

Mirrors and Windows

Diverse and Culturally Responsive Books Matter in Early Childhood



Children's books help shape what children think about themselves, their peers, and the world around them. What children see – and do not see – in books can have a lasting impression on their values, attitudes, and actions.

Diverse and culturally responsive books have stories, images, and characters that accurately reflect and affirm a diverse range of identities, allowing children to see themselves and their world. These books provide children with *mirrors* of their own lives and experiences, as well as *windows* into the lives and experiences of other people.

For children of color, particularly from Black and Brown communities, books that are *mirrors* can make a positive impact on their racial identity formation, self-worth, and belonging. For all children, books that are *windows* can increase empathy, acceptance, and inclusivity.

It is never too soon to start reading diverse and culturally responsive books to young children. Children become aware of race-based differences starting in infancy and can express racial bias by the time they are in preschool.

Books have the power to be a catalyst for discussing race and racism and promoting equity and inclusion with young children. By ensuring children have access to these books from the start, we can help interrupt persistent inequality in our society.

Reach Out and Read as a Leader

Reach Out and Read serves **4.2 million** children across the country and provides 6.6 million books each year. We have a national network of **33,000 pediatric providers** at **6,000** sites in all **50 states**. Our model has the potential to reach 91% of all children under age 5 through well-child visits, beginning at birth.

With our near-universal reach and the size of our network, we can play a significant leadership role in expanding access to diverse and culturally responsive books for families across the country. Families place deep trust in our pediatric providers, presenting us with a powerful opportunity to teach them about the importance of reading diverse and culturally responsive books together.

