

Colouring together

A short facilitator companion

WHY THESE PAGES

We’re Courtney and Sam, CARL’s co-founders. We both grew up in mostly white communities, looking for people who looked like us in classroom books and worksheets. Now we’re raising children of our own, and we love the idea of them finding people and families like ours in everyday pictures, and, just as important, people and families that aren’t like ours. Seeing differences in the classroom gives children a safe place to ask questions and learn about each other.

START WITH AN INVITATION

“Try your colours in the six boxes. You can layer colours or change how firmly you press, then colour the picture.” Many crayon and pencil brands now make skin-tone sets. If you don’t have one, a regular box works too: browns, tans, peach, pink and yellow can all be skin colours, white is good for lightening a layer, and layering two colours gets even closer. Colour choices don’t need to be realistic or match a child’s own skin, and pointing, showing or colouring quietly are all ways to take part.

STUDENTS MIGHT SAY...

Possible comments and responses to adapt, not a script to work through.

STUDENT COMMENT	A POSSIBLE TEACHER RESPONSE
“Which one is skin colour?”	“Skin comes in many shades. Which colours could you try together?” Offer several shades without naming one as the default.
“I can’t find a colour like mine.”	“We might not have an exact match. Would you like to try layering two colours?” Matching is optional. Acknowledge gaps in the supplies.
“None of these look like me.” / “... like my family.”	“Let’s make it look like you. You can add hair, glasses or someone from your family, then colour them your way.” CARL has many more colouring pages with different people and families. If a child’s family isn’t there yet, send a request at hicarl.ai/support (Product: CARL; How can we help: “Feature, content or template request”).
“They can’t be family. They look different.”	“People in the same family can have different skin tones and hair. Looks don’t tell us who is in a family.”
“Why are there two mums / two dads?”	“Families can have two mums, two dads, one parent, grandparents or other caregivers. Families come in different forms.”
“That skin colour is weird.”	“We don’t call someone’s skin weird. People have different skin tones.” Check in privately with anyone affected.
“Why is she in a wheelchair?” / “What’s wrong with his leg?”	“Nothing’s wrong. Her wheelchair helps her get around, like glasses help some people see. Bodies work in lots of different ways.” Answer simply, describe what the wheelchair, crutch or prosthetic leg does, and move on.
“I don’t want to talk about my family.”	“That’s okay. You can talk about the picture, show a colour or keep colouring.” No explanation is needed.
“Why is her hair like that?”	“Hair grows in different textures. It can be straight, wavy, curly or tightly coiled.” Use descriptive words without ranking one texture above another.
“Why are they wearing that?”	“People wear different things for different reasons, including their faith or culture. We can’t always tell why from a picture.” Name a garment when you know its name; avoid guessing someone’s religion.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION OPEN

“What changed when you layered those colours?” · “What are the people enjoying together?” Let children choose what to share. No one needs to speak for a whole group. Avoid asking anyone to explain or represent their skin tone, family, clothing or disability.