

Classroom activities: Celebrating diversity

These activities help students understand that even though we belong to groups, we are all different in many ways. Relationships are improved by our appreciation for diversity and rejection of stereotypes.

What's going on?

- 1 Sit in a circle and talk** about having a pet. Show pictures of different breeds of puppies. Discuss: What do you notice about the puppies? Do all puppies look the same or different? Does the variety in the appearance of the puppies makes them more or less interesting? Conclude that even though each of the puppies looks different they are all lovable.
- 2 Look at each other**, especially at each other's facial features and hair. Chart / graph colour of skin, hair and eyes; colour, length of hair and attributes such as curls etc.
- 3 Game: Simon (or Sunita) says.** Provide directions to highlight individual and cultural diversity e.g. Everyone with brown eyes, stand up. Everyone who has a dog as a pet put your right hand on your head. Everyone whose favourite sport is soccer, stand on one foot. Everyone who speaks more than one language, jump up and down.
- 4 Game: Bingo.** Students move around their group, or class, asking questions and recording the names of people who fit the description on a list: e.g. has played basketball; has celebrated a religious occasion; likes curry; has travelled on a plane; is allergic to peanuts; has more than three names; was not born in Australia; likes vegemite; has more than two siblings; has lived in another country; likes cold weather; speaks more than one language; rides a bicycle. First to complete their list calls out Bingo. Regroup to talk about / make a graph showing similarities and differences between class members.
- 5 Students tell one new thing they learned** about a classmate / name one way in which they and another student are alike (Something they didn't know before playing the game). Students might say, for example, "I didn't know that Jacob spoke Hebrew" or "I didn't know that Ruth played soccer."
- 6 Discuss:** Have you or any of your friends/classmates travelled to another country / moved to Australia from another country? How did you feel when you arrived (e.g. lonely, excited)? What does 'multiculturalism' mean? How has migration made a positive impact on Australian society? What is race? How would you define it? Have you ever encountered racism? Explain what happened and how it was dealt with (by you, your friends, the school, family, community or by the law).
- 7 Ask your students about friendship and acceptance** using class discussion or a confidential questionnaire. (You may like to use the Friendship and Acceptance Questionnaire which is based on the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools which can be found in the Teaching resources catalogue.)

Think about it

- 1 Discuss / write / draw about differences** and how everyone is uniquely beautiful and lovable, how each is precious to their family and friends, and the community: I am special because... I can... I like... but my friend likes... My mum / dad / friend likes me because...
- 2 Reflect individually** on beliefs about people who are of a different gender, culture, religion etc. Consider: Is that really true, or could it be just a stereotype? What examples can I give of people contradicting the stereotype? Share these thoughts with the class.

Make a difference

- 1 Brainstorm ideas** about how to celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes in your community. Use a democratic process like voting to decide on what to do next. Write a sequence of steps to making these happen.
- 2 Visit the library** and find out about resources for multicultural education in your school.
- 3 Design and create** quilt squares to represent yourself - joined together (stitched or taped or tied with strings depending on the material used) to make a classroom community quilt which will serve as a way for students to share with each other their own stories and to see themselves as a community.
- 4 Learn more about different groups** by reading a book, seeing a movie, attending an event, making friends with people from different backgrounds e.g. by inviting someone from a different background to eat lunch with you. Join groups at school that welcome people of all backgrounds, and avoid groups that exclude people. Take care not to make jokes or make fun of people based on their race and speak up when you hear people making fun of others based on their difference.
- 5 Find out about organisations and projects** to improve community relations. Interview someone from the organisation about their work. Ask: What are the goals of your work? What activities do you carry out to reach these goals? Who is involved in your work? What kind of impact has the group had? How can young people become involved?
- 6 Become involved** in a global network of young people