

# They're not too young to talk about race!



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At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies prefer to look at faces of their own race. (Kelly et al., 2005)

Children as young as two years use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008)

By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008)

By five, Black and Hispanic children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al., 2008)

By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold—they have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016)

Explicit conversations with 5–7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. **Silence about race reinforces racism** by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—but only if we talk about it!

**Do some learning of your own** to get ready for conversations with children.

Here are some good places to start:

- Raising Race Conscious Children — [raceconscious.org](http://raceconscious.org)
- Teaching Tolerance — [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org)
- Embrace Race — [embrace-race.org](http://embrace-race.org)
- Teaching for Change — [teachingforchange.org](http://teachingforchange.org)

