Classroom activities: Challenging prejudice

These activities develop understanding and the capacity to challenge prejudice i.e. those negative attitudes and behaviours directed at people based on aspects of their identity. Choose one or more activities from each phase.

What’s going on?

1. **Discuss personal identity in five categories.** Draw symbols on transparencies representing these and share with a partner / group / class.

2. **Gender:** Feelings about being male/female; What have you learned about being female/male in our society? Who taught you those things? How were you taught?

3. **Ethnicity/Culture:** How would you represent your ethnic or cultural identity? Show how it feels to be a part of your culture. How did you learn about your culture? Who or what were your teachers?

4. **Religion:** How do you identity yourself in terms of faith? If you follow a formal religion, where have you learned about your traditions and beliefs? If you have spiritual beliefs, how have they developed? If you have no religious or spiritual beliefs draw anything that represents your own beliefs. Who have been your teachers? How have you been taught?

5. **Citizenship:** How do you feel about being a citizen of your country? What do you think your country is best known for? What (if any) common beliefs or values do citizens of your country hold?

6. **Observe the school climate** to notice the ways in which students may be targeted, excluded or included in various ways throughout the school day. Have them record their observations in writing.

7. **Form a special task force** to observe and record incidents of bias, name-calling and bullying and what students did when they witnessed these acts. Be careful that this research does not identify individuals - it is only for gathering evidence.

8. **Conduct an interview** with a mentor about their bullying experience. Formulate questions e.g. What bullying incident have you been involved in? Who else was involved? Where and when did it happen? What did you do? What influenced you to do what you did? What were you thinking? What were you feeling? What happened next? What lesson did you learn? What advice would you give?
Think about it

1. **Discuss: What does it mean to show respect for others?** How can we show respect? Print the word respect and its definition on chart paper and place it on the wall.

2. **Use think/pair/share** to review what it means to be unique. Share ideas and come up with one classroom definition. Print the final definition of unique next to respect on chart paper and display in classroom. Brainstorm ideas about how people are unique.

3. **Discuss: Is being different OK**, and why or why not? By agreeing that it is acceptable to be different from others, we show respect for others.

4. **Discuss: What is a belief?** What does it mean to ‘believe’? Beliefs can be religious or non-religious such as honesty and kindness etc. Do we all have beliefs? Are they all the same or are they different for each person? Is it OK if we don’t have the same beliefs? Print an agreed definition of ‘belief’ on chart paper and post it next to respect and unique. Students in groups / pairs listen to each other, and ask questions about one another’s beliefs.

5. **Share** personal identity transparencies with one another. Use an overhead projector. Hold transparencies up and look through them at classmates. Discuss: How do other people look through the transparency? Do you see each other clearly? What effect might this “lens” have on how you view other people and events?

6. **Brainstorm meanings** and develop a definition of prejudice. E.g. Prejudice has three main features: It is an attitude i.e. an evaluation or judgment. It is directed at a social group and its members. It is negative, involving hostility or dislike.


8. **List other types of groups** in the school with which students identify. These might include: grade level, sports, interests, gangs, sexual orientation, political affiliation, etc. Discuss: Have you ever been targeted or picked on because of your association with one of these groups? What happened? How did that feel? How does it feel to be considered either “alone” or of the “majority”. How do teachers, administrators and other students treat those students? How does this dynamic affect the school environment?

9. **When you interrupted** an act of bias or prejudice, what motivated you to do so? When you witnessed an act of bias and did not intervene, what motivated you to “stand by?” Chart common themes or ideas about the reasons why they intervened and why they did not. Ask students which is easier to do - interrupt or stand by and why? What are the consequences of either action? Be sure that the point is made that it is not always wise or safe to respond in the moment; notifying an appropriate authority, or approaching the person later may be a safer and more effective strategy.

10. **Write** down, and submit anonymously, two things learned from each exercise. Teacher can read out the statements, discuss.
Make a difference

1 **Brainstorm strategies** for intervention.

2 **Express what you’ve learned** through skits, poems, drawings, stories, learning logs, audio / video recordings, photographs, computer presentations, information brochure, posters, leaflets.

3 **Present findings or creative illustrations** of the issues / concepts to the class / parents / school or community groups / media / in school forums and in school publications and websites.

4 **Write letters** and meet with the principal, Parents and Citizens, Student Representative Council and other classes and year levels.

5 **Call a special meeting** or use class meetings or Student Representative Council meetings to discuss the issues and the changes.

6 **Invite different groups** in the school.

7 **Become involved** in a project in the school or local community. Participate in groups and committees. Make decisions at the meetings about the next steps and who wants to be involved. Make a budget, proposal and plan of objectives and goals for your program to present to organizations and government officials for support and finances.

8 **Gather support** - Involve the media and government officials in your cause.

9 **Do outreach** by word of mouth to family and friends. Ask for donations or for any type of resource.

10 **Advertise and hold fundraisers** to gain support and finances.

11 **Use school events** and fundraisers as an opportunity to develop relationships with community leaders and to let them know about your group / project / activities.

12 **Research organizations** affiliated with your cause and look for a parent organization.

13 **Write** to local councils about areas of concern.

14 Write letters to the local newspaper or your local member of parliament telling them what is happening in schools today - and that students in your school are doing something about it.

15 **Recruit** people for volunteers or workers.

16 **Revisit** the issue on a regular basis and reflect on progress and new questions or issues which have arisen.