

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Course: Diversity

Level: High School



Objective: Students will be able to define diversity, describe the benefits of **diversity**, define and identify prejudice, and examine how emotions of pride and fear can affect how we treat others.

Course Intent: Provide tools for students to understand and recognize diversity and prejudice, engage in exercises to develop their understanding of diversity, and acceptance of differences among others.



Applications & Benefits:

Helping students to be able to fully accept each other, regardless of their differences, can help students combat prejudice and celebrate diversity.

Course Snapshot

This course incorporates the following lessons.

LESSONS	ACTIVITY	TIME REQUIRED	RESOURCES & MATERIALS NEEDED
#1 Introductory Lesson: Introductory Lesson: What is Diversity?	Small Group Activity Discussion	20 – 25 minutes	- Lesson definitions - Two items of food or objects that go together (see examples) - Chart paper - Timer
#2 What Makes Us the Same?	Whole Group Movement and Discussion	15 – 20 minutes	Yes, No and I Don't Know signs
#3 Everyone Struggles	Whole Group Individuals Writing and Discussion	20 – 25 minutes	- Lesson definitions - Scrap paper - Basket
#4 Connecting Emotions to Diversity and Prejudice	Whole Group Discussion	15 – 20 minutes each	- Lesson definitions - Chart paper or white board

DIVERSITY VS PREJUDICE

Lesson Rationale

Explicitly teaching about diversity has positive impacts on students. Understanding diversity involves knowing that fundamentally everyone has similarities. The process of learning diversity requires treating others with respect while celebrating differences.



Open and honest conversations about diversity in race, religion, gender, culture, abilities, language and more can help students feel more comfortable and safe learning alongside someone different than them.



Celebrating differences takes the “unknown” away and paves the way for acknowledging differing viewpoints to promote creativity.



A common misconception about teaching diversity is “colorblindness.” Students have been told that race, religion, or nationality should not matter and that children should treat everyone the same and be “color blind.” However, colorblindness does nothing to support tolerance, inclusion or acceptance, and detracts us from the beauty of diversity. When we ignore the many ways in which we are diverse, we miss out on helping students connect in a meaningful way.



The purpose of these lessons is to facilitate a conversation about how race, culture, nationality, family income, and religion can make us different, but that difference is what makes the world such a wonderful and unique place. To approach students with this idea, we must approach them in an honest and accepting manner while making it relevant to their lives.

Storybook Resources

There is a growing number of storybook resources for teachers to read and have available in their classrooms to support diversity. Below is a simple starting list. Remember to always provide a variety of storybooks in class, not just when you are discussing diversity. Model diversity on an everyday basis.

- *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz
- *The Skin You Live In* by Michael Tyler
- *Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match*/Marisol McDonald *No Combina* by Monica Brown
- *Pink Is for Boys* by Robb Pearlman
- *Julián is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- *Families, Families, Families* by Suzanne Lang
- *It's Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr
- *This is How We Do It: One Day in the Lives of Seven Kids from around the World* by Matt Lamothe
- *Everybody Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley
- *Mommy's Khimar* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow

- *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold
- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi
- *Same, Same But Different* by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw
- *A Family Is a Family Is a Family* by Sara O'Leary
- *Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story* by Reem Faruqi
- *Different is Awesome* by Ryan Haack
- *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae
- *Happy in Our Skin* by Fran Manushkin
- *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin* by Julia Finley- Mosca
- *I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Book About Understanding and Appreciating Each - Other* by Cindy Gainer
- *What's the Difference? Being Different Is Amazing* by Doyin Richards

Introductory Lesson #1: What is Diversity?

What to Know Before You Begin

Definition

What is diversity and why is it so important?

Diversity is made up of the qualities that make us different from each other. These differences can be skin color, family traditions, religion, or even how much money your family has. Diversity is an important factor in showing respect towards others and not just accepting differences but finding the beauty in our differences.



Fascinating Details

Did you know that the human brain is composed of many parts working together? Your brain contains approximately 86 billion neurons. A neuron is a cell that belongs to the nervous system and sends messages from the brain to the body. For you to take a step, neurons must pass information from your leg to your brain! If different parts of your brain can work together, imagine applying that type of cooperation to your school. Imagine students accepting each others' differences to come together, learn and grow together.



Activity:

In this activity, students will highlight the differences in two food items without knowing that these are two items that are often eaten and taste very good together. This exercise mimics the goal of diversity, to see that the beauty in our differences helps us work together!

Begin by dividing the class in half and giving each group one of the following items, hiding it so that the other group can't see it. The goal for each group is to use all their senses (yes, even taste!) to describe their item without giving out its name. Depending on any allergies in your class, here is a list of item combinations to choose from.

- Peanut butter and Jelly
- Salt and Pepper
- Cinnamon and Apples
- Cinnamon and Sugar
- Peanut butter and Chocolate
- Strawberries and Chocolate
- Butter and Popcorn

If you'd prefer not to use food, or it is not the best choice for your classroom, you can also use the following item pairs to illustrate the concept that two unlikely items make a great combination.

- Wheel and a Chair (wheelchair)
- Socks and Shoes
- Flowers and a Vase
- Seeds and Soil

Station the groups apart from each other to limit them from overhearing each other or trying to peek. It's important that they not know what the other group's item is. Provide each group with chart paper and markers to write down their ideas. Set a timer for 5 minutes and let the groups begin. Once the five minutes are up, ask the groups to present their descriptions to the other group. Students can try to guess what the item is, but the activity also works well if they don't.

After the groups have presented, ask the students, "How are these items different? Do they sound like they could go well together?" If students already guessed the items, they will most likely say, "Yes" right away. Focus on the descriptions and ask, "If you didn't know that this was chocolate, does it describe something that you would eat with this?" and use words from the descriptions.

Explain to students that it's the differences in the items that make them go so well together. Explain to the children that they just explored the diversity, or differences, among some items. Discuss the definition of diversity and ask students to think of some ways in which people are different (religion, skin color, ethnicity, language, etc). Focus discussion on the idea our differences are beautiful and make us unique. Just because we are different, that doesn't mean we can't play and love and work together. Diversity means accepting others for their differences, and showing respect to everyone, even though they might be different from you.

Ask students to talk with their neighbor or a partner. Have the pairs talk to each other and each share something unique or special about them. Ask students to share about family traditions, if they practice religion, places they've lived, languages are spoken at home, family members they live with, and more.

Lesson #2: “What Makes Us the Same?”

What to Know Before You Begin

Part of understanding the beauty behind diversity is that everyone has something unique to teach someone else, whether it is cultural, traditional, or just a different life experience. The best way to first teach students about acceptance is to show them that we are not all that different from each other in the first place.

Activity

For this activity, make sure that there is space for students to move about easily. Put a sign up on one side of the activity space that says “Yes” and on the other side “No.” Add “I Don’t Know” or “Unsure” to the middle.

Explain to students that you will ask the class a question, and their job is to move to the side of the room to their answer. If they are unsure, they can move to the middle. Ask students questions about common likes/dislikes, experiences and family. See the questions below.

- Do you like broccoli?
- Do you like to play video games?
- Do you have any pets?
- Do you like ice cream?
- Do you ride your bike/bus to school?
- Do your grandparents live with you?
- Do you have any siblings?
- Do you like spaghetti?
- Do you like to watch sports?
- Do you like to listen to music?
- Do you like to read?
- Do you like to play tag?



Afterward, have students talk about what they noticed. Were they surprised that they liked the same things as someone else? Did they learn something new about someone? Did they like everything that their friends liked? Discuss with students that we all have favorite foods, families, and hobbies. These favorite foods, families, and hobbies (etc) are sometimes different than the favorite foods, families, and hobbies that other people have.

Ask students to think about and name some other ways that we are the same and different. Have students talk with a neighbor and share about themselves. Ask them to consider the following questions.

- What is your favorite family tradition? What is it that you like about it?
- What is your favorite food? Is there a meal that your family has taught you how to make?
- Do you have siblings? How many?
- Do you own any pets? How many?
- What is your favorite thing to do on the weekends?

Ask students to note similarities and differences. When we share our differences with each other, we realize that differences do not need to prevent us from being friends, but instead, should help us understand that there are all types of people in the world and that we can learn something from those who are different than us.



Lesson #3: “Everyone Struggles”

What to Know Before You Begin

The purpose of this activity is to get students thinking about how they are similar to others and different than others, yet we can all still work, live and play together. Prejudice along with the topic of diversity, it is important to recognize when prejudice is occurring. Prejudice is a type of discrimination, of treating someone unfairly or differently. Prejudice is not based on facts, knowledge, reason or experience with someone, but an overgeneralization based on the way someone looks or acts that is different than you. As you can see, diversity aims to learn more about each other, thus eliminating prejudices.



Consider this simple example of prejudice.

“Since my Dad cooks better than my Mom, then I believe men are better cooks than women.”

This person has come to this conclusion without any other knowledge to support this conclusion. One person’s abilities do not represent an entire group of people’s abilities. On the other hand, diversity teaches us to learn about each other and embrace differences. This same person is possibly closing themselves off to a wonderful dessert made by a woman!

Activity

Begin with an easy task by asking students to write down something that makes them happy. They do not need to write their name on the paper. Put all the papers in a basket and read a few to the class. Reinforce the idea that we are all happy sometimes.

Next, ask students to write down something about a family or friend they care about. Remind students not to write down the name, just something general, like, “My mom makes the best hamburgers,” or “My friend plays dolls with me.” Repeat the activity by placing the papers in a basket and reading a few. Reinforce the idea that we all have people we care about and care about us.

Now, ask students to write down something that they struggle with. It could be a subject they don’t understand, a problem at home, or with a friend. Remind students that they don’t have to write their name. The two previous exercises were set up to build the trust that students know they could put their honest thoughts down without being singled out. After each paper is in the basket, read a few.

Reinforce the idea that we all struggle with something, and we don’t know what everyone else is struggling with. It’s important to treat each other kindly and get to know each other’s differences, instead of making judgments that are not based on facts.

Explore the topic of prejudice by explaining the definition. Explain that sometimes we make judgments about others without knowing what they are like or what they are struggling with, and this is not based on facts, but generalizations or opinions.

Consider another example of prejudice related to food.

“Chinese food tastes better than Italian food, so Chinese people are better cooks than Italian people.”

This statement is based on an opinion. Some people love Chinese food while other people love Italian food. Preference in food is a matter of opinion. However, many people will use opinion to classify an entire group of people.

You can choose to repeat the exercise by asking students to write down something that others often think wrong about them, perhaps based on their skin color, religion, clothes they wear or hobbies they have.

For younger students that can’t yet write, an option is to provide students with a variety of choices for each question and secretly placing that choice in the basket. For example, for the first prompt, “What makes you happy?” you can provide students with pictures of the school, a family, toys, friends, the beach, etc. The result will look more like a chart, but the idea is the same, that we all have different things that make us happy or that we struggle with.



Lesson #4: Connecting Emotions to Diversity and Prejudice

What to Know Before You Begin

Connecting Emotions

How do emotions affect diversity and prejudice? Our emotions and experiences influence how we treat others that are different than us, with pride and fear being two prominent examples. This lesson is divided into two different activities to look closely at each emotion.

What is pride and how does it affect diversity? Pride is a feeling of self-importance from something you did or something you have or have been given. Having pride isn't an inappropriate emotion. It becomes harmful when you are overly prideful and begins treating others unfairly because of your pride.



What is fear and how does it affect diversity? Fear and anxiety are closely related. Fear is the emotion you feel when there is a threat to your safety and anxiety is the emotion felt when there is something unknown or a perceived threat. Fear and anxiety cause us to make overgeneralizations, and these can be about people or situations. It's important to teach students that the actions of one person are not representative of the entire group.



Activity

Pride

Begin by sharing that pride is a sense of self-importance. Explain what pride is when you feel important because of something you did or something you have, and sometimes pride can be hurtful towards others that are different. It can be both a positive and negative quality. For example, when you work hard on a drawing and display it for the class to see, you are positively showing your pride. However, if you tell everyone that your picture is better than everyone else's, then your pride has been hurtful to others. Pride becomes harmful when you think you are more important than someone else.



On the whiteboard or chart paper, make a T-chart with a checkmark on one side and an X on the other. Write “show your picture” under the checkmark and “tell everyone yours is the best” on the other side.

Provide students with a few more examples of prideful situations. Have students discuss a positive reaction and a negative reaction to the scenario. Use the following scenarios.

- You just got a pair of brand-new shoes.
- You got an A on your report card.
- The tooth fairy gave you \$20 for your tooth.
- You scored a home run in kickball at P.E.
- The art teacher displayed your picture to the entire class.

Talk with students about the ways that pride can lead us to treat others differently, rather than showing the diversity and celebrating our differences.



Fear

Begin by sharing the definition of fear (see the Fear and Anxiety course for more information). Fear is the emotion you feel when you think there is a threat to your safety. Anxiety is closely related and is the emotion you feel when you are afraid of an unknown or perceived threat. Fear is being afraid of getting stung by a bee when it lands on your shoulder and anxiety is being worried that there might be a snake in the garden where you are picking vegetables.

Provide an example of fear for students to think about. Ask if they have ever had a nightmare and were then afraid to go back to sleep, thinking they might have another nightmare. Explain that they experienced fear and their fear of having a bad dream changed their actions.

Sometimes, a person's fear of someone different or something unknown can lead them to react negatively towards that person or situation.

Just like the activity on pride, on the whiteboard or chart paper, make a T-chart with an X on one side and a checkmark on the other. Use the example of the dream and write "every time I fall asleep, I will have a nightmare" on the side with the X. This is the overgeneralization and is not representative of every night we go to sleep. On the side with the checkmark, write, "I don't have a nightmare every time I fall asleep."

Discuss with students another example of a situation that may produce overgeneralizations from fear or anxiety. Have students discuss the overgeneralization being made and more constructive response. For example, seeing someone get attacked by a dog in a movie. The overgeneralization is that all dogs are mean and will bite, but that is not representative of all dogs. A positive response would be to think about why the dog attacked and avoid doing that. In the movie, if the dog was provoked, you could write, "Keep a safe distance from dogs" or "Ask the owner about the dog." Remind students (in each scenario) that the example is not representative of the whole.

A few more scenarios for a discussion are listed below.

- You got hit in the face with the kickball at P.E. You don't want to play kickball anymore.
- Right after lunch, you jumped on the trampoline and then got sick and threw up. Now you don't like jumping on the trampoline.
- You fell when you were riding your bike the other day and had to get stitches. You haven't ridden your bike since then.
- You went to the doctor for the flu shot and it hurt. You don't want to ever go back to the doctor.

End the discussion by asking students how this relates to making overgeneralizations about people. Does every girl like to play with dolls and every boy like sports? Does every brown skinned person eat spicy foods? Ask students if they'd like to share any ways that people have judged them based on something that wasn't true.



Quick Quiz

1. What is diversity?

- A. Qualities that make us different
- B. Accepting our differences
- C. Respecting others
- D. All of the above

2. Someone tells Derek that their shoes are better than his because theirs are new and Derek's are old and worn out. What do you do?

- A. Agree, and tell Derek his shoes are old and ugly.
- B. Ignore Derek because you don't want to be friends with him anyway.
- C. Tell Derek you think his shoes look comfortable and unique.
- D. Act like you didn't hear anything.

3. You have a new student in your class, but she doesn't speak English very well. You notice that she doesn't talk to anyone in the class and sits by herself at lunch. What should you do?

- A. Ignore her. She doesn't want to talk to you, and your friends are waiting for you.
- B. Tell her that she's not as good as you because she can't speak English.
- C. Sit next to her and find out more about her by asking her questions about using words you think she knows.
- D. Ask her why her English is so bad.

4. How can we avoid prejudice?

- A. Get to know someone before deciding how you feel about them
- B. Treat others with respect, even if you have a different opinion
- C. Avoid overgeneralizing about groups of people or situations
- D. All of the above

Teacher Feedback

Please provide insights on any adjustments made regarding the actual use of the content above.
Feel free to share your thoughts, suggestions, constructive criticism.

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