

Cultural Awareness Activities

Skin-Color Match-Ups

Set out a number of nylon knee-high stockings in various shades, tan, black, white, pink, yellow, and red. Encourage children to try them on their hands and arms or their legs and feet. Ask questions to help the children increase their awareness of skin color. For example, "Can you find a stocking that is the same color as your skin?" Or "What color is that stocking you have on your arm?" Ask the children to "Try the _____ stocking. Is it lighter or darker than your own skin?" Tell the children no one's skin color is really white, pink, yellow, or red. Emphasize that skin-color differences are interesting and desirable.

Hair Comparison Activity

Ask parents to give you a tiny bit of hair from each child. If parents cannot do this, use photographs of different hairstyles and hair-care products for the children to use, explore, and talk about. If parents do give you the hair, paste the hair from each child on a 3" x 5" index card, put them in a box, and ask the children to identify each bit of hair. Talk about how hair has texture and curl. For instance, some people have fine hair while others have coarse hair. Some people have straight hair, and others have curly hair. Talk about how people have different hair colors and lengths. Take a photo of each child's face and make a collage of different hairstyles.

Alike and Different (Thumbprints)

Set out white 3" x 5" cards, a black ink pad, a pen, and a magnifying glass. Ask the children to make prints of their thumbs by pressing them on the ink pad and then on the cards. Label each print with the child's name. Let children use the magnifying glass to see how the prints are alike and different. Point out that everyone has patterns on the skin of their fingers and each person's fingerprints are different from anyone else's.

Proverbs and Traditions

Ask children to talk with their families about sayings that are common in their culture or traditions that they have in their families. Choose one broad topic, such as love, birthdays, holidays, or time. Chart the responses to see how different cultures express similar ideas.

Grandparents

Children might also be fascinated to compare the different names they use for their grandparents (Williams, 1989). Listen and watch for children's comments that can lead to discoveries about each other

Family Tree Craft

A family tree craft is an excellent way for children to understand how different cultures may be found within their own families. If you have a multicultural classroom, this can become a great show and tell activity. Simply ask the children to take home a preprinted family tree, and enlist the parents' help in filling out the names of grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on, as well as their places of birth.

If you do not have a lot of diversity in your classroom, ask children to discuss their last names with their parents to trace their roots. Some children may discover that distant ancestors came to the United States from Ireland, Germany, England, Spain or other countries. Incorporate these distant ancestors into the family tree; if you cannot get names, you may use the country flags. Plan a trip to the library, and help each child to find out more about their distant relatives' countries.

Egg Breaking Activity

Have different colored eggs. Touch them talk about the colors and textures. Then crack the eggs in a bowl and look at the inside and talk about how all of the insides look the same and have the same components

I Am Different

Materials:

Just fingers.

Description:

This is a fingerplay to do with children during circle time.

I am different from my head to my toes
(point to self then to head and toes)

I am different from my eyes to my nose
(point to self then eyes and nose)

I come from a place that is far and wide
(point to self then spread arms wide open)

A place where we all smile instead of cry
(act like you are tracing your lips into a smile
and bring hands down eyes as if you were crying)

I am very different as you can see
(point to self then at a friend)

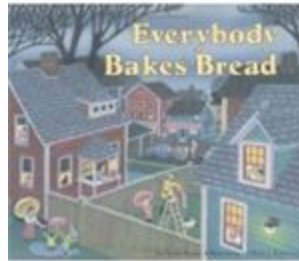
But I still have a lot of love in me!
(point to self place hand over the heart
then hug yourself)

My Family Heritage: Preschool Activity

written by: Patricia Gable • edited by: Tania Cowling • updated: 12/8/2014

Are you Greek? Mexican? Irish? Did your great-grandparents come from Poland? China? Learning about our heritage in the early childhood classroom can be a fun event! Each child can say, "This is my family heritage." We are all unique and special.

With the onset of computer technology, it has become a popular activity for many to



investigate their family trees. Family heritage is a wonderful topic to use in your preschool classroom when children find out about their families and realize their uniqueness. It can build self-esteem in every student as they share "My Family Heritage" to their classmates. It can also be used to celebrate the differences in people and build tolerance of those who are different. Studying heritage in the early childhood classroom can get families involved in a good way!

Here are the materials you'll need:

World map on a bulletin board near your story-time area.

Push pins

World globe

Book: Everybody Bakes Bread by Norah Dooley

Let's Begin!

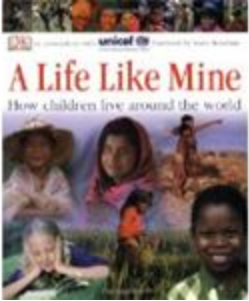
Explain to your students that a world map is like a globe flattened out. Show where you live on both the globe and the map.

Read the book *Everybody Bakes Bread*. This is a story about a young girl who is restless at home on a rainy day. Her mother sends her on an errand, which takes her to the homes of several neighbors. In each home, she tastes baked goods from other countries and cultures. As you read the story, mark the places on the map where these recipes originated: Italy (Europe), Barbados (West Indies), India (mid East) South Carolina (Eastern U.S.), Lebanon (Mid East), Israel (Mid East) El Salvador (Central America)

Then discuss with the children that each of them have ancestors (grandparents, etc.) that have come from other places. You may have students that say things like, "I'm Italian!" or "I'm Irish."

Explain that people [learn skills and customs](#) from their cultural heritage, passing it down through the family. People may seem different because of how they dress, what they eat and how they [celebrate holidays](#). Give some examples of how your family heritage has influenced you.

Family Information



Tell students that their jobs will be to find out what countries their relatives came from.

Use a letter to send home with your students that explains the lesson and what you would like the student to bring to school. Here is a link for a letter that you can download: [Letter to Parents](#)

On the designated day, each child can share the information and, with your help, put a pin on the map. As a resource, if available at your library, use the book called [A Life Like Mine](#) (published in association with UNICEF). It provides pictures and information about children in 17 different countries, showing schools, games, food and homes.

Extension Ideas

To further extend the lesson, try one of these ideas:

1. Provide examples of food from different countries.
2. Invite a few relatives of the students to come and give a brief talk about their culture. Allow time for questions from students.
3. Provide music of other countries. The local library may be a good resource.
4. Include some other good books:

[Grandfather's Journey](#) by Allen Say

My Great Grandpa by Martin Waddell

Grandma Francisca Remembers by Ann Morris

Loving (Around the World Series) by Ann Morris

Discussing family heritage in the early childhood classroom can be such fun. Each child will learn "My Family Heritage" and understand what makes them unique. Hopefully each will learn acceptance of those who are different because we are all special in some way.