Essential Diverse Children’s Books to Engage Students in Discussions About Bias and Bullying

Chocolate Me! Taye Diggs. (Pre-K – 1) Teased for looking different than the other kids—his skin is darker, his hair curlier—he tells his mother he wishes he could be more like everyone else. She helps him to see how beautiful he really, truly is.

The Day You Begin / El día en que descubres quién eres. Jacqueline Woodson. (K – 3) Follows a series of students who feel like they stand out and are teased by their classmates. Woodson reminds us that we all feel like outsiders sometimes—and how brave it is that we go forth anyway. English and Spanish editions.

Each Kindness. Jacqueline Woodson. (1 – 3) Every time Maya tries to join Chloe and her friends, they reject her. Eventually she stops coming to school. When Chloe’s teacher gives a lesson about how even small acts of kindness can change the world, Chloe is stung by the lost opportunity for friendship.

Ghost. Lu. Patina. Sunny. Jason Reynolds. (4 – 8) A series of books with four kids from very different backgrounds with personalities that are explosive when they clash. All are a part of an elite middle school track team that goes to the state championships. They all have a lot to lose, but they also have a lot to prove, not only to each other, but to themselves.

Hurricane Child. Kheryn Callender. (4 – 6) Feeling lonely and bullied daily with cruel remarks about her dark skin tone, Caroline finally befriends a new student, Kalinda. As Caroline develops a crush on Kalinda, they work together to find Caroline’s mother.

The Invisible Boy. Trudy Ludwig. (K – 3) Nobody ever seems to notice Brian or think to include him in their group, game or birthday party... that is, until a new kid comes to class.

Muskat Will Be Swimming. Cheryl Savageau. (2 – 4) A Native American girl’s feelings are hurt when classmates make fun of children who live at the lake. Her grandfather tells her a Seneca folktale reminding her how much she appreciates her home and place in the world.
My Name Is Bilal. Asma Mobin-Uddin and Barbara Kiwak. (3 – 5) A brother and sister are the only Muslim students at their school. When the sister is teased for wearing a headscarf, Bilal finds the courage to stand up for her.

One. Kathryn Otoshi. (Pre-K – 1) Red picks on Blue. The other colors don’t know what to do until One shows them how to stand up, stand together and count. Also see Zero.

Red: A Crayon’s Story. Michael Hall. (Pre-K – 1) A blue crayon mistakenly labeled as “red” suffers an identity crisis. Almost everyone tries to “help” him be red until a friend offers a new perspective. He’s blue! About finding the courage to be true to your inner self. Can be read on multiple levels.

The Skin I’m In. Sharon G Flake. (5 – 7) Maleeka suffers every day from the taunts. If they’re not getting at her about her homemade clothes or her good grades, it’s about her dark, black skin. But the new teacher’s attitude surprises her. Miss Saunders loves the skin she’s in. Can Maleeka learn to do the same?

The Stars Beneath Our Feet. David Barclay Moore. (5 – 9) A boy tries to steer a safe path through the projects in Harlem in the wake of his brother’s death. Then Lolly’s mother’s girlfriend brings him a gift that will change everything: two enormous bags filled with Legos.

Wings. Christopher Myers. (1 – 5) Take flight with Ikarus Jackson, the boy with wings who remains true to his dreams despite taunts. One girl realizes he must be lonely and resolves to stop the hurtful words.

Wishtree. Katherine Applegate. (3 – 7) Trees can’t tell jokes, but they can certainly tell stories. After a Muslim girl and her family move in, an oak tree and a crow help two children and their neighbors embrace their differences and handle bullying and hate speech.