

diversity equity & inclusion



Heading back to school each year ushers in a fresh start for children, families, and educators. There are new classmates, new classrooms, new dynamics, and new opportunities to engage with one another academically and socially. It is also natural to expect that children will need time to adequately adjust to their new Kids 'R' Kids settings, classrooms, teachers, and classmates. Our collective goal is to strive to lessen transition anxiety and make it a positive, inclusive, and encouraging experience.

At Kids 'R' Kids, our executive leadership team continues to work with Inclusent, a Diversity Equity and Inclusion firm, to create, cultivate, and evolve our culture, programs, and policies throughout our entire organization. We aim to not only recognize our differences but to acknowledge them, challenge outdated mindsets, and build upon our inclusion efforts and actions in our 2022-2023 school year and beyond. Many studies have shown that infants as young as six months categorize others by gender and race (Katz & Kofkin, 1997). As children get older, it is essential to allow them to ask questions, appropriately vocalize their observations, and engage in conversations about differences and what they see and experience in their classrooms.

All children should feel that they are in a safe space from the moment that they enter our academy doors each morning. They should know that they are entirely accepted and that they can bring their entire selves to school every day without fear or hesitation about how they will be treated or perceived. Their families should feel confident and trust that our Kids 'R' Kids classrooms are intentionally welcoming environments where all students can flourish intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically regardless of differences.

Educators should feel supported and encouraged to amplify their efforts to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive in all ways in their classrooms – from the first day through the last. As a component of our DEI strategy, each month, we offer live in-person or virtual webinar educational events, DEI lesson plans, and DEI Resource Guides that can be utilized as tools for in-classroom learning. We will continue to make these resources available to our educators to enhance their skills, techniques, and methods in their quest to help build children's self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-awareness. When children are introduced to different perspectives, we know that it can lead to positive learning outcomes, such as improving cognitive skills, preparing children for good citizenship and critical thinking, and promoting creativity. (The Century Foundation)

As we move forward into this new academic year, here are steps that can be taken to foster an environment that is more inclusive and creates a safe space for all children to learn and grow:

- Introduce simple diversity, equity, and inclusion concepts, like embracing differences and showing kindness. If possible, incorporate them into your classroom rules and reinforce them regularly.
- Ensure classroom resources, activities, and decorations represent diverse communities. This includes books, videos, discussion topics, pictures, and assignments.
- Create opportunities for students to openly exchange ideas, perspectives, experiences, and ask questions. Encourage them to share and celebrate their differences.
- Make it fun. Singalongs and games are good ways to get students excited about their new classroom, friends, and teachers.

Remember, consistency is the key. When your students feel welcomed, accepted, and encouraged, they will feel that their classroom is truly a safe space where they can comfortably shine all year long.

