

Awareness: Celebrating Differences

Objective: To encourage students to recognize and accept the many ways in which people are both similar to and different from each other and to identify ways to celebrate our differences.

Materials: Copies of "People Bingo" worksheet for each student

Length of time: 30 minutes

Activity:

1. Teacher: Look around the room at your classmates. Just from what you can see, they are all alike in some ways and different in some ways. This is called similarities and differences. Create T-chart with the word "Similarities" on one side and "Differences" on the other.
2. Teacher: The words on the chart describe things about others that we can see. All of you are similar and different in many other ways that can't be seen. Now we will find out some of those differences by playing a game that's a lot like the game of bingo. Ask if students know how to play bingo. Explain that the important difference between People Bingo and regular bingo is that in People Bingo everyone will be a winner. The game ends when everyone in the group has completed at least one row on his/her card.
3. Distribute a copy of the "People Bingo" worksheet to each student. Allow time for the students to play People Bingo and complete at least one row on their worksheets. This will take 10-15 minutes.
4. One thing we've seen by playing People Bingo is that we're all similar and different in a lot of ways. What are some of the things you learned from People Bingo? Discuss. Sometimes people behave unkindly toward others who are different from ourselves. Each one of us is a unique individual. Each one of us is special. We all have strengths, talents and abilities.

Extension: Write or draw about a time when people treated you unkindly because they thought you were different or they thought you were different, but treated you with kindness and respect.

Why Judge?

Objective: To develop tolerance for others who do not act as we personally prefer.

Materials: None

Length of time: 30 - 45 minutes

Activity:

1. Review the 4 categories in which people may be alike or different (looks, age, feelings, and actions)
2. Discuss ways in which some people's actions may be different from others' (what people eat, the way people move, the way people talk or communicate).
3. Conduct a mock trial in which the group leader plays the attorney and the class plays the judge, jury, and defendants (select the more self-assured, verbal students to play the defendants).
4. Enact the trial for the crime scenarios described below and conduct a follow-up discussion for each.
 - a. A person is accused of needing her book brailled and cannot see
 - b. A person is accused of moving around in a wheelchair and not his legs
 - c. A person is accused of having a hearing aid in his ear

Discussion:

1. Why would a law such as the one this person is accused of breaking be a silly law to have?
2. Does it hurt a person if others behave in ways different from the way he or she might with other people?
3. Instead of laws to protect us from being upset, what do we need to have inside us that will help? (elicit a definition of tolerance, acceptance and understanding in the children's own language)

Extension: Draw, write or small group activity about a time when you were made fun of or criticized for acting in a way that didn't hurt anyone, but that someone else just didn't like.

Take a Closer Look

Objective: Explore feeling self-conscious and give perspective to students about physical differences.

Materials: toy microphone

Length of time: 20-30 minutes

Activity:

1. Teacher: discuss with students what types of things may make others feel "different" (wearing glasses, wearing braces, moving in a wheelchair, writing with left hand, wearing a hearing aid, etc).
2. Role play: tell students that you are a news reporter who is very excited to learn that there are kids in this town who wear glasses (or braces, or write with left hand, etc) and that you want to interview them about this "phenomenal" personal characteristic. Tell the students that you will be asking about how important they feel, the advantages of having or wearing this item, how cool it is and how unique and special they feels as a result.
3. Choose an articulate student for the teacher to interview or interview the group with raised hands for the role play. Conduct the interview, using the microphone to make the role play seem more realistic.
4. After completing the role play, ask the students how they felt when they took what to some may be seen as a negative and turned it into a positive.
5. Define the word *reframing*—turning something negative into a positive or looking at it in a different way—and emphasize how your students can apply this concept to their personal situations. Teach them how perspective changes according to the situation and positive thinking must be practiced in order to grow into a habit.

Extension: Make a journal entry about something that you or someone you know might be self-conscious of. Write or draw an example of your personal *reframe*.

Don't Call Me Special

Objective: Fostering acceptance and tolerance of people who are in some way "different."

Materials: copy of book: Don't Call Me Special: A First Look at Disability by Pat Thomas; blindfolds

Length of time: 30 minutes

Activity:

1. Read book Don't Call me Special Stop at the RED BOXES throughout the book to ask and discuss pertinent issues with students.
2. Explain to students that they are going to feel what it is like to be without one of their senses.
 - a. Choosing one or more students, blindfold them and ask that they move without their sight. Discuss.
 - b. **In schools where equipment is available, giving able-bodied children the opportunity to use a wheelchair or other aids may enhance their understanding of some of the difficulties faced by someone who uses these aids.
 - c. Tell the class you are going to say something only using your lips and they are to "lip read" what you have said to simulate what it might be like for a student who cannot hear without a hearing aid.
3. Discussion is aimed at demystifying special equipment because it is important to help see the person and not the disability.
4. After making it more difficult for children to see, hear or walk, talk with them about people who have overcome disability and even achieved greatness—such as Helen Keller, Beethoven, and Franklin Roosevelt.

Extension: Webquest for elementary students on Helen Keller

<http://www.arlington.k12.va.us/schools/barcroft/webquests/inflppl/Webquest-InfluentialPeople.html>

Webquest for elementary students on Helen Keller:

http://www.philau.edu/msit/student_samples/MC72/HelenKellerWebQuest/

Webquest for elementary student on Beethoven:

<http://www.webquests.ips.k12.in.us/Communities/webquests/Assets/webquests/music/spring02/corn/webquest.htm>

Understanding: Teasing Hurts

Objective: Reinforce a classroom climate in which teasing and bullying are unacceptable. Students will describe the effects of teasing and identify ways to discourage teasing and to deal with teasing when it occurs.

Materials: Questions from #3 below posted on the board or overhead.

Length of time: 30 minutes

Activity:

1. Introduce activity by asking what happens when countries or nations don't respect each other's differences? When people from different parts of our community don't respect each other's differences? When people your age don't respect each other's differences here at our school?
2. Define teasing as "one way people show disrespect and intolerance for others." Sometimes you might think teasing is just joking around and doesn't do any harm. Sometimes teasing can be vicious. Even when people think they're just joking, teasing can be mean and cruel.
3. Assemble student in groups of four or five to discuss the questions you've posted on the board/overhead. Give 5 minutes to discuss with small group.
 - a. Have you ever been teased? Has someone you know ever been teased?
 - b. What was this person (or you) teased about?
 - c. How did this person (or you) feel as a result of being teased?
 - d. How did this person (or you) handle the situation?
4. Have a reporter from each group share answers.
5. Introduce the idea that people sometimes tease each other by using the word "retard." Why is it important not to use that word?
6. Have students work in the same small groups as in Step 3. Each group should brainstorm ways to respond to teasing that will help to create a more positive school and classroom climate. Possible ideas might include:
 - a. Walk away from it
 - b. Tell the person you don't like it
 - c. Avoid people who tease
 - d. If other methods fail, tell a family member or teacher that you're being teased and ask for help in handling it

Extension: Draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper. On the left side draw or write about a time when you or someone you know was teased. On the right side, draw or write about how you will handle it if it happens in the future.

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www.specialolympics.org/getintoit

Individual Learning Styles

Objective: Recognizing your learning style and why at times you learn more easily than at others

Materials: One copy of the Learning Styles Inventory for every student; pocket chart with large letters to spell a grade level word

Length of time: 15-20 minutes

Activity:

1. Hand out the Inventory and try to check the ONE that sounds most like you.
2. Teacher: there are no right or wrong responses to this inventory. Everyone learns differently. If you said to yourself "Wait a minute, I fit more than one of these descriptions," you probably do. Your response indicates a tendency toward a certain learning style, and it can help you understand why you learn more easily at some times than others.
3. You can use this information to be more successful in school. For example, suppose you're having a tough time in math. You checked 3 on the inventory, and now you know that you might learn best by doing hands-on activities. Ask your teacher if you can use manipulatives (things you hold and touch) to learn math concepts.
4. Using a pocket chart with mixed up letters ask a student who reported #3 on the inventory to arrange the letters (with your assistance) to make the correct word. That is another way you can help yourself become more successful in school on your spelling tests.

Just Different

Objective: To recognize that just because people are different doesn't mean that they are better or worse.

Materials: pencils

Length of time: 20-30 minutes

Activity:

1. Introduce the activity by asking students to get out a pencil that they have been using and to bring it to the front of the room. Explain that you will be talking about differences and that they will be using their pencils to do an experiment
2. Ask the students to examine their pencils carefully, looking for special characteristics that might help them identify their pencil. Then instruct them to put their pencils into a common pile.
3. Mix the pencils up. Then, one by one, ask each student to locate his or her pencil.

Discussion:

1. How many of you were able to find your own pencil without much difficulty? How did you do this?
2. What specific characteristics distinguished your pencil from someone else's?
3. Suppose that we had put people instead of pencils into the pile. Are there specific characteristics that distinguish people from another?
4. Just because you or your pencil is different, does that make you or it better than another? Why?
5. What problems might occur if everyone or everything were identical?

Extension:

Draw a picture or write about a time when you may have felt "different" than the other children.