

Tips for choosing a Persona Doll for your classroom:

1. Assess your classroom:

- **Who are the children?**

Who needs a MIRROR to see themselves reflected in the classroom? Which children are least likely to see parts of themselves reflected back on a daily basis? For example, children whose parents are recent immigrants, who are American Indians, who practice a faith or religion that is not common in your area, who are multi-racial, or who have disabilities are unlikely to see themselves reflected very often in toys and books around them or on the TV. If these children are in your classroom you should consider a doll who shares key aspects of who they are.

Who needs a WINDOW to help them develop empathy and understanding for those who are different from them?

- **Who are the families?**

Are there some families who are often negatively portrayed in society based on an identity or lived experience they have? For instance, a child living with their grandmother, with a single mom, with two moms, or in foster care may rarely see positive images of their family. One of your dolls could play a supportive role in helping them value the way their family is composed.

- **Who is in your community?**

Who is present in your community, but not present in your classroom? Are there groups of people that your children will go to school with or work with later in life that your children don't get to make friends with or learn about? If so, do you want to choose a doll that can help your group gain comfort with these neighbors?

2. Decide on a starting point:

Your classroom assessment probably led you to think of many, many dolls you could use in your classroom. Now it's time to narrow it down. You may be able to meet multiple needs in one doll. For instance, a doll could be multi-racial and living with two moms. It's possible that the doll could have a sibling with a disability. Still, you will need to decide which needs are most important right now.

Some things to think about as you prioritize might be:

- **Which needs will stay stable over several years?** Will the doll you are thinking of starting with still reflect your classroom needs next year?

- ***Which needs are the most pressing?*** You might want to prioritize the stories your children aren't hearing at all (a doll with autism or with a sibling with autism) over the stories they just aren't hearing often enough. Or prioritize the doll that can help you counter negative stereotypes and biases that your children might be absorbing about certain identities and lived experiences.

To make the best possible use of the dolls in your classroom, each doll should be both similar to (mirrors) and different from (windows) the children in your group.