Anti-Bias Building Blocks
An Elementary School Curriculum

GRADE LEVELS: Kindergarten and elementary school grade levels (K-5)

TOPICS: Communication, Respect, Identity, Differences, Bias, Bullying

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Language

Buy the Curriculum

It’s recommended to use the curriculum in conjunction with a training from your local ADL office.

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About the Elementary School Curriculum

During the elementary school years, the social and emotional development of young children is a core part of their school experience. We suggest making Anti-Bias Building Blocks a regular part of your weekly lesson plans. This anti-bias curriculum is divided into five instructional units. Each unit has lesson plans
grouped for Grades K-2 and for Grades 3–5. With twenty-five lesson plans for each grade level, it is ideal to do one lesson plan per week. The curriculum also connects with English Language Arts (ELA), social studies as well as other subject areas. An integrated approach to anti-bias education is significantly more powerful than tying it to one subject area.

**Anti-Bias Education**

Educational environments that reflect the rich diversity of the community, nation and world assist in opening young children's minds and actively engaging them in their own learning. Research has shown that prejudice is countered when schools and classrooms foster critical thinking, empathy development and positive self-esteem in young children.

*Anti-bias education* is a comprehensive approach to learning designed to actively challenge stereotyping, prejudice and all forms of discrimination. Creating inclusive, respectful classrooms where young children feel comfortable talking about difficult but important issues is an ongoing effort and working for social justice is a life-long endeavor. To prepare for successful learning of anti-bias concepts in the classroom, teachers should consider some criteria for creating positive, anti-bias environments where respect for diversity is taught, modeled and experienced firsthand.

With comprehensive anti-bias education, the mastery skills that participants acquire include the following:

- Children understand the various dimensions of identity and apply this understanding to their thinking and behavior.
- Children develop an understanding of basic terms and concepts relating to prejudice and discrimination and apply this understanding to their interactions with others.
- Children increase their understanding of the impact of culture on communication and apply this understanding to their interactions with others.

- Children develop the capacity to recognize and acknowledge bullying, prejudice and discrimination in themselves, in others and within institutions.

- Children develop and put into practice skills to challenge bullying, bias and discrimination in themselves and others.

**Overview of Units**

**Unit I: Creating a Safe and Comfortable Classroom Environment** provides lessons to build a solid foundation for the students' social and emotional skill development. The lessons help students feel safe in their classrooms, develop the skills to communicate effectively, gain a vocabulary for the different feelings that may emerge and learn how to work collaboratively in small and large groups.

**Unit II: Understanding My Strengths, Skills and Identity** provides lessons to build a strong sense of self in children, exploring the concepts of identity and differences. The lessons help students understand factors that shape their identity, acknowledge their likes and dislikes and reflect on the differences between themselves and their classmates.

**Unit III: Understanding and Appreciating Differences** provides lessons to explore students' cultural and other identities and differences so that they can learn to play and work together effectively. The lessons help students reflect on their own cultural identities, learn about the culture of others and understand when differences arise.

**Unit IV: Understanding Bias and Discrimination** provides lessons to create a viable and inclusive school and classroom climate by helping students understand bias
and discrimination. The lessons help students explore bullying, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (and the differences between those) and reflect on the cycle of inequality.

**Unit V: Confronting/Challenging Bias and Bullying** provides lessons to empower students to do something about the bias, discrimination and bullying they encounter. The lessons help students learn how to be an ally on an individual level and by working with others, explore social change movements over history and work on a social action project that improves their school and community.

**Anti-Bias Framework**

Each lesson plan in *Anti-Bias Building Blocks* has a core activity for young children, writing activities, children’s literature suggestions and fits within English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. Educators may find it useful to use specific lesson plans from a particular unit to support ongoing curricular content; however, we encourage the consideration of using the units sequentially. Each unit consists of 3–6 lesson plans. All of the lesson plans build upon the previous lessons/units and are highly interactive, modeling a participatory process that encourages young children to actively engage with issues that affect their classroom, school and community. As young children work together and share diverse perspectives and backgrounds, solving problems, brainstorming and discussing the material, they learn to communicate respectfully, cooperate and improve their critical thinking skills. Research indicates that all of these abilities are associated with decreased discriminatory behavior.

It’s recommended to use *Anti-Bias Building Blocks* in conjunction with a training from your local ADL office. This anti-bias training provides a framework for the curriculum’s use in the classroom. It also helps participants: (1) recognize bias and the harm it inflicts on individuals and society, (2) explore the value of diversity, and (3) improve intergroup relations and combat racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of prejudice and bigotry.

ADL offers half-day and full-day workshops.