** The main goal of this curriculum unit is to teach pre-K students about the concept of privilege and to expose students to the idea that some people have privilege and some people don't. While teaching the students about privilege, the students will explore the concept of fairness. Students will also have opportunities to express in a safe place how they feel about people being treated differently. This unit is extremely important because students that are black can walk into a store and see a bunch of white dolls and very few black dolls, walk into a book store and see more books with animals than characters that look like them or a bunch of white Santa Clauses and few to no black Santa Clauses. These students at the age of four and five are already being affected by privilege. Through this curriculum unit, I will expose the students to diverse books that have a variety of people from different ethnic backgrounds doing different things. Through the unit, the students will build on their language, comprehension, physical and social emotional skills.

*I plan to teach this unit in spring 2020 because the students have been exposed to a lot of literature and they are able to attend and engage at this point in the year. It will be taught to approximately sixteen pre-K students.*

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# Teaching White Privilege in Early Childhood

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## Introduction

### Rationale

Pre -K students are building on their literacy, language, social emotional, and fine motor skills. I believe this unit will help the students enhance these different domains. This unit will also help the students become aware of how treating others can be unfair and discover the negative feelings some people can face from being treated that way.

Research shows that when children are at the pre-K age, they already have an understanding of racial concepts (Cristol and Gimbert 2008). They have already gained ideas of racial stereotypes. Pre-K students are also affected by white privilege. Students who are white have already begin receiving privilege such as having access to so many books they have people like them in it. While black children already have labels on them such as their behavior and reasons for their behaviors. Black children in pre-K already have stereotypes against them, while white children in pre-K are already being exposed to and absorbing these stereotypes too.

### School Background and Information

The website NC report card provides information and data about Ashley Park. Less than 20 percent of students entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade is proficient. Students that are economically disadvantaged is 74.9 percent.

The pre-k classroom has 16 students. One student has an IEP. The students are 4 and 5 years old. There are 5 boys and 11 girls. Two of the students are Asian. Two students are Hispanic. Eleven of the students are African American.

Ashley Park has an afterschool program for students in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade named GEP. GEP is big on family engagement. They also provide opportunities for the students. The program also collaborates with the staff and community for resources.

Every student that attends GEP must have a home visit. Last year and past years, the program provided assistance to families for paying rent and/or bills. They had to discontinue the financial assistance due to the budget. GEP helps families obtain their GED and job placement. They partner with Central Piedmont Community College. The program provides opportunities for the student and their families to attend a variety of outings.

GEP helps the students with their homework. They provide snack to the students after school. Students are able to attend free field trips such as Hornets basketball games. The staff from GEP collaborates with the teachers to assist students having challenges. They also work with different companies such as Nike to provide resources to the students and their families.

Ashley Park has a high homeless population. Another program at Ashely Park is a Child's Place. Child's Place helps students and their families that are homeless. They help create plans to keep the students in school and promote academic success. The program assists with

making sure the student's basic needs are met. Social workers are also involved to assist with employment, health issues, food, domestic violence, financial management, and housing.

Ashley Park offers sports to the middle school students. They offer football, cheerleading, volleyball, softball, basketball, track and field, baseball, and soccer. The school also has the program Girls on the Run. The students must meet the qualifications to be a part of the programs.

## **Unit Goals**

Books that display examples of privilege, race, giving different advantages, fairness, equal opportunities, and examples of different races being the same but being treated equal will be read to the students. The books will be age appropriate for 4- and 5-year olds. Each book will be read three times to give the students a clear understanding of the story and the teacher to push in examples of white privilege. The first and second read aloud will be during whole group and third read aloud will be in small groups. The students will have opportunities to share out their opinions and interpretations of the book. Students will also share how they think the characters feel and what do they think would be fair.

The goal of the unit is teaching the students concepts of privilege and how privilege make others feel. They will also be exposed to literature that is age appropriate and have rich vocabulary to expose students to new words. The unit will also enhance the student's comprehension skills and critical thinking skills.

## **Content Research**

White privilege allows white people to have certain traits black people don't have. White people are seen as good or harmless people while black people are seen as rule breakers. Because white people are seen as harmless, they can have excuses that are okay and black people can be seen the opposite in the same situations (Sullivan 2019: 7, 13). The stereotype for black boys by the fourth grade is sometimes they are lazy and uneducable. White Teachers Role in Sustaining the School to Prison Pipeline: Recommendations for Teacher Education (Bryan 2017: 326-345) Black students are suspended more than white students for similar things. A news article from the Washington Post discussed how black students receive worst discipline than their white peers (Strauss 2018). The article explains due to stereotypes and bias teachers are making inferences on the students' actions by race. This is an example of how white privilege is affecting black students in school. Skiba et. al. (2016) explain that in the 2011-2012 school year students of color were suspended three times more than their white peers. The book also explains that black students are more likely to be institutionalized compared to their white peers. These are examples of how white privilege takes place within the school systems. The question of fairness arises. Is it fair for a black and a white student to do the same action, but due to white privilege the same action is viewed different for a white student? Pre-K children can learn about fairness. They are not developmental ready to understand at a larger context how same actions can be viewed different in black people compared to white people, but they can understand through literature what is fair and what is not fair. They can also learn differences among how people are treated differently without putting the emphasis on black or white. Educating white and black

teachers about the difference may bring light to what teachers are unconsciously doing, which may have an effect on how the black students' behaviors are viewed.

White fragility plays a role in white privilege. People that are white have a state of racial comfort, so when they are in situations that cause racial discomfort, they have a difficult time dealing with it. The difficulty of white people to deal with racial stress is due to segregation. Because white people are typically in environments that are dominated by whiteness, they do not learn and don't have the capability to deal with racism. They are raised in schools and neighborhoods that are predominately white so they don't learn how to deal with the viewpoints of people of color. They are also taught not to care about being around people of color, because where they live and the schools they go to are considered good. The article "White Fragility" explains how white people label them good as there are no people of color in those environments. The idea of whites being segregated from black people directly affects education. Schools give white children stereotypes about black children and those children grow up to be teachers teaching black children they have these stereotypes about. In addition to growing up learning stereotypes about black children, they attend a teacher college programs that reinforce stereotypes and bias about children of color. These stereotypes affect their relationships with black children and how they discipline the students of color (DiAngelo 2011). The article "White Teachers Role in Sustaining the School to Prison Pipeline: Recommendations for Teacher Education (Bryan 2017) explains that teachers in schools are sometimes white teaching black children and working with black families. It can be difficult for the teachers and students. The teachers have to learn how to interact in an environment with black people when they have little to no exposure to the black community. With little exposure to people of color this can cause problems to arise in classrooms.

White privilege also comes into play with attempting to become a teacher. To become a teacher, college students not only need to receive a degree, they also are required to pass a test—a test that is racially biased. The praxis test is the test teachers need to pass to teach in the classroom. The test is described as being biased for black people. The test is designed for people who have been exposed to "white experiences" (Bryan 2017). White female children have a high chance of growing up and becoming teachers that will teach black children.

Bryan (2017) points out that a lot of teachers are white and the issues that arise when white teachers are teaching black boys. White teachers as a result can dehumanize children of color. They can unnecessary discipline black children. As a result, children of color can feel isolated from the school system. The article gives recommendations to help white teachers overcome their stereotypes about black children. It suggests that teachers take courses about educating African Americans and this might help decrease discipline practices that are bias. Teacher programs should focus less on studying children of color because that can reinforce stereotypes and more on decreasing the bias and stereotypes.

Black students starting from early education have issues in education due to culture bias, racism and classism. They are put in special education and/or labeled as behavior and emotional issues. A lot of black children are already 2 to 3 reading levels behind their white peers by kindergarten. These educational setbacks increase black boys' chances of ending up in prison or not completing school. (Bryan 2017)

Although black people are the main people working on racial justice, white people can help. This is extremely important when teaching at schools like Ashley Park that are

predominately attended by black students. In addition to the students' being black, a lot of them are from low income households. Black and white teachers need to be a part of promoting racial justice (Sullivan 2014: 2-3).

Black children are suspended more than white children, which leads to an increase in chances they will be in the criminal justice system. When black children go through the criminal justice system the unfairness continues. Black children that are only 13 years old get sentenced to life for crimes that do not include taking someone's life. Compared to white children, black people are 22 times more likely to get the death penalty if they kill a white person than if they kill a black person. This another example of how it is a privilege to be white. (Stevenson 2019)

When comparing schools in Charlotte, North Carolina, demographics show the segregation of schools. The article "Racial breakdowns highlight school differences and CMS challenges" (Helms 2015) discusses the demographics of Mecklenburg schools. The article discusses above half of black and Hispanic children are going to schools that 90 percent of the children in their class are not white and are living in high poverty. Out of the 168 schools, 39 of them have mainly white students enrolled. When schools have high poverty in the school, it is harder to find good teachers. The schools that have higher enrollment of white students have higher levels of students proficient in reading, teachers with higher degrees, and national board-certified teachers. A school in Mecklenburg County has 52 percent white students, 20 percent Asian students, 16 percent black students, and 10 percent Hispanic students 83 percent of the students are proficient in reading, 100 percent of the teachers are certified, and 81 percent of the teachers have more than 3 years experience. Another school in Mecklenburg county that is 84 percent black, 7 percent Asian, 7 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent white has 25 percent of the students proficient in reading, 100 percent of certified teachers, and 75 percent of the teachers have taught more than 3 years. The data on both schools' reading levels also is dramatically different. (Great Schools n.d.)

There are different ways white people can approach helping out with racial justice. White people can help with the de facto segregation of places such as school systems and neighborhoods. White people can use their voice to speak up against the schools that are de facto segregation. Teachers that are teaching at schools like Ashley Park that are mostly black, can advocate for making the schools more diverse (Sullivan 2014: 2-3).

The article "Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person" explains that part of white privilege is seeing your race a lot when simply turning on the tv or reading the newspaper. (Crosley-Corcoran 2014) The article Challenge of the culture club: A lack of representation of black and minority-ethnic cultures in early years books-which can deter children from those backgrounds from reading -is a concern to parents, discusses how books that reflect people of color are challenging. Books that include black children culture are difficult to find and expensive. The article describes a large book stores as having plenty of children books that have white children in it and even animals in it, but very few books with black children and about their culture. White privilege begins from birth. They have access to tons of books that have people in it that look like them, and black children have access to very few. In addition to black children having little access to books that reflect their culture they are expensive. A school that has PR predominately African Americans that are coming from low income household have a lesser opportunity to have books in their household that reflects them. With the books being

more expensive that makes it even harder for the families to have access to the books. (Dennys 2016)

A study done by Dean Cristol and Belinda Gimbert (2008) examines how to decrease racist impressions and attitudes in young children. The article discussed a study that researched children ages 5-6 and 8-9 cognition of stereotypes. The research showed the children as young as five had knowledge of stereotyping. That research along with other research demonstrates children as young as 3 have ethnic attitudes and have racial prejudices that are systematic. The article also discussed other research that showed children attitudes and perceptions can be changed with access to ethnicities and curriculum that is appropriate. Another study discussed in the article found that 5 and 6-year-old children had their own beliefs and knowledge about stereotyping for black skin. Cristol and Gimbert concluded that it is important to expose children young children to curriculums that can decrease prejudice. The students I work with fall into the group that research has shown already has knowledge of stereotyping. Through the activities the students will have exposure to books that explain the negativity of stereotyping and how treating people different because of stereotyping can hurt them. (Cristol and Gimbert 2008)

The article “The Use of Multicultural Curricula and Materials to Counter Racism in Children” (Bigler 1999) discusses recommendations for using multicultural to reduce racism in children. One recommendation discussed is from the bookkeeping model. The bookkeeping model suggest exposing students to things that contradict stereotypes. When the students are exposed to things that are different from the stereotype there should be a large decrease in the students’ attitudes and beliefs about that stereotype. Through the literature in the activities, I will provide the students will be exposed to a variety of people from different races that have different skills.

## **Teaching Strategies**

Here is a list of strategies that can be used throughout the unit.

- Visuals and Examples: Throughout the unit the students will be exposed to a lot of vocabulary words. Use visuals to explain the vocabulary. Give examples of the vocabulary that the students can make connections with.
- Push in Vocabulary and Concepts: While the students are engaged in different activities that are related to the vocabulary discuss the concepts and vocabulary with them. Help them recall the concepts and vocabulary words.
- Questioning: Ask the students questions that will give them opportunities to explore their feelings about the concept, the vocabulary introduced, and recall events from the story
- Model: Model how to use the vocabulary and the materials
- Hand Over Hand: Use hand over hand for students who need assistance with using the writing materials
- Extra read alouds: Students having a difficulty picking up the vocabulary or understanding the story, pull them in groups of 1 to 3 and read the story to them and reinforce the vocabulary and details in the story.

## Activities for the unit

### 1. Color of Me

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is for the students to become aware of people have different skin tones, hold a writing utensil, and retell details from a story.

Objectives:

- Begins to recognize and appreciate similarities and differences in people
- Demonstrates knowledge about self
- Uses language to express thoughts and needs: Uses expanding expressive vocabulary, speaks clearly,
- Demonstrates Knowledge of print and its uses: Uses and appreciates books
- Uses writing and drawing tool.

Procedure: Introduce the book *The Color of Us*. Ask the students to predict what they think the book is about. Read the book *The Color of Us*. Throughout the book, comment on the different shades they can use to make people. Introduce the multicultural paper, multicultural crayons, and multicultural markers. Discuss the different shades of paper. Explain they will be creating a self-portrait. Show examples of self-portrait. Model how to draw a self-portrait on large chart paper. After the students finish their self-portrait they will share it will the class. See Appendix 2 for sample self-portraits.

Vocabulary: Shades, multi-cultural, self-portrait, and skin tones.

### 2. *Lightness in Darkness A Story about How Slaves Learned to Read in Secret*

Purpose: The purpose of the activity is for the students to identify emotions of people. Students will also be introduced to the word privilege.

Objectives

- Uses language to express thoughts and needs: Uses expanding expressive vocabulary, speaks clearly,
- Demonstrates Knowledge of print and its uses: Uses and appreciates books
- Comprehends and responds to books and other text: Interacts during read-alouds and book conversations, uses emergent reading skills, and retell stories

Procedures: Introduce the book *Lightness in Darkness A story about How slaves learned to read in secret*. Explain the problem in the story. Give background information on a long time ago people could not learn to read because of their skin tone. Recall the book *Color of Me* and discusses how the people are different shades. Explain privilege is when you are able to something, get treated a special way or get something others can't get. Sometimes people get privilege because of the shade of their skin. Read the story and comment on how the people are sneaking around to learn how to read. Comment on if they were a different shade they would be able to learn how to read and would not have to sneak around to read. After the story ask, how do you think they felt about not being able to read because of their skin tone? Model answering

the questions in a complete sentence. Students who have difficulty coming up with an emotion give them choices of emotions. After reading the story create an emotion dice the pictures are located in appendix 2. Have the students take turns rolling the dice and identifying the emotion. See Appendix 3 for emotion dice materials and sources.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Read

Procedures: Show the class the cover of the book *Lightness in Darkness* A story about How Slaves learned to read in secret. Ask the students to recall the title and problem in the story. Read the story. While reading the story, discuss the characters in the story that can learn to read and push in the word privilege. Discuss the fairness of characters who have to sneak and read. After the story ask, what were the people in the story trying to learn, how did they learn to read, do you think it's fair they could not learn to read because of the shade of their skin? Review what privilege means, and ask who in the story was privilege to learn to read? Ask, why may Rosa have been angry. After the second read of the story move the story to the library area and do the third read and small groups with the students. While doing the reading in small groups encourage the students to share their thoughts on the fairness and privilege in the story.

### 3. *Privileged with Shoes* first read

Objectives:

- Uses language to express thoughts and needs: Uses expanding expressive vocabulary, speaks clearly,
- Demonstrates Knowledge of print and it's uses: Uses and appreciates books
- Comprehends and responds to books and other text: Interacts during read-alouds and book conversations, uses emergent reading skills, and retell stories

Purpose: The purpose of the activity is to identify characters emotions in situation of privilege, answer questions about a story, and obtain a better concept of the word privilege.

Procedure: Introduce the story *New Shoes*. Review the title, author, illustrator. Discuss the problem in the story. Inform the students the reason they have the problem is because of the shade of their skin. Read the story. During story comment on the privilege, characters emotions, and fairness. Explain vocabulary using gestures and pointing to pictures. After the story, ask what was the problem and how did they solve the problem. Ask what was not fair in the story and how do you think they felt.

#### Privileged with Shoes part 2

Purpose: The purpose of the activity is to retell details from a story, identify characters emotions in situations of privilege, answers questions about a story, and identify privilege amongst people.

Procedure: Show the cover of *New Shoes* and ask the students to recall the title of the story. Ask the students to recall the problem in the story and how they solved the problem. Read the story. While reading the story pause and ask the student who is privileged and why, how do the characters respond to the problem, and how the characters feel. After the story, ask, how was the character in the shoe store privileged, how do you think she felt when she could not receive the same privilege. Pull out the emotion dice. Have the student roll the dice, identify the emotion,



and who in the story felt that emotion. Students have difficulties show pictures and give choices. Put the story in library area and read the story a third time in small groups. While in smaller groups allow the students to share their feelings on the topic.

Vocabulary: fair, shades, privilege, patients, coins, polish

**Assessment**

At the Pre-K level, assessment is conducted by writing notes on what the children say during activities, using a chart such as the one below:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Child's Name</b>	<b>Notes</b>

Checklist for Objective: Using drawing and Writing tool

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Uses whole Hand movement</b>	<b>Partial Three pint Finger Grip</b>	<b>Three point finger grip</b>

Assessment sheet for comprehends stories and ask and answers questions about books:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Questions Asked</b>	<b>Students Response</b>

## Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

### Teaching Strategies Gold

#### Social Emotional

- Establishes and sustains positive relationships: Responds to emotional cues, interacts with peers, and makes friends
- Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations: Balances needs and rights of self and others and solves social problems

#### Language

- Uses language to express thoughts and needs: Uses expanding expressive vocabulary, speaks clearly,
- Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills: Engages in conversations

#### Literacy

- Demonstrates Knowledge of print and it's uses: Uses and appreciates books
- Comprehends and responds to books and other text: Interacts during read-alouds and book conversations, Uses emergent reading skills, and retell stories

#### Social Studies:

- Begins to recognize and appreciate similarities and differences in people
- Demonstrates knowledge about self

## Appendix 2

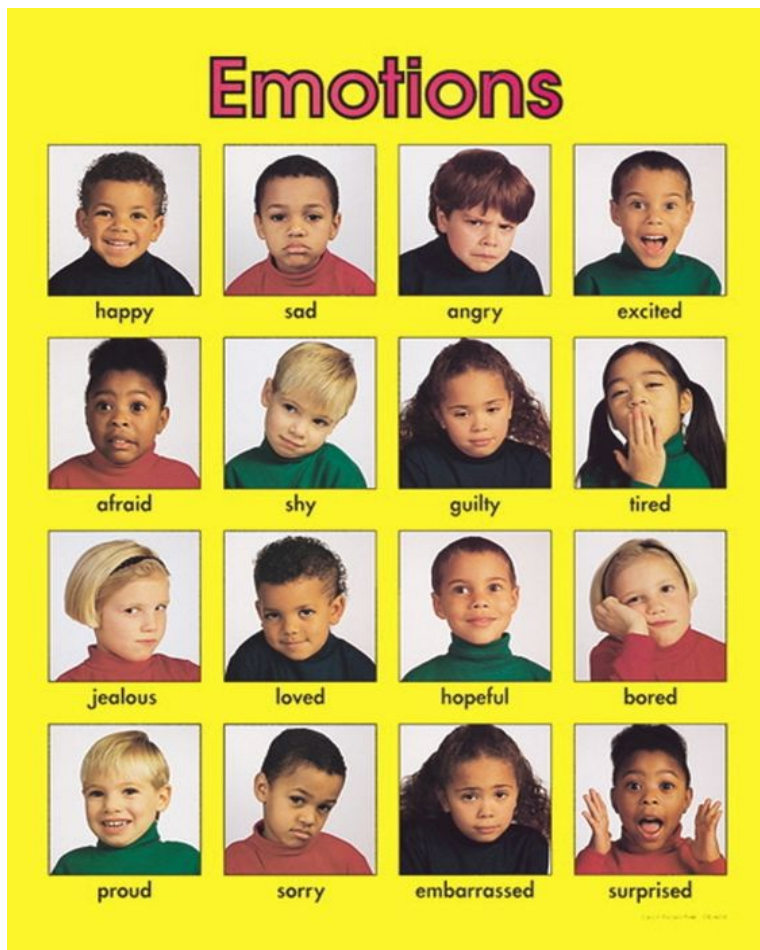
### Examples of Self -Portraits



## Appendix 3

### Emotion Dice Pictures

Cut out a six different pictures and glue it to the dice or make a dice. Directions for creating a paper dice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUws412hdjo>



Pictures for Emotion Dice: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/378724649893322859/>

## Teacher Resources

Books that give opportunities to teach students about privilege, race, fairness:

- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018.  
The book discusses different ways people are different. They give examples such as language. This is a good book to push in while doing self- portrait.
- *The Skin You Live In* by Tyler Michael Csicko and David Lee. Chicago Children’s Museum, 2013.  
This book discusses the differences in skin and being comfortable. This is a good book to connect with self-portraits.
- *I am Human* by Susan Verde. Abrams, 2018.  
This book touches on diversity and goes well with the self-portraits.
- *It’s Okay to Be Different* by Todd. Little, Brown & Co., 2001.  
This book touches on diversity and goes well with the self-portraits.
- *Malcolm Little* by Llyasah Shabazz. Atheneum Books, 2014.  
This book gives examples of privilege and can help students learn the concept.
- *Soccer Fence* by Phil Bildner. Penguin, 2014.  
This book gives examples of privilege and can help push in the concept of privilege.
- *Black White Just Right* by Marguerite W. Davol, Irene Trivas. Albert Whitman & Company, 1993.  
This book touches on diversity and goes well with the self-portraits.

## **Student Resources**

Materials: Multicultural paper, multicultural crayons and markers, examples of self portraits

Examples of Self Portraits: <https://www.deepspacesparkle.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/kinder-gallery1.jpg>

Discuss the different shades of people while discussing the portraits

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