

5.16 Age Appropriate Anti-Racism

Mon, 3/28 9:49PM 32:50

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

kiddos, ally, racism, elementary, anti, goals, understand, unfairness, children, people, race, bias, important, racist, program, thinking, talk, developmentally, differences, community

SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00

You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Five, Episode 16: "Age Appropriate Anti-Racism."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:14

Teaching our children to be inclusive and anti-racist starts with us within the sacred walls of our home. First Name Basis is designed to empower you with the confidence you need to be a leader in your family and a change maker in your community. Together, we will wrestle with hard questions and use the answers to create the world we want: a world that reflects our values of inclusion, compassion, and courage. I'm your host, Jasmine Bradshaw, and I am so excited to be on this journey with you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:50

Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. Y'all. Do you realize that we have been doing this journey together for such a long time? Over the past two-and-a-half years, we have had so many amazing conversations about skin tone, race, racism, anti-racism... We're at almost 100 episodes, and I was just thinking the other day about how, a few weeks ago, we were talking about white-presenting, white-passing, white-assumed, and what all of those things mean, and I was just like, "Wow. We are really in the weeds here, when it comes to this conversation about anti-racism." And I am so glad. I'm just so grateful for all of the progress we've made and all of the ground we've covered. And obviously, those things in the weeds, in the tiny details, are really, really important. But for this episode, I want to zoom out and talk a little bit more about our kiddos. I want you to take a second and think back to the first time you pressed play on First Name Basis. And if this is your first time, welcome! We are so glad you are now in our First Name Basis family. But if you are a person who pressed play, that means that you are probably a parent, a caregiver, or a teacher who cares about and loves kiddos and cares about and loves your community. And you want to take those two things that you really care about and love and connect them together in a meaningful way. So today, we're going to

be talking about our kiddos and how we can help them become well-rounded, contributing members of their community who are committed to anti-racism, and we are going to do it in a way that is developmentally appropriate. So I hope you're ready because this is going to blow your mind when I tell you about the different goals of anti-bias and anti-racist education, and how we create activities that go along with supporting those goals for our children.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:52

But first, I have to tell you that enrollment for Ally Elementary and Ally Elementary Jr. are officially open. Today is the first day that you can register for either Ally Elementary or Ally Elementary Jr. Enrollment will be open until April 8, and then it will close so that we can all start the program to gather as a community. So if you're not sure what I'm talking about Ally Elementary is a program that we developed for you to do with your children, or with your students, so that you can help them become the anti-racist allies that our communities so desperately need. In Ally Elementary Jr., we have five modules which are meant to be done over the course of five weeks. And I share everything from melanin and what it is, all the way through what is race? Where did it come from? What is racism? What does it look like? What is systemic racism? And we continue on to understanding what is anti-racism and how can we embody that in our lives.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:56

Ally Elementary is best suited for third through eighth graders. And last time I opened the doors for Ally Elementary I heard from so many of you that you have younger kiddos and you really want to have these conversations with them too, but you knew they weren't quite ready for Ally Elementary. so that is why we created Ally Elementary Jr.! Ally Elementary Jr. gives you and your young kiddos the building blocks you need to begin your journey to becoming anti-racist allies. So in Ally Elementary Jr. we really focus on what is allyship? What does it look like? And how can I be an ally in my life to the people around me that I love.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 04:36

And Ally Elementary Jr. was created for preschool through second graders. So we have something for almost everybody. Someday we'll get to Ally High, but it's not here quite yet. If you're interested in Ally Elementary or Ally Elementary Jr., I will put both of the links in the show notes or you can go to firstnamebasis.org/allyelementary or firstnamebasis.org/allyjr. And if you go to either one of those, there will be a button where you can click over to the other one. If you're interested in looking at both programs, you can absolutely bundle and invest in both programs for your family or for your classroom.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 05:14

All right, so let's talk about age appropriate anti-racism. Now, I have heard from so many parents and caregivers, that they're really nervous to talk to their kiddos about race and racism because they feel like they're putting negative thoughts into their children's heads. But the truth is, our children are already thinking about and noticing race. And when we open the door

to conversation, they will be able to communicate with us in a way that helps us see what it is that they're picking up on in the world about race of our racism and how we should be intervening. How should we be steering them and guiding them so that they can live anti-racist lives in solidarity with marginalized people?

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Jasmine Bradshaw 05:58

One of the other things I want to add is that a few weeks ago, when I interviewed Dr. Lucretia Berry, something that she said stuck out to me so much, and I've thought about it so many times since then. She talked about how it's really important that we're not always talking about race and skintone from a place of trauma. Let me tell you, whenever something tragic happens on the news, and it centers around race, I get a flood of parents coming into our First Name Basis community and asking how they talk to their kids about race. And it's really unfortunate, because I feel like they've missed out on an opportunity to build that foundation during the time when they can talk about celebrating differences, embracing skin tone, and how exciting it is that we all come from different cultures. And instead, they have to start in a place that's so heavy and dark and sad. So if you're listening to that, and you're thinking, "That's me," I don't say that to make you feel bad or anxious, I just say it to help you understand how important it is that we are talking to our kiddos about race and skin tone all the time, so that we are ready to have those hard conversations when it comes up. But we don't always, like Dr. Berry was saying, want to talk about race from a place of trauma, because then our children might think that race is something that's scary, or something that is shameful. So it's important that we are building in opportunities and time to talk about race and skin tone in a place where it can be celebrated and embraced in a way that isn't so heavy. Now, when I tell you that your children and students are already thinking about race, and skin tone, I am for real. For real for real. Let me share some statistics with you. Now, these stats come from an article called "Conversations With Kids About Race." It's from a professional journal for educators, and I will link it in the show notes. I actually got to go to a conference with the organization called Learning For Justice, and they shared this article there, and it was so spot on. So studies have found that children as young as three months old can racially categorize people. Now it's important to note that obviously, babies are not holding racial prejudice in the same way that adults and older kiddos do. So they're not looking at people of different skin tones and different races and seeing anything negative. They're just noticing and categorizing people based on if they have lighter skin or darker skin. When our children are three years old, they can express explicit forms of racial bias. And I have absolutely seen this happen in my own home with some white kiddos who are friends with my kids. We have of course dolls that are different colors. And there have been children who have come to my home who don't want to play with the Black dolls. And they are young young kiddos. And that, to me is a very clear expression of racial bias. When our children of color are five years old, they actually already understand that racist stereotypes exist, and they are negatively affected by them. So that is why I'm saying that it's so important to start teaching allyship as young as preschool. Because our five-year-old kiddos who are children of color already experience racist stereotypes and other types of racism.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 09:27

This last statistic is about white eight year olds, and it says quote, "By age eight white kids learn that it is socially unacceptable to express explicit forms of racial bias and instead exhibit an increase in implicit forms of prejudice." End quote. So our white children are understanding

that racial bias is unacceptable, but instead of rooting it out and becoming anti-racist, they're just figuring out better ways to hide it. They're watching the adults around them and the implicit biases that their adults are internalizing, and they are mimicking that behavior. That's why it's so dangerous for us to wait to talk to our children about race. Our kids are so smart. And they figure out what they're supposed to say, and what they're not supposed to say. But that actually just makes it harder for us to know what their biases are. When our kids are communicating with us and they're saying these prejudices out loud, when they're expressing these biases, as much as it feels like, "Oh, my goodness, I wish you wouldn't have said that," "Oh, my gosh, I'm so embarrassed," "Oh, my gosh, I really hate this right now," it's actually a gift, because it shows you where you have work to do.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:44

So when a child says something that is biased, prejudiced, or racist, obviously, your priority should be correcting the harm. But you should take a step back and think, "Oh, my gosh, I'm so grateful that I now know this information, because now I know exactly how I can help my child better align themselves with our family values, and better align themselves with anti-racism." Now that we know where our kiddos are at what ages, both white children and children of color, I want to share with you the four goals of anti-bias education.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:20

Now, I'm really excited to finally share this framework with you, because it is the framework that I use when I'm preparing to create resources for you and episodes for you. It's something that I'm thinking about all the time. And there are so many other anti-bias, anti-racist educators who use this same framework when they're developing curriculum and activities. So it's really widely agreed upon that these four goals are a really great starting place for our families and our teachers when we're thinking about anti-racism. These four goals come from a book called "Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves." It's a book that's by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards, and it's basically a teacher professional development book. So it's written for teachers who are on the ground doing the hard work of helping children become anti-bias and anti-racist. And I actually heard about it a long time ago, from one of my all time favorite anti-racist educators Britt Hawthorne. You know, I am one of her number one fans. She shared it forever ago, I bought it forever ago, I read it forever ago, and I loved it forever ago. And if you know Alex Scott from "Ditto Kids" magazine, she's one of my dearest friends. She also uses this framework to create a lot of her anti-bias, anti-racist kids activities that are in "Ditto Kids."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 12:38

With all of that being said, you know that these are the four goals that I used to create Ally Elementary and Ally Elementary Jr. So I'm going to share these goals with you, and as I go, I'm going to help you see how these goals were used to create both of those programs in a way that would be developmentally- and age-appropriate for your children or for your students.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 13:03

The last thing I'll share with you before we dive into the goals is that I really believe that anti-bias education is like a precursor to anti-racism. We can't understand racism unless we understand bias. So that is why we turn to these goals of anti-bias education, because they really aligned perfectly with giving us the jumping off point so that we can dive into anti-racism.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 13:27

Okay, so the very first goal is that each child will demonstrate self awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities. Now, you might be surprised. You might be surprised to find out that when we start talking to our children about race and skin tone, we don't necessarily start in the deep end with what is racism and how horrible is racism. We actually want to start by affirming our children in the identities that they hold, and helping them see that each person around them is unique, different and special. You really don't want to start by sitting your children down and being like, "So kids, let's talk about racism." You want to start in a place where they understand that everyone has things that they can be proud of about themselves. So of course, this is our starting point for preschoolers and other young kiddos. But it also might be a good place to start for older kiddos who have missed out on an opportunity to explore their identity and feel that family pride.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:31

Now let's move into the second goal. The second goal of anti-bias education is that each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections. So the second goal is really about differences. It's about looking around and recognizing that people being different from you is one of the only constants of this world. I always share that with parents when they're starting out on this journey. Differences are exciting. Sometimes differences can cause friction, and we have to learn how to work through that. But really, differences are one of the only things that will stay the same. Coming into contact with people who are different from us is one of the things that we can truly count on happening in all of our lives, including our children. So recognizing that differences are exciting, and something that should be celebrated, is the second goal of anti bias education.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 15:29

And these two goals are where we really really focus our attention in Ally Elementary Jr. So like I mentioned, Ally Elementary Jr. is geared toward preschoolers through second graders. So I'm thinking of our kiddos who are three to six. And when they're that young, we really have to start by helping them see who they are, and why that is so important in the world to embrace and be excited about who they are. Then we have to help them see that everyone around them is different. And that is something that they should be excited about, and something that they should be supportive of. So in Ally Elementary Jr., the first thing we do is talk about ourselves. We talk about our skin tone, we talk about our melanin and our ancestors, and we really dig into what makes us special and unique. We start by mixing up our very own skin tone paint, and giving it a beautiful name, and then painting either a people chain or our hand to show all of the different types of melanin that you can see in this world. After we do that, we move into embracing the different parts of our identity. We explore the difference between nationality,

ethnicity, culture, and race, and talk about how important those things are to our lives, and how they influence so much of what we do. We share our own experiences with culture and ethnicity, and then there's an opportunity for you to invite others in your life to share with you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:05

I mean, of course, I don't want to give it all away, but one of my favorite activities in Ally Elementary Jr. is the "Culture Bag" activity, where you go around and you collect things that you feel represent your culture, and you share them with each other. You can each pull things out of the bag and talk about why they're so important to you. And the most fun thing we've done is create an invitation in the program so that you can print it out and invite some families that you know to experience this culture bag celebration with you. It's so stinking cool.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:41

So as you can see, in Ally Elementary Jr., we focus primarily on goals one and two—getting to know ourselves and getting to know the people around us. And then from there, we lightly touch on the last two goals, which I will share with you. But I want to emphasize that understanding allyship truly is the foundation that our children need to become anti-racist. So they can't quite get to anti-racism until they explore allyship. And that's what Ally Elementary Jr. is created to help you build that foundation of allyship.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:16

Okay, let's jump into the last two goals. So the third goal of anti-bias education is that each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts. So this is what I was saying is the last thing we touch on in Ally Elementary Jr.—it's what is bias and what is unfairness. We talk a little bit about race when we are talking about identity, and I share that someone's racial identity can be a really important component of their identity when they're a person of color, but we don't dig deep into anti-racism, because those little ones just aren't quite ready for it yet. The language that they need to understand is fairness and unfairness, bias and discrimination. All of those things they're ready for. But understanding racism and the complexities that go along with these racist systems, they're just not quite there yet. So yes, in Ally Elementary Jr., we do dive into discrimination and unfairness, what those look like and some ways that we can respond when we see it. And we talk about how we should react when we are the person who is doing the discriminating, when we are the person who is treating others unfairly. That is a really important conversation. And we wrap it all up by exploring our "Allyship Toolbox," and thinking about the things that we can do as an ally and the things that we need to practice. How we still want to learn and grow.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 19:50

So this is why I say it's so important for you to be in tune with what your kiddos need and where they're at developmentally, because there are absolutely going to be some second graders who are ready for Ally Elementary, the big kid program, but there are some who won't

be yet. There are some who are still exploring their identity, and that is a-okay.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 20:12

So speaking of Ally Elementary, I'm going to read that third goal again, because I want to just stick it in your brain one more time before we talk about how we explore this third goal in the Ally Elementary, big kid program. So the third goal of anti-bias education is that each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts. Now, as I mentioned, Ally Elementary was created for third graders and up, and that's because we really do dig deep into what that unfairness looks like. We talk all about race, and we talk about how race was created by white grownups a long time ago, who wanted to justify the fact that they were taking land from Indigenous people and enslaving Africans. Those are two really important things that we focus on in Ally Elementary is understanding where race came from, and how they created race in order to justify the racism that was already going on. They were already stealing land. They were already stealing people, and from that race was created. So we go into all of that, the story behind it, the history, and the quote, unquote, "science" that people were using to justify this mistreatment in this unfairness.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 21:34

After we talk about the history behind it, we dig into how racism is systemic, and how it includes prejudice plus power. And then we move all the way through anti-racism, and brainstorm ideas about what it looks like to be anti-racist in your life. So Ally Elementary is much more heavy hitting when it comes to these big-time issues that we have in our community. These big-time, systemic issues that we are trying to tackle as a community, as a family, as a classroom community.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 22:09

So the last goal of anti-bias education is that each child will demonstrate empowerment, and the skills to act with others or alone against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions. So like I mentioned, we actually touch on this goal at the end of both programs, because no matter how old you are, you need to have some tools in your tool belt for how to respond when you see that people aren't being treated with the dignity and the respect that they deserve. So the difference between the two programs is really what we're calling it, whether we're calling it unfairness and discrimination in Ally Elementary Jr., or whether we're really diving into, "This is racism, and this is what it looks like," in our Ally Elementary program. But in both programs, you will have the opportunity to talk with your children or your students about what it looks like to take action and be an ally when you see that something wrong is happening.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 23:07

I hope that hearing about and understanding those four goals helps provide a little bit of clarity for you when you're sitting down to do these activities, whether it be with your children or with your students, because it is so important that we go into this understanding the end goal, understanding the outcomes that we want and the end result. I'm hoping that when you're

doing the activities, you'll think, "Oh, I know! That's goal number one, that's when we're trying to help our kiddos understand who they are and embrace their identity and embrace their own family pride," or "Yes, oh, that aligns perfectly with goal number two—understanding that there are so many different people in the world and that differences are an exciting part of life." So that's why I share these goals with you, so we can really see where we are now and where we want our kiddos to be headed on their journey of allyship and anti-racism.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 24:00

Now the other thing I want to share with you when it comes to age-appropriateness is the importance of language. You have to look at the language that you're using when you're talking to children. If you're a parent, you know this and if you are a teacher, you absolutely know this. Have you ever tried to teach a lesson, and the vocabulary is 100% going over the kids' heads? I have been there, and I have this one memory that sticks out in my mind and sometimes makes it hard for me to fall asleep at night because it was so awful! I was teaching a math lesson. And one of the vocabulary words in the lesson was "expression," like, you know, math expression, math problem, which is easy. But for some reason, the textbook that I was teaching out of really wanted me to teach the kids the word "express" in order to help them understand "expression." And I was not doing a good job, clearly, because one of my students raised his hand and was like, "Like Panda Express?" And I was like, "Nope, that's not what I'm talking about at all!" And the cherry on top of all of this is I was literally also being evaluated. So I definitely got dinged. And I was like, "If I could just explain 'expression' by itself, it would have been fine, but I don't know why they want me to talk about the word 'express!'" Anyway, my evaluator was very understanding, but I definitely had to go back the next day and reteach that lesson, because nobody understood what I was trying to tell them, And they were all just thinking about Panda Express.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 25:31

So all of that to say, I have spent a lot of time thinking about our children, thinking about where they are developmentally based on their age, and which vocabulary words and which definitions would be best for them to understand depending on where they're at. So what I'm going to do is I want to share with you the same word with two different definitions based on the different programs. So the first is the definition from Ally Elementary Jr. And like I said, Ally Elementary Jr. is for preschool through second graders. And let's talk about the word bias. So in Ally Elementary Jr., I created all the definitions just like I did for Ally Elementary, and for bias I put, "A bias is when you think you know what something is going to be like, but you've never tried it. Or when you think you know what someone is going to be like, but you've never met them, or you don't know them very well." Now, I know that is a mouthful, but I repeat it so many times, and I helped the kids see that a bias is when you think you know what something's gonna be like, but you really don't, because you've never tried it, so how would you know?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:36

Now when we're thinking about Ally Elementary, that is for third through eighth graders, and in that program, we define bias as, "A bias is when we have strong opinions about people, places or things, even if we don't have very much personal experience with them." So do you see the

difference there? Obviously, a third grader is going to understand what an opinion is, they're going to understand personal experience, and they're going to make that connection. But a four-year-old is just not there yet. Our preschoolers don't know what an opinion is, and we don't want to have to take the time to really explain all those different things. So breaking it down into "a bias is when you think you know what something's going to be like, but you've never tried it, so you don't really know," is the best way to go. So I hope you can see how we have really taken the language and tried to meet your kids where they're at developmentally, so that they can tackle these big issues.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 27:33

So how do you choose? How do you choose between Ally Elementary Jr. and Ally Elementary? Well, if you have kiddos in both age groups, you can of course, invest in the bundle, and get both. But if you have younger children, and you're looking for a program that will help you build the foundation of allyship with your kiddos, and lay the groundwork to tackle anti-racism in the future, Ally Elementary Jr. is for you. Now, if you have older children, and you are ready to dig deep into what racism is, and how we can use anti-racism to be part of the solution, Ally Elementary is for you.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 28:12

I can't wait to see your faces on the inside of Ally Elementary Jr or Ally Elementary. One of my favorite things about both of these programs is that we have a parent community that you are automatically added to when you invest in the program. So you have people who are going along this journey with you that you can ask questions to, that you can look to for advice that you can cheer each other on. It's the best. And I love getting to know all of you inside there.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 28:41

And the other way that I get to know you all is that we have three Q & A sessions with me throughout the program. So let's say you're doing one of the activities and your kiddo or your student asks a question and you're like, "I have no idea what to say. I do not know how to handle this." You can bring those to me in our three live Q & A sessions. And the great thing is that Ally Elementary Jr. is designed to be a four-week program and Ally Elementary is designed to be a five-week program. But as soon as you invest you have access to this information for ever and ever. So if you need a little bit longer than the five weeks because you're digging into the material and you are getting some really great growth opportunities and really amazing discussions, that is a-okay. You can take your time and we will be in the parent community waiting for your questions to embrace you with open arms, and I'm so stinking excited. So sign up for Ally Elementary or Ally Elementary Jr. You can go to firstnamebasis.org/allyelementary or firstnamebasis.org/allyjr. Of course of course of course I will leave those links in the show notes. I can't wait to see you there. We are going to do some really good learning and some really good growing together.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 29:59

Please don't hesitate to reach out. If you have any questions, you can email us at hello@allyelementary.org

Please don't hesitate to reach out. If you have any questions, you can email us at hello@firstnamebasis.org. And just remember that enrollment closes on April 8. And I'm actually not sure when we'll open it up again. The last time we opened enrollment was in October, and now it is almost April, so it's actually been about six months. So if either of these programs sound like something that would be a good fit for your home or for your classroom, even if you want to wait a little while to get started on it, I would invest now, just because I'm not sure when we'll bring it back because we have lots of other exciting things that we are bringing to you over the summer.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 30:38

All right, my friends, I love you so much. I can't wait to hang out with you in Ally Elementary and Ally Elementary Jr., and I will talk to you next week for our season finale of Season Five! What? Season Five is already coming to a close! Next week we'll be talking about Ramadan, and how to talk to our kiddos about Islamophobia. So I hope you'll tune in to the season finale of First Name Basis Season Five.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 31:05

My friends, thank you for being here. I hope you can feel how much I believe in you, and how deeply I know that when we work together, we can make real change in our communities. Any of the books, podcasts, or articles that I reference will be linked in the show notes. If you are looking for more detailed notes, be sure to head over to our Patreon community. On our Patreon site, I provide all of the outlines that I use to make the episodes and everything is linked there. So you don't have to take furious notes while you are listening. And don't forget to join us over on Instagram at [firstname.basis](https://www.instagram.com/firstname.basis). If you're interested in partnering with First Name Basis or doing some kind of collaboration, please email us at hello@firstnamebasis.org. All right, have a great week my friends, and I will talk to you again soon.