

# *A Teachable Moment*



**What are your beliefs and values and the values you want to see in your children? A Teachable Moment** is a tool to help you begin some conversations about “hot button” topics and give you some ideas of how to respond to your children when questions come up. - Parent Diversity Support Team PDST- **January 2013**

**The Meridian School**  
Fostering an  
inclusive community

## How do we talk with children about discrimination?

**Our Teachable Moment:** On January 25<sup>th</sup> at our Friday Morning Meeting, storyteller Kahya Alexander shared her personal story growing up in the South during the Civil Rights Movement. She said that she will always remember the day that President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act and how her life started changing. She was able to attend an integrated school and go in the same pool with white kids. She had a good experience at the integrated school and white people were nice to her, but she couldn't understand why she saw in the news other white people being so upset for these changes.

Kids celebrate MLK Jr. every year and they read books and see pictures, but hearing a personal story brought history to them on a different level. Faculty and students followed up with reflections and conversations in the classrooms. With this program, we hope to promote **a healthy learning community that understands fairness and embraces differences with respect and empathy.** Below are some teachings, ideas and questions we invite you to explore with your child:

### Points to consider:

- Prepare yourself and be a role model. Be intentional in your everyday life about the messages you want your child to receive from you about what it means to treat people with dignity and respect and how to be in the world. Start with your own personal journey towards cultural competency.
- Talk with your child about the importance of not manifesting the same behaviors they don't like in the other person when responding to bias. Teach him/her to avoid labeling and name calling. Describe the behavior; don't label the person.
- Step up and interrupt bias when you hear or see it.
- Find an ally/be an ally.

### ➤ **Discrimination is unfair and wrong:**

- Have you ever felt excluded? How do you feel when you include others in your play?
- How can we learn from history so we don't make the same mistakes? What was segregation? What is integration?
- What is discrimination? How would you feel if you experience discrimination because you were born with blue, green or brown eyes? Or because you are a boy or a girl?
- How can you stand up for yourself and others when you experience or see something that is unfair?

### ➤ **Our beliefs affect our actions:**

- What is fairness? When you believe that something is wrong, you can do something about it.
- Although many white people grew up believing that segregation was “normal” many others didn't agree with segregation. They helped African Americans to change unfair laws and over time change beliefs about what is fair. Our laws are changing, but there is still unfairness in our system. We need to continue to **learn, question, act.**
- In addition to MLK, many other people were heroes who believed in the Civil Rights Movement. They stood up for themselves and for others.

**CONTINUED ON REVERSE.....**

## ➤ We shouldn't judge or stereotype people based on how they look:

Intentionally provide a **counter-narrative** in order to break stereotypes:

- Talk about what is a stereotype and how it hurts people.
- Talk about the beauty and strengths of diverse groups of people including your own culture and heritage.
- Provide your children with books, movies and other media that reflect racial diversity in positives ways.
- Teach critical thinking whenever possible and create awareness by discussing how media reinforces stereotypes of different groups of people. How are different groups of people portrayed in the media?

## Resources from Cultures Connecting, LLC:

### Children's Books:

- ⇒ Annushka's Voage (Immigration/Ellis Island) Tarbescu, E.
- ⇒ Baseball Saved Us (Japanese American) Mochizuki, K.
- ⇒ Black, White, Just Right! (Multiracial) Davol, M.
- ⇒ Brown Like Me (Multiracial) Lamperti, N.
- ⇒ Fiesta Femenina: Celebrating Women in Mexican Folktale (Mexican) Gerson, M-J.
- ⇒ Grandpa, is Everything Black Bad? (African American) Holman, S.
- ⇒ ¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can! Janitor Strike in L.A. (Mexican American) Cohn, D.
- ⇒ Locomotion (African American) Woodson, J.
- ⇒ Maple Moon (Native American) Crook, Connie B. & Cameron, S.
- ⇒ Mrs. Katz and Tush (Jewish & African American) Polacco, P.
- ⇒ My Bar Mitzvah (Jewish) Rosenblum, R.
- ⇒ Sami and Time of Troubles (Lebanon) Heide, Francis P. & Gilliland, Judith H.
- ⇒ The Color of Us (African American) Katz, K.
- ⇒ The Mud Pony (Native American) Cohen, Caron L.
- ⇒ The Streets are Free (Latino) Kurusa.
- ⇒ The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963 (African American) Curtis, C.P.
- ⇒ Trevor's Story: Growing up Biracial (Multiracial) Kendal, B., and C. Halebian.
- ⇒ Two Mrs. Gibsons (Multiracial) Igus, Toyomi
- ⇒ When Jessie Came Across the Sea (Jewish Immigration) Hest, A.
- ⇒ You Be Me, I'll Be You (Multiracial) Mandelbaum,

### Adult Books:

- ⇒ Bender, D., and B. Leone, eds. (1996) Interracial America: Opposing Viewpoints. San Diego, CA: Greenhouse, Press.
- ⇒ Bolgatz, J., (2005). Talking Race in the Classroom. New York: Teacher College Press.
- ⇒ M.P.P. Root, ed., (1996). The Multiracial Experience. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- ⇒ Nakazawa, D.J. Does Anybody Else Look Like Me? A Parent's Guide to Raising Multiracial Children
- ⇒ Obidah, J. & Teel, K. (2001). Because of the Kids: Facing Racial and Cultural Differences in Schools. NY: Teacher College Press.
- ⇒ Steele, C.M. (2010) Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us. New York. Norton & Company.
- ⇒ Takaki, R. (1993). A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co.
- ⇒ Tatum, B. (1997). Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? New York: BasicBooks
- ⇒ Van Ausdale, D. and Feagin, J. (2001) The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism. New York: Rowman and Littlefield,

### Websites:

Cultures Connecting, LLC [www.culturesconnecting.com](http://www.culturesconnecting.com).

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry [http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/multiracial\\_children](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/multiracial_children)

The Free Library <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/%22What+are+you%3F%22+Biracial+children+in+the+classroom.-a0178631599>

A World of Difference Institute <http://www.adl.org/bibliography/default.asp?whichCat=2&whichSubCat=13>

The Mixed Race Experience [www.mavinfoundation.org](http://www.mavinfoundation.org)

The Association of Multi Ethnic Americans [www.ameasite.org](http://www.ameasite.org)

Diversity Inc. - <http://www.diversityinc.com>

Students and Teachers against Racism <http://www.racismagainstindians.org>

Rethinking Schools <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml>

Teaching Tolerance <http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp>

This document was created by The Parent Diversity Support Team with the help of members of the staff and parent community. For this issue we also use resources from Cultures Connecting, LLC. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Yaneth Vrentas. [yvrentas@meridianschool.edu](mailto:yvrentas@meridianschool.edu)