

CREATING A DIVERSITY SESSION FOR YOUR FACULTY: *AN INTRODUCTION*

Description

It has become expected that high school students will study the many topics popularly associated with diversity, such as the history of slavery and the Civil Rights movement, the disenfranchisement of women and the Nineteenth Amendment, and even examining the social and personal effects of such “-isms” as racism and sexism. But while we expect our students to become well-versed in the topics of diversity, we as educators must also examine our own knowledge about and attitudes towards diversity.

Diversity includes characteristics such as race, class, and gender but also encompasses internal differences among people of the same ethnic, class, or gender backgrounds. Diversity includes an individual's family constellation and dynamics, educational background, hobbies, sexual orientation, skills, languages, physical abilities, and more. Our society is increasingly aware of and sensitive to the facts that we are an ever-increasingly diverse society and that we need to recognize and respect the complex uniqueness of individuals rather than try to force people to conform to a mythic "mainstream."

In our diverse society, only those who develop the skills to interact comfortably with people who differ from themselves and who do not succumb to easy stereotyping and oversimplification will find success in the professional world. Needless to say, school personnel must themselves learn these skills and traits so they can create classrooms that encourage all kinds of students to succeed and teach students the skills they will need to thrive in a diverse world.

This resource is meant as a beginning point for your school, a way to start the conversation around diversity and to begin the education of your faculty and staff. It will make people more sensitive and committed to issues of diversity and more able to respond to those issues.

The activities in this resource may be completed all at once during a half-day in-service or they may be broken up into 45- to 60-minute segments so that they can be completed over a longer period of time. Either way, they should be completed in order.

Audience: Faculty and staff of high school



race bridges
— for schools

*Race Relations
Seeking Harmony*

Purpose

To help administrators, teachers, and staff

- Become more aware of the many facets of diversity
- Explore their own experiences with diversity
- Identify the diversity of the school community
- Value learning about and addressing diversity in the school community
- Identify how understanding diversity can serve the quality of the school
- See diversity as a strength and tool in building faculty and school community

Before You Begin: A Caveat

Because this resource is meant to help schools address diversity at their own pace and within their own budgets, we do not assume that there will be an outside, trained facilitator to oversee the following activities. While these activities will help faculty and staff become more adept at identifying issues associated with diversity, they are introductory in nature. They are a beginning, an exploration.

It is recommended that once your faculty and staff have begun to work on becoming more culturally aware that you then provide a more in-depth and sophisticated anti-racism training. The following activities should not be advertised as anti-racism training, which is a very specific topic that ought to be facilitated by an experienced trainer who is competent to guide organizations and individuals through the hard work of discussing, addressing, and dismantling racism and white privilege.

The following activities, while introductory in nature, may lead to difficult and even tense conversations. For that reason, consider putting together a small team of people from your school to facilitate the activities; that team should be made up of people who are calm and diplomatic, who have a tolerance for heated conversations, and who might even be willing to do some outside preparation (see the Resources section) before facilitating the activities.

Resources

Books:

Lee, Enid, Deborah Menkart, and Margo Okazawa-Rey (eds.). *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*.

Kivel, Paul. *Uprooting Racism: How White People can Work for Racial Justice*.

Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*.

Sue, Derald Wing. *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation*.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” and Other Conversations About Race: A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity*.

Zinn, Howard. *A People’s History of the United States*.

Movies:

A Class Divided, which includes the blue eye/brown eye experiment (available at www.pbs.org).

True Colors (a video produced by ABC; available from MTI Film & Video).

Anti-Racism Training:

For Adults: Check with groups like the Anti-Defamation League (www.adl.org) and the National Conference for Community and Justice (www.nccj.org) to find training near you or go to www.susanohalloran.com for on-line teacher training.

For Students: Study anti-bias curricula, such as those resources put out by RaceBridges for Schools (www.racebridges.net/schools), Susan O'Halloran (www.susanohalloran.com), and Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org).

ACTIVITY I - DIVERSITY: THE BEGINNING

This activity helps people surface their knowledge of diversity and connect with the issues associated with diversity. The focus is on taking a personal inventory and on an interactive activity.

Opening Discussion: All the Facets of Diversity

In order to get the group active and unified, begin with a large group discussion by throwing out the question, **“Why are we here today?”** When someone says the equivalent of, “To talk about diversity,” ask **“And what is diversity?”** and **“What characteristics do we associate with diversity, for example ethnicity?”** (look for answers, such as sex, gender, age, socio-economic status, language, education, hometown, hobbies, etc.). Take as many answers as the group offers; don’t discourage any of the answers.

Personal Inventories

Once the brainstorming has come to an end, pass out **Handout #1: You’re more diverse than you think!** Ask people to take 10 minutes to fill it out as completely as possible.

Get people’s attention and ask them to get into pairs and share their lists with one another. Each person should take 3-5 minutes to share his or her answers. The pair should then take a minute or two to talk about what they have in common and how they differ. When they finish, ask people to share with the group what similarities they found with their partner. Then ask them to share their differences. Then ask what they were surprised to learn about their partner. Finally, ask them what they learned from this exercise. (Look for the group to mention that there are so many ways in which to be diverse.)

Ask the group how many of the questions and answers they discussed were about facets of diversity that would be easy to discover just by looking at a person or even by having the person sit in their classroom for a week or two. Then ask the group which facets of diversity would be difficult to discern just by looking at a person. Emphasize that we are all much more complex than we appear and even more complex than this worksheet can reveal.

Ask partners to discuss the following questions for another 5 minutes: **“Which of the questions on the worksheet relates to a part of yourself that another person must know about in order to really know you? Why? How would someone learn this information about you?”**

Call the group back together again. Have a few people in the group share their answers to those questions. Continue a large group discussion around the following questions: 1. How would it affect you not to be able to share all of yourself in community? 2. How would it affect you if one of the elements you shared on the sheet were made fun of or criticized here at school? 3. If you did not feel safe sharing one of your important facets of diversity here at school, how might you behave differently?

Wrap Up

Help guide the discussion to a close by listing on a flipchart or board the following (ask for the help of the group in making the lists):

1. **What are the different facets of diversity?** (When finished, ask the group to help you mark the ones that we can't recognize just by looking at someone. Put a star next to those.)
2. **What are the effects of not being able to share all of who you are, either because parts of you differ from the dominant culture or, worse, because facets of who are get mocked or criticized in your community?** (Look for answers like, "getting depressed," "not participating," "frustration," "anger," "giving up," etc.)

Wrap up by telling people that now that you have discussed the variables of diversity—that diversity is not only how we look on the outside but also our values, beliefs, histories, etc.—and the effects of not being able to share our whole selves that the next activity will ask us to identify our own experiences with those feelings.

ACTIVITY II - DIVERSITY: EXCLUSION /INCLUSION

This activity helps participants identify how our facets of diversity can allow us to feel like we belong or cause us to feel excluded.

Telling our Stories

Now we have shared some of the bare bones of ourselves with one another and discussed how it would feel to have one or more facets of our diversity suppressed or even ridiculed. We are beginning to see how complex diversity is and how easy it is to miss one of these facets in another person and perhaps how easy it might be to speak without thinking and send the message to a student that a facet of diversity of his or hers is not okay. Remember, we never know what lies beneath the exterior of our students, of what facets of diversity we are not aware!

Now we are going to have a chance to talk about a time when we have experienced feeling ignored, misunderstood, or even threatened because of being different from the group. Get into groups of four and take turns telling your stories about a time you *felt* excluded because of a facet of diversity that made you different from the group. Each person should take no more than 3 minutes. After all people have told their stories, take time to discuss the stories as a group, noting the similarities and differences among the stories and then discuss the impact of being treated differently.

Debriefing Questions (You may want to make these questions available during the discussion by passing them out or by writing them on the board.)

- What feelings do you associate with being excluded because of a perceived difference?
- Now how do you think about that part of yourself that others used to exclude you?
- What do you wish someone had said to you or done for you at the time you were excluded? Looking back at this experience, how do you wish you had responded to that experience?

Bring the conversation back to the larger group and have a few people share their stories and discuss one or two of the debriefing questions.

During this activity we had the chance to think about times we were excluded and how that affected us. In the next activity, we will turn to our own school community and our students and think about who might feel left out.

This activity asks faculty and staff to turn from considering their own internal and group diversity and from telling stories about their own feelings of exclusion to considering the diversity of your student body and what steps the adults can take in the school to make all students feel welcome.

During this time, there will be multiple groups working on different projects. Divide the participants into 4 groups and have them complete the following tasks. If groups have more than 8 people, create more groups and assign multiple groups to each task--they can compare notes later.

Group 1: Identify groups at your school who might feel excluded from the mainstream culture of the school.

Group 2: Identify positive actions and programs in place already and how to build on them.

Group 3: Assess the commitment of the school to diversity.

Group 4: Dream up your fantasy diversity initiatives / programs.

Give each group an instruction sheet (see **Handout 2**) and give groups 30 minutes to complete them.

Bring the groups back together and have the reporter from each group share the report from his or her group.

These are great reports and ideas! Clearly, we have a lot more training, learning, and work to do, but this is a good start. Some of you will want to start doing things differently as soon as students show up, so here are a few things you can start doing right away! (Pass out **Handout 3**.)

- **Here is a short resource guide to books, movies, and web sites to help get you started. We should all read the books by Loewen and Tatum!**
- **Begin playing the “Turn it Around” game. Whenever you hear a stereotype about a group of people, apply the same or similar statement about one of the groups to which you belong. Does it make sense or does it seem ridiculous? For example, if you hear someone say something like, “Well, of course she did well on the physics test, she’s Asian,” ask yourself what’s being implied. In this case, it is that all Asians are good at science. Create a statement like that about your own group; for example, “Of course she knows what to do in a crisis, she’s a teacher.” Here, the assumption is that all teachers are good in a crisis. How would that make you feel if you fell apart in a crisis? Even if you think there is some truth to the statement, do you want to be held to it at all times? Of course, the two statements above are positive, but imagine the pressure to live up even to so-called “good” stereotypes and the frustration of being lumped in with the group rather than seen as an individual. Or think about a negative statement: “Oh, he’s an athlete; he must not be too smart.” Would you say the same thing about the group to which you belong, whether it’s a book group, a knitter’s group, or a group for people who are woodworkers? When something doesn’t work when you turn it around, then you know it’s a stereotype!**



- **Take a look at the “Rules for a Diverse World” on the handout. Clearly, there are more than the ten rules listed here, but this is a good place to start.**

End the session by allowing people to write a brief evaluation—see the model one below—and then share that with the group. Give the group the opportunity to share what they think went well and what they want more of. Finally, end by allowing the group to identify what further training they would like to take in order to make the school a welcoming, inclusive community.

Notes to Facilitators:

The bolded text can be read out aloud and followed word for word; however, you may want to read over the material a few times so that you are comfortable putting these ideas into your own words, in the way in which you normally talk.

Handout #1: You're more diverse than you think!

Directions: Don't spend too much time thinking about your answers to the following questions—just jot down what comes to mind for each and move on. Complete at least ten of the questions below.

1. List the languages in which you are able to communicate.
2. List all the ways you would identify your race, ethnicity, and nationality.
3. Identify your birth order (oldest, youngest, middle, only, etc.).
4. What sex are you? What stereotypically masculine traits or behaviors do you have? Which stereotypically feminine ones? (Answer all of the questions, no matter what sex you are.)
5. List your hobbies.
6. Who was your role model as a child? Why?
7. Did you have enough money growing up? How does that affect your attitude towards money now?
8. Identify one tradition you continue from your childhood. How would an outsider to your family or culture learn about that tradition?



9. When you walk into a room of people you don't know, to which group do you gravitate? Why?

10. What is the reason you decided to work at a school? Does your career match your hopes?

11. List all the schools from which you have received a degree.

12. If you grew up in a religious tradition, do you still practice that faith? Why or why not?

13. If you were to have a discussion about the political issue that you think is most pressing for our country, to whom would you want to talk in this room? Why?

14. During a break from school, with whom do you spend your time? Identify one activity in which you like to participate.

15. When you think about spending some time with your colleagues addressing the topic of diversity, how do you feel? Why?

Handout 2: Group Instructions for Activity III

Group 1: Who Is Excluded?

Directions: As a group, brainstorm a list of which groups at your school might feel excluded from the "mainstream" culture of your school and why. Don't forget to think of non-student groups, too! Time Limit: 30 minutes.

Group 2: What Works Now?

Directions: As a group, brainstorm a list of ways that your school already addresses diversity. Put a plus sign (+) next to those programs/efforts that you think work well and then list ideas for expanding those efforts. Include everything, from the smallest to the largest efforts! Time Limit: 30 minutes.

Group 3: Assess Your Commitment

Directions: As a group, discuss the level of commitment you believe your school has to encouraging the diversity you have and to building bridges among the diverse groups in your school. List evidence that your school is ready to take on the long-range task of embracing and encouraging diversity; then list ways in which you think your school might resist embracing and encouraging diversity.

Group 4: Dreaming Of Diversity

Directions: As a group, pretend money and time are not considerations and brainstorm a list of diversity initiatives, programs, efforts, activities, etc. that you would love to see happen at your school. Do not limit yourselves in anyway.



Books

Kivel, Paul. *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*. Philadelphia, New Society, 1996.

Lee, Enid, Deborah Menkart, and Margo Okazawa-Rey (eds.). *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*.

Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*.

O'Halloran, Susan. *Kaleidoscope: Valuing Difference & Creating Inclusion*. Available at www.susanohalloran.com. A two-level curriculum for schools about diversity, race and dealing with difference.

Sue, Derald Wing. *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation*.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*.

Videos

A Class Divided. Lucasiewicz, M. (Producer). (available at www.pbs.org).

This video includes the original blue eye/brown eye experiment that had grade-school students take on roles of oppressed / oppressor based on their eye color. Demonstrates how quickly systems of prejudice and privilege can be created and enforced.

True Colors. Northbrook, IL: MTI Film & Video, 1991.

An ABC video with Diane Sawyer that follows two discrimination testers, one black and one white, as they look for jobs and housing, and try to buy a car. 19 minutes.

Skin Deep: College Students Confront Racism. Reid, F. (Producer/Director). San Francisco, CA: Resolution/California Newsreel, 1995.

Examines a multi-racial group of students discussing race and racism; demonstrates the possibility of changing attitudes through dialogue. 53 minutes.

Anti-Racism Training:

For Adults: Check with groups like the Anti-Defamation League (www.adl.org) and the National Conference for Community and Justice (www.nccj.org) to find training near you or go to www.susanohalloran.com for on-line teacher training.

For Students: Study anti-bias curricula, such as those resources put out by RaceBridges for Schools (www.racebridges.net/schools), Susan O'Halloran (www.susanohalloran.com), and Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org).

Turn It Around! Game



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Rules for a Diverse World

- **Ask!** When in doubt, ask! Not sure what to call someone’s ethnicity? Ask! Not sure if someone has dietary restrictions? Ask! (Remember to be tactful, however; it is not sensitive to ask someone, “what are you?” or other such alienating questions.)
- **People Speak for Themselves, not the Group.** One person can never speak for the entire group. Do not ask someone to speak for the whole group he or she belongs to.
- **Don’t Assume.** Don’t expect someone from another culture to become your teacher. Just because someone is different from you or belongs to a culture that has been historically excluded in your society doesn’t mean he or she wants to teach you all about that culture. (Remember, don’t ask questions you wouldn’t want to answer.)
- **Educate Yourself.** Educate yourself about other groups and cultures. There are plenty of books and movies to help you here—be curious and persistent.
- **Study Your Own Culture.** Know your own culture—study it, ask about it, and talk about it. Don’t think that only other people have cultures and that your only role is as an observer of other, more interesting, people. That shortchanges your culture and turns other people’s cultures into curiosities for your entertainment.
- **Don’t Be a Culture Hog.** Don’t try to be the expert on someone else’s culture or try to “act” like another culture.
- **Believe.** When people tell you that they have been excluded because of one or more of their facets of diversity, believe them and respect their feelings.
- **Humility.** It’s impossible to be fully culturally competent—how long would it take to know all ethnic groups, all socio-economic groups, all language groups? Rather, try to be culturally humble: willing to learn, to ask questions, and to be quiet rather than offend.
- **Look Deeper.** Remember that there is always more to a person than meets the eye. Don’t assume you know about the person just by looking at him or her or by meeting him or her briefly. Allow the other person to reveal his or her depths over time.

- **Oppression is Bigger than You.** If you are tempted to boil an “-ism” down to how individuals treat one another, remember that anti-racism isn’t just about being “nice,” it’s about changing the way the system works. Even if we all become accepting and nice over night, white people would still enjoy historical and political advantage.

Handout 4: Evaluation

Name: _____

Subject(s) Taught: _____

Level(s) Taught: _____

1. Identify two or three learnings you will take away from these diversity awareness activities.

2. How will these activities influence you at school?

3. What more would you like to learn about diversity, multiculturalism, racism/antiracism, etc.?

4. Do you know of any diversity / anti-racism trainers or programs that you would recommend?

5. Other comments:

