

Dear Third Grade Families,

- * *What's a nationality?*
- * *What age group do you enter after Senior Citizen?*
- * *Is it bad to call someone Black if they are African American?*
- * *What if one of my parents is from Korea and the other one is from America?*
- * *What is TAB (Temporarily Abled Bodied) and how do I talk about needing glasses or help with math?*
- * *What if I was born in a different country than my parents, what does that make me?*

These, and other dynamic questions about our multiple identities, are being asked by Third Graders during my weekly sessions in their classroom. Eight and nine year olds are on a wonderful journey of discovery about ancestors, birth places, gender expression and identity, language, and the rich cultures and experiences that contribute to their identities and understanding of self.

As we celebrate our unique identities, a key component of our work is respecting that we all have the right to self identify. Recently, a student shared her thoughts about how skin color can tell you about a person's race or ethnicity. We learned that skin color could not really tell you where a person is from any more than hair length can tell you about a person's gender.

Through their social studies theme of the Native American people of the Northeast Woodland area they are knowledgeable about the first Americans. With a map of the world we are talking about where students and their parents were born. For some, however, whose parents, grandparents or even great grandparents were born in America they are not fully aware of their ancestral heritage. While the students are ready to take ownership of who they are, they could use some help from your understanding why their families say they are African American or Caribbean, Asian American or Chinese, European American or Bi-racial. With this in mind I ask that parents help their children complete an assignment they have been working on for a few weeks.

With the completed assignments, students will return to their drafts of a poem about themselves. An ***I AM FROM*** poem asks students to use poetic language to describe their multiple identities. Below are a few examples of children's rough drafts. Enjoy, and we look forward to sharing the full poems with you when they are completed.

- * *I AM FROM...swirls of chocolate*
- * *I AM FROM...the color of the clouds and white smooth milk*
- * *I AM FROM...the chocolate colored people of the Caribbean*
- * *I AM FROM...caramel, like the tan color of the beach*
- * *I AM FROM...vanilla ice cream caramel sauce*

Sincerely,
Chap, Vonick and Randi