



LESSON PLAN: WE'RE ALL DIFFERENT ALIKE

OVERVIEW: This lesson is designed to provide students the opportunity to feel united with their peers by both their similarities and their differences. It will create a forum in which students can talk about why name-calling often occurs when an individual or group is deemed different, and how this targeting can be reframed into something positive.

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to identify similarities they have with their peers that they might not have known about.
- Students will be able to describe how it feels to be part of a group of similar peers.
- Students will be able to identify the difference between names used to unify a group of similar individuals and names used to single out or denigrate a group of similar individuals.
- Students will be able to reflect on times when they were singled out for being different and how that felt.
- Students will be able to perform in and respond to role-plays about name-calling and differences.

AGE/EXPERIENCE LEVEL: Adaptable for K-5 (see suggestions in Adaptations section below)

TIME: 2-3 sessions, 30-45 minutes each

MATERIALS: *Make A Group Suggested Questions*; paper; pencils; color-coded index cards or objects, pre-made; chart paper; markers; clock

PROCEDURE:

Part 1 – Group Game (10-15 minutes)

Share with students the following directions for the game *Make A Group*:

This game is about making groups of people based on something you have in common with those people. We are going to clear a space in the room so that everyone can stand up



and spread out with room to move. Then I am going to ask you to think about an answer to a question about yourself. Once you have thought of your answer, I am going to ask you to quickly find other people in the room who have an answer to the question that is the same or similar to yours. You can ask people their answers, or shout out your own in order to find other people to group with, but the rounds are going to move quickly. If you don't find a group right away, that's ok – you'll find one on the next question. When I raise my hand, it will be time to listen to the next question and make new groups.

Engage students in a number of rounds of the game using the *Make A Group Suggested Questions* supplement, in addition to other questions that are relevant and interesting to the group of students you are working with. It is important to ask questions that will include all students, and the idea is to ask questions quickly so students are kept on the move. If you can, close this portion of the lesson on a question that results in students being somewhat evenly divided into groups, and ask the groups to form small circles and sit down on the floor for the next part of the lesson.

Part 2 – Pass the Brainstorm and Discussion (15-20 minutes)

When students are seated in the last group they formed during the game, restate that they are currently part of a group of their peers who are the same as them in some way. Set them up to engage in a *Pass the Brainstorm* activity using the following instructions:

Each of you will be given a piece of paper and a pencil, and when I say “go” you will write down one idea for a positive, Put-up name for the group you are in. For example, if you are in a group of students that all say broccoli is their favorite vegetable, you might write down “The Broccoli Busters” or “Team Green” as your idea. When I give the signal you'll then pass your paper to the right so that you are holding your neighbor's paper and someone else is holding yours. Look at what the person before you wrote, and think of a new positive group name, and write it underneath theirs. Wait for the signal again, pass the papers again, and write a third idea. Let's do this activity in silence to give people space to think. After a few passes you'll share all the names you've come up with in your group.

Give students no more than 30 seconds to write down each idea before signaling a pass. When the brainstorming is done, give the groups a few minutes to read all the ideas they have collected out loud to each other and to choose one name they all like that could represent their group in a positive way. Ask each group to share their name with the class, and then briefly discuss the following questions:

- How did it feel to come up with a positive group name with your peers based on a



similarity you all share?

- Why do you think people use names this way?

Now repeat the instructions to the students for a second round of *Pass the Brainstorm*, except this time ask them to think about ideas for names that someone might use as a Put-down to their group. Emphasize that this round will also take place in silence, and ask students to agree not to use the put-down names outside the context of this portion of the activity. When a few passes have taken place, ask students to circulate the papers to all students in the group to read and reflect on. None of the put-downs will be read aloud during this section of the activity.

Pose the following questions to the class, and engage in a brief discussion of students' ideas:

- How did it feel to read the list of Put-down group names that your group brainstormed?
- Why do you think people use names this way?
- How did the two rounds of *Pass the Brainstorm* feel different from one another?

Part 3 – Jigsaw (10-15 minutes)

Execute the Jigsaw method of regrouping students by handing out one color-coded index card/object to each student that indicates which new group they will be a part of. Assign the number of colors to match the number of groups you want to end up with, and attempt to have each new group contain only one or two students from each of the old groups. For example, if there are 20 students that were previously grouped in 4 groups of 5 students each, choose 5 different colors and distribute them so that each student in the original group gets a different color. You will then end up with 5 groups of 4, and the groups should be fairly evenly mixed.

Once the Jigsaw is complete and everyone is seated with a new group, pose the following questions and ask students to engage in a small-group discussion in which each student has the chance to share an experience with the group:

- Can you remember a time when you were called a name or put down for being different from others around you?
- How did it feel?
- What did you do?

Give groups approximately 2 minutes per group member to share their experiences, and then draw the class back together and ask students to share any connections they see between the various stories their classmates told. Record the similarities that come up on chart paper for students to refer to in the next portion of the lesson.



Part 4 – Role-plays (20-30 minutes)

Challenge students to use the experiences they just shared about their individual experiences with being called names for being different, and the similarities they found among their stories to generate a role-play that they will practice and then perform for the class. The role-play should tell the story of someone who was called a name or bullied for being different, how it felt, and how they dealt with it. The scenario students choose to act out can be based on one student's experience, on a combination of a number of students' experiences, or can be entirely made up by the group.

To support the development of the group role-plays, encourage students to assign various jobs within the group that will help keep everyone on track towards preparing the skit. Not every student needs to act in the role-play, but every student must play an active role in the development of the skit. For example, students can participate as a timekeeper, a director, a narrator, or an actor.

When students have had adequate time to plan and rehearse, draw the class back together to watch the performances. If possible, lead a follow-up discussion using some or all of the following questions:

- How did the students being called names in the role-plays deal with being teased?
- What kinds of differences were the students being bullied for in the role-plays?
- Why do you think people call names or put people down because of differences?
- What was it like working in groups today with people that were both similar to and different from you?
- How do our differences help us do good work?

ADAPTATIONS:

For lower grade levels:

- In Part 1 of the lesson, provide students with language for how to make a group ahead of time. For example, tell students that after they have thought about their own answer to the question they can move to a classmate and say, "My answer is _____. Is that your answer, too?" If the two students have the same answer, they can then move as a pair and ask the same question to another classmate, and so forth.
- For *Pass the Brainstorm*, conduct the activity as a circle game, with students sharing ideas one at a time in succession around the circle. Provide students the option to "pass" on one round if they are stumped for more group names.
- Support the student Jigsaw by creating color-coded stations for students to move to, so



- that when they have their color-coded index card or object, they can move around the room to find the station that matches the color they have.
- Engage in the Part 3 discussion as a whole class, so that the teacher can help sustain the telling of individual student stories and draw parallels between them. Students can then develop role-plays in their Jigsaw groups.
 - As students develop a role-play, circulate and “check in” with the students playing the various roles in the group. For example, speak to all the time-keepers and make sure they are on track, then speak to all directors and make sure they feel good about things, etc.

For higher grade levels:

- The questions for *Make A Group* can be made more complex so as to challenge students in their quest to find others similar to them. For example, rather than “What color eyes do you have? Make a group with others who have the same or a similar eye color as you,” you might ask, “How many times have you moved?” or “How do you feel about school?”
- During the first section of Part 2, challenge students to use the lists of brainstormed names to create three brand new names that combine elements of a number of the group members’ ideas. Ask students to conduct a vote in order to choose the final group name.
- Ask students to develop a short written response (a free-write or journal entry) detailing their reaction to the second round of *Pass the Brainstorm* in which they think of and then read various Put-down names for their group. Engage students silently in this free-write before posing the questions for discussion.
- Challenge students to develop a written list of connections between the stories they tell in their Jigsaw groups about being called names or being put down for being different. Use these lists as a jumping-off point for large group discussion about common themes in students’ experiences with name-calling.

EXTENSION/ASSESSMENT:

As a follow-up to this activity, students can write a “review” of one or more of the role-plays that they saw classmates perform at the end of the lesson. Students can write both a brief summary of one or more of the stories the role-plays illustrated, as well as describe what they saw as the strong points of the skit. Additionally, students can develop alternate endings to the situations performed in the role-plays, illustrating how the characters might have acted/ reacted differently to the name-calling and teasing taking place.

This lesson can also be extended by engaging students in an activity called *Step Into the Circle*, which asks students to self-identify around various questions (for example, “Step into



the circle if you were born outside of the United States”), but does not involve forming groups. The activity is best done in silence, and students are encouraged only to self-identify when they feel comfortable. Depending on the questions chosen, *Step Into the Circle* has the potential to bring up stronger feelings about differences and self-identification than *Make A Group*, and should be followed up with group discussion or a personal free-writing assignment. Students can be encouraged to think about what was different about taking the risk of stepping into the circle versus making a group, and what they learned about themselves and their classmates during the activity.

Literature suggested for extension of lesson themes (see the *Suggested Literature* supplement, on page 34, for book descriptions):

It's Ok to Be Different
by Todd Parr (PreK-2)

Oliver Button is a Sissy
by Tomie DePaola (PreK-2)

Alley Oops
by Janice Levy (PreK-2, 3-5)

Felita
by Nicholasa Mohr (3-5)

Pinky and Rex and the Bully
by James Howe (3-5)

Mr. Lincoln's Way
by Patricia Polacco (3-5)



MAKE A GROUP SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- What did you have for breakfast (lunch, dinner last night, etc.) today? Make a group with people who had the same thing for breakfast that you did.
- What is your favorite color (animal, ice cream flavor, day of the week, etc.)? Make a group with people who have the same favorite color that you do.
- How do you feel about vegetables (fruits, seafood, chocolate, etc.)? Make a group with people who feel the same way about vegetables that you do.
- How many pets (cats, dogs, fish, etc.) do you have? Make a group with people who have the same number of pets that you do.
- What color are your eyes (hair, etc.)? Make a group with people who have the same color eyes that you do.
- What do you usually do right after school (when you first get up, during recess, etc.)? Make a group with people who do the same thing after school that you do.
- What kind of shoes (pants, shirt, socks) are you wearing today? Make a group with people who are wearing the same kind of shoes as you today.
- How many people are there in your family (living in your house, sharing a room with you, etc.)? Make a group with people who have the same number of people in their family that you do.
- How do you feel about swimming (reading books, dancing, biking, etc.)? Make a group with people who feel the same way about swimming that you do.