

Re: Power On K-2 Example Letter for Families (Revise as Needed)

Greetings Parents and Guardians,

Today we read *Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race* By Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli, & Isabel Roxas. As the title suggests, it is about race and racism, with all of the big ideas and terms explained. Developed by experts in the fields of early childhood and activism against injustice, this text offers the opportunity to begin important conversations with young children about race and racism in an informed, safe, and supported way. It offers clear, concise language, child-friendly examples, and thoughtful supportive illustrations that young children can understand and easily make connections to their observations and experience and adults can leverage for further discussion. Please read a note from the author below:

Young children notice a lot—including skin color, race, and even injustice and racism. It can be hard to find the right words to answer their questions or to start a conversation about race. But when we don't talk about it, children often come to their own conclusions, which can include bias and stereotypes because of the world we live in. Simple conversations can help them make sense of their world and even recognize and speak up about injustice. This book is a good place to start or continue the conversation. It's okay to take a break, leave something out for now, or weave in stories of your own.

—Megan and Jessica



Megan Pamela Ruth Madison,
Trainer at the Center for
Racial Justice in Education



Jessica Ralli,
Early Literacy Programs
Coordinator at
Brooklyn Public Library



Isabel Roxas,
Illustrator and
Indie Publisher

Research shows that talking about issues like race and gender from the age of two not only helps children understand what they see, but also increases self-awareness, and self-esteem, and allows them to recognize and confront things that are unfair, like discrimination and prejudice. They offer wonderful suggestions on how to continue these conversations at home. I have attached their suggestions for discussing Family Diversity, Identity Terms, Racism, Empowerment & Activism with this letter. You can find suggestions for other ideas and terms, more resources, up-to-date information, and more ideas on [FirstConversations.com](https://www.firstconversations.com).

We will be continuing these important discussions as we start reading **POWER ON!**
By: Jean J. Ryoo and Jane Margolis. **POWER ON!** is a graphic novel about four friends that take a stand about the education they need, while learning about Computer Science (CS), equity and social justice issues in CS education, and how technology can be used for social good instead of harm. You can learn more about the text at poweronbook.com/.



At the end of this unit, students will be presenting their CS projects at a class showcase. I am looking forward to the amazing discussions, collaborations, and projects to come! Please feel free to explore the texts on the SORA App using the NYCstudents.net account login. If you have any questions or concerns after reviewing the texts, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions. Thank you for all you do!



FAMILY DIVERSITY

Young children often think that the way their family looks is the way all families look. Find regular opportunities to point out family diversity and different skin tones within families. Give examples using books, photos, or dolls during playtime.



IDENTITY TERMS

When we aren't used to talking about race, it can be hard to know where to start or what language to use, and words like *Black* and *white* may even seem like "bad words." They're not! Having accurate and appropriate language for social identity groups empowers children. Introduce identity terms during play or while reading books to help young children learn the language they need to describe themselves and to be comfortable with human differences.



RACISM

You have permission to talk to young children not just about diversity and differences, but also about injustice. Young children are already seeing, being impacted by, and perpetuating racism. As the grown-ups in their lives, we should not avoid topics that are confusing, scary, or sad. We need to help them understand and navigate those topics and feelings. Learn how to explain racism in your own words. This will help you find the right words to explain it to young children, and follow their lead when they have questions. Call out racism as it manifests in your own lives and continue to discuss this openly with your children. This will help them do the same as they grow. For more on ways to define and understand racism, visit our website.



EMPOWERMENT AND ACTIVISM

Young children learn more by watching what you do than from what you say about your beliefs. Racism is baked into the culture of the United States. In order to undo this system, we must actively participate in anti-racist efforts. There are so many different ways to get involved! Brainstorm ideas together, and start small in your community. For more ideas on ways to empower activism in young children, visit our website.

Visit **FirstConversations.com** for up-to-date information, support, and ideas!