

# Primary school children should be educated on racism

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Imagine, you and your friends sitting in your primary school classroom. Everyone is completing their own work when a student raises their hand to inform the teacher that their notebook has been stolen. All eyes fall on you. This was the reality for Danny, an aboriginal boy who faced racism in throughout his primary school life. Danny vividly remembers that ‘ In primary school when anything went missing or stolen – who do you think got the blame? Every single time, from such an early age, me and the two other Indigenous kids would always be taken aside and asked if we were the ones that stole it imagine being the one to be constantly picked on and blamed I’m now 41-years-old and still to this day when things go missing, I get anxious because I was always the first one to blame.’ Middle school kids in Florida are were given a test full of racist stereotypes, second graders in LA were given a math problem asking them to count slaves needed in cotton fields, where three African-American kids were asked for the answer by other students. These remarks of racism are no longer isolated instances in primary school-aged children and highlight the concern and need for primary school children to be educated on racism.

A study conducted by the University of Melbourne found that prejudice in children can begin as early as 3 years old. Actions and words often learned by those around them, children are at their most vulnerable in their primary school years. By fostering an environment where children believe that racial slurs and actions are the social norms, they risk believing their actions will be accepted by wider society. Furthermore, the Department of Education revealed that ‘ the number of primary school children being suspended for racist behaviour has risen by a third in the past few years, from 430

incidents in 2014-15 compared with 320 in 2009-10.' Schools should be fostering an environment where programs are taught about accepting different races, religions and genders, and diminish. These programs may include multicultural days, where all students can learn and share their races to other children in a fun and hands-on way. By educating primary school-aged children about racism from an early age and being involved with their peers from different nationalities, it also has positive effects on children.

By constructing a positive and knowledgeable cultural identity is also achieving one of a Third World child's major development tasks. Children must be guided to advance their development of understanding racial issues. A study by Louise Derman-Sparks believes this can be done by fostering an 'accurate knowledge and pride about one's racial/cultural identity; accurate knowledge and appreciation of other racial groups; and an understanding of how racism works and how to combat it'. Children are at a vital stage of their development in primary school and this process is required early in their lives. Children need guidance while they move into a new period of cognitive development and at this age, they show a wider interest in racial and national identity. During their primary school age, and kids are finding their own identity, by fostering an environment about accepting different races and their own, primary schools have the opportunity to create accurate knowledge to foster young kids understanding of the wider world.

Individuals may argue that racism may never truly be eradicated from our lives as we as humans are accustomed to notice differences within each other. However numerous studies have shown that when kids are in their

primary school years, they are accustomed to listening to their peers and teachers. By beginning knowledge of accurate facts and accepting different races it will minimise the impacts into the future. Children need to be allowed to ask questions relating to race and need help forming correct opinions for the future. We may not be able to fully eradicate racism in our world, but small steps can be taken. By introducing activities and fostering positive talk about different races, we are taking a positive step into the future.

Racism impacts everyone. From young kids to adults, comments, slurs and actions can stay with an individual for their lives. By fostering positive connotations to accepting a variety of nationalities and teaching primary school aged children helps to begin the eradication of racism in our society. Kids are the new society, and we have an opportunity to foster a new environment in society. Racism is never okay. Remarks of racism are never okay. Acts of racism are never okay. Children need to be educated on racism during the most influential parts of their lives. For now and into the future, they will make the biggest difference.