



Strategies for Teaching the Value of Diversity

Curriculum Unit 97.04.02
by Christine Elmore

Introduction

In this unit I plan to present some strategies that teachers can use to help children come to value the diversity that exists in the world around them—on a small scale, in their schools, communities, the teams they play on, and penpals they interact with, but also in a larger framework, as children inevitably encounter diversity through the media. Television, videos, books, newspapers and magazines, etc., continuously bring to our living-rooms the concerns, needs and accomplishments of people of all types from different cultures and ethnicities. “The World is coming to America,” Gust and McChesney exclaim in the introduction to their book, *Appreciating Differences*, and we, both as parents and teachers, have a responsibility to help our children to become more appreciative of the differences that surround us.

My approach will be to present concepts in a particular sequence, one building on the other, beginning with having my students take a closer look at themselves, their names, their families and their neighborhoods in an effort to foster their knowledge and appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of a group. From there we will move on to the exploration of ‘differences’ and ‘similarities’ in people. Following this, we will examine stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. Because I am a teacher of primary-aged children, I have chosen concepts and learning activities that are both specific and concrete. I leave the teaching of the more complex concepts of racism and oppression to the teacher of the older child.

Good stories, says Louise Derman-Sparks in her book, *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*, “capture the heart, mind and imagination, and are an important way to transmit values” (p.16). I plan to use children’s literature—both fiction and nonfiction and poetry—as a vehicle to introduce each topic. I find that a well-selected piece of children’s literature embodies the essence of the concept and expresses it in ways that children can identify with much more than any single poster, audio-visual aid or mini-lecture that I might give. To bring further clarity and meaning to the concept being explored, I have chosen relevant interdisciplinary activities to accompany each lesson.

I teach second-grade in a self-contained classroom at Lincoln-Bassett Community School. My children are primarily from African-American descent, a heterogeneous group with varying abilities in the 7-to-9 year age range. Although I have designed this unit with them in mind, I am confident that it could easily be adapted by teachers to suit the K-3 grades, if not older.

The lessons in this unit center around the following diversity themes, one building on the other:

I.) Valuing ourselves as individuals and as members of a group.

II.) Looking at the similarities and differences of people.

III.) Understanding stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.

The lessons will be introduced on a daily basis for a period of about 45 to 60 minutes. I anticipate the unit covering a four to six month span of time.

Part of the challenge of designing my lessons has been simply identifying and acquiring appropriate samples of children's literature at the primary level to help introduce and support the particular multicultural theme being explored. To my knowledge there is no single resource at the primary level comparable to Hazel Rochman's excellent resource for adolescent literature, entitled *Against Borders: Promoting Books for a Multicultural World*. I have, therefore, undertaken the laborious task of reviewing numerous picture books in an effort to select those that, in my estimation, most effectively address the themes I am covering in my unit. I have ultimately found more good books than I could possibly use in my limited unit, and so I have provided two appendices preceding the bibliography pages in which I have listed other books that teachers may consider in presenting the various multicultural themes. Appendix A includes books whose main theme concerns identity, family and heritage. Appendix B includes books centering around the themes of neighborhoods, similarities and differences in people and prejudice.

Before I begin introducing the lessons (which begin under Section I below), let us take a brief look at the four approaches for implementing multicultural education in the classroom as put forth by James Banks, a major theorist in the field.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960's more efforts have been made to integrate ethnic content into the school curriculum which before that time had been reflective exclusively of the majority white culture. In his book entitled *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, James Banks describes four approaches that have evolved by which this integration can be implemented. He ranks them in order of their effectiveness.

In the **contributions approach**, the mainstream curriculum stays relatively intact and the teacher simply inserts content about ethnic heroes/ heroines and specific cultural artifacts (such as food, music, celebrations of various ethnic groups, etc.). This is a quick and easy way for teachers to create a more multicultural curriculum and it at least provides students with one-time experiences of particular heroes/ heroines. Clearly, this approach has its drawbacks. It does not enable students to develop a more global view of the role played by the various ethnic groups in our society. They may learn about specific individuals of various ethnicities and yet not understand the role they played in the total context of our country's history and society. In addition, with this approach the insertion of only very discrete cultural aspects fails to present students with a complete picture of the culture, often simply trivializing it and, in fact, creating misconceptions. Banks suggest that such an approach may even reinforce stereotypes.

In the **additive approach**, a book, unit or course is integrated into the core-curriculum without restructuring it, thus leaving the content and perspective primarily Eurocentric. Such an effort is often piecemeal and, similar to the 'contributions approach', it fails to provide students with an adequate view of the many-faceted ethnic content from multiple perspectives. In the final analysis, students are still not enabled to appreciate the

many ways in which our country's various ethnic groups are interconnected.

In the **transformation approach**, the core-curriculum's basic goals, structure and perspectives are changed in order to help students view issues, concepts and conflicts from multiple ethnic perspectives and points of view in an effort to enhance their understanding of both the development and complexity of our society. So when students study the American Revolution, for example, they learn about it from the perspectives of the many groups that were involved.

The fourth approach, the **social action approach**, encourages students to reflect on the particular issue or concept under study, synthesize their knowledge and make some decisions about it. Learning is extended beyond the classroom to the real world and students are encouraged to take some form of political or social action on a variety of community issues.

James Banks points out that the movement to infuse multicultural content into the core-curriculum is going to have to be gradual. Therefore, the teacher may find that she begins with the 'contributions approach' and later builds on it by using elements of the 'transformation approach'. In fact, these approaches are frequently combined as teachers strive to make their curricula more and more effectively multicultural.

The primary goals of a multicultural curriculum and the ones I am including as my unit objectives are the following:

- 1.) To help every student to build a strong and confident self-identity as well as an informed and proud group-identity.
- 2.) To help students to develop an enthusiastic and creative interaction with diversity.
- 3.) To help students develop the necessary critical thinking skills for speaking up for oneself and others in the face of injustice.

Now, let us begin our lessons under the three following sections.

Section I—Valuing Ourselves as Individuals and Members of a Group

In the first lesson of this section, as we begin an exploration of our own individual identities, we will first take a look at **our names**. The first book that I will use to introduce this topic is *Chrysanthemum*, by Kevin Henkes. It is a story about a little mouse who has always thought her name was perfect until she begins school. It is there that she discovers that she is the only one with a very long and unusual name, for which she is constantly being teased. After reading the story, we will discuss how Chrysanthemum felt, and find out if anyone has ever experienced a similar trial when their name made them feel unusual. I will then ask the students to pretend that they could talk to the main character and to think about coming up with one question that they would like to ask her. After putting the questions in a jar, I would ask pairs of students to come up to the front of the room, one taking the role of Chrysanthemum and the other of the interviewer. Questions would then be selected and responded to.

This book is a natural springboard for the following two math activities: After determining that Chrysanthemum has 13 letters in her name, students would be instructed to print out their names on small index cards, counting the number of letters in their first names. Students would be asked to give their estimations of the longest and shortest numbers of letters they think we will find in our class. Recordings of their estimations would be made for later comparison. We would then construct a simple class name bar-graph. Numbers ranging from 2 to 14 would be written horizontally on the bottom of large chart paper. Students would come up and tape their name cards above the corresponding number, thus creating vertical bars. Much comparison of other names would ensue as we attempted to read and interpret our bar-graph. Number sentences using the symbols =, > and < would be used. (i.e., Gwendolyn's name > Tobias's name). A second activity taken from Mary Baratta-Lorton's book, *Mathematics Their Way*, begins with the students being given a class-list of everyone's first name written on graph paper. After cutting the name strips out they would be given a large piece of paper on which to categorize and glue them. This large paper would be divided into three rows labeled 'More', 'The Same', and 'Less'. By counting and comparing each name in relation to his/her own, the student will place the others in the appropriate section.

To involve the family in our exploration of names, students will bring home a questionnaire to be completed. Such questions as: 'Are you named after anyone?' 'Does your name have a special meaning?' 'Do you have a nickname?' 'Has anyone ever teased you about your name? If so, how did you feel?' 'Has anyone ever mispronounced your name? Explain.' One way to share the completed questionnaires would be to break up into cooperative groups of four and present them. Then they could be made part of a class-name booklet.

A second lesson focusing on the fact of our names being an important part of our identity would begin with a book entitled *Ripeka's Carving* by Jenny Hessel, taken from Stage 4 of the Literacy 2000 Booklets (a series used in many elementary schools in our district now). In this story, everyone at school, from the principal to the teacher and the students in her class, mispronounce her name and call her 'Rebecca' and it is only when Ripeka gets in trouble for carving her name on her desk that people learn her real name and the reason for her distress! One way to make the message of this story more meaningful would be to have students role play and reenact the story impromptu style. They would also be encouraged to act out variations on this theme, perhaps based on some of their own experiences. An art-activity would follow where students create crayon etchings on which they carve out their names and display them in the room. In an effort to explore how our names tell much about ourselves, we would then write acrostic poems using our names as the subject. In this type of poem, your first name is written in a vertical fashion and each line of the poem is made to describe you in some way. For example:

Makes good peanut butter cookies

Always cheerful

Reads Nancy Drew novels

Yellow is her favorite color

In our next subsection on identity we will explore our relationship with the most important group that we will ever belong to— **our family**. I will begin with a children's book, entitled *I Love My Family*, by Wade Hudson. In this story we read about a young African-American boy's description of an annual family-reunion in North Carolina. Every year the family gets bigger, he tells us as we view illustrations of individual extended family members of all ages and often with particular eccentricities, all valuing the reunion as a time to strengthen

bonds and interact with each other. At one point in the story a family tree is mentioned, which can be taken as an opportunity to discuss what a family tree is and how we could create one (with the help of family members) on a very simplified scale, perhaps beginning with great grandparents down to grandparents, parents, siblings and, finally, us. This information could be arranged in pictures of apples strategically placed to indicate succession on a background of a large tree. (For those children whose family situations are not happy,—and I do think the teacher needs to be aware of this possibility—I might suggest encouraging those children to focus on the meaningful relationships they have with teachers and classmates at school.).

From such an activity naturally springs a consideration of the countries of origin of our families as we learn that, in fact, most families in our country started off somewhere else. Students would be asked to locate these countries on a large world map. Yarn connecting a treasured family photo brought into class with the location on the map might aptly display our various origins. Another very visual way to display the class's diverse origins would be to construct a bar-graph with vertically placed number-cards indicating the number of students with a particular country of origin placed above the horizontally displayed country of origin name-cards.

Another book, *Family Pictures*, by Mexican-American author, Carmen Lomas Garza, vividly depicts her childhood memories of special family events, including a town cakewalk, making tamales and picking oranges at her grandparents' house. Following the reading of this story, students would be asked to write about and paint pictures of special family events that they remember fondly.

To further develop an appreciation of one's heritage, our next lesson would begin with a reading of the book, *Masai and I*, by Virginia Kroll. In this delightful story, Linda, a young African-American girl, learns about East Africa and the Masai people with whom she develops a strong feeling of kinship. The similarities and differences between Linda's life in an apartment building and life in a Masai village are beautifully depicted in both pictures and words. My students would then be invited to learn more about their family origins, and to once again encourage the home-school connection, they would be asked to interview a family member. Such interview questions as these would be included: 'How long has your family lived in their present neighborhood?' 'What other places have you and your family lived in?' 'When did your family come to the U.S.? Why did they come?' 'What was the occupation of your ancestors when they first came to the U.S.?' 'What language did they speak then and what language do you and your family speak now?' Then students might be asked to describe something about their heritage that they are proud of. Brief, oral reports presenting some of the interview information could be given to the class.

To further this exploration of one's heritage, students could select an aspect of their family's country of origin (food, dress, music, religion, homes, roles of men and women, etc.) and, with the help of an older reading buddy (perhaps a fifth-grader), research it in our school library. Facts would be gathered and the final product would be constructed in the form of a 'research poster' of their chosen cultural aspect, containing illustrations and fact-cards creatively displayed for others to view and discuss.

In a third subsection devoted to **our neighborhoods**, we extend the group to which each student belongs even further. To have my students mentally place themselves in their neighborhoods I would read a poem by Eloise Greenfield called, "Watching the World Go By," which reads as follows:

Watching the World Go By

sitting on my front step

watching the world go by
I'm sitting on my front steps
watching the world go by
when I seen all the trouble
I know life ain't no piece of pie
looking from my front steps
I can see the world go by
I'm looking from my front steps
seeing how the world goes by
when I see so much joy
I know I got to try

(taken from *Nathaniel Talking*) After closing their eyes and being encouraged to calmly envision what they see going on around them in their neighborhood from their front steps, students would be asked to draw an action picture of what they saw, including as much detail as possible (buildings, people, nature, etc.). Such pictures could be easily made into a big book entitled 'Scenes From Our Neighborhoods'. Poems from Eloise Greenfield's and Jan Spivey Gilchrist's *Night on Neighborhood Street* may also serve to capture some of the reality of my students' experiences in their neighborhoods, and could be read aloud as they work on their scenes.

A superb book that takes the reader through a neighborhood in New York City as seen through the eyes of an eight-year-old African-American girl is *Kimako's Story* , by June Jordan. As Kimako walks her neighbor, Bobby's, dog through the streets of her neighborhood we visit places like Milton's Antique Store where people take their worthless junk to trade for cash, and a park full of trees and bushes where kids have fun in a wading-pool on one side and, on the other, men with no socks play checkers on concrete tables and share bottles of whiskey wrapped in brown paper bags. We meet a ten-year-old named Roderico—who always wants to beat Kimako and her cousin up! Then there's Theresa, who is going to be fat and have bad teeth because of all the candy she gets to buy and never shares.

Kimako maps out her walks through her very interesting neighborhood with a simple dotted path and X's marking the spots she visits. After modeling a similar walk-through of my own neighborhood on large chart paper, I would ask my students to map out a route of their own, visiting some of their favorite places in their neighborhoods. Children could work in pairs and help each other.

The following math activity would also fit nicely in our exploration of neighborhoods. Students would be asked to draw a detailed picture of the house or apartment building they live in on an index card including the address at the bottom. We would then take a closer look at the street names, grouping them according to whether they use the word street, boulevard, circle, court, avenue or circle as part of their name. These 'house cards' would then be placed on the class bar-graph under the appropriate category.

Kimako also shares with the reader many poem-puzzles that she likes to make up, like this one:

Poem Puzzle # 4

When it rains I see
Things looking really clear and very
Soft to me
When the ___ comes out
All I have to do is _____ and _____
And _____.

This is followed by a delightful sketch illustrating what she does after it rains. This type of poem-puzzle has a rather simple structure, one that my second-graders could successfully imitate. And so they would be asked to create some of their own about the places, people and happenings in their neighborhoods, which they could later exchange with partners who would attempt to complete the blanks in a variety of ways. Their drawing could accompany these poem-puzzles.

Section II—Looking at the Similarities and Differences of People

My approach will be to explore the similarities among people and then move on to a celebration of our differences. So we might begin this section by turning off the light with poet, Shel Silverstein:

No Difference

Small as a peanut,
Big as a giant,
We're all the same size
When we turn off the light.
Rich as a sultan,
Poor as a mite,
We're all worth the same

When we turn off the light.
Red, black or orange,
Yellow or white,
We all look the same
When we turn off the light.
So maybe the way
To make everything right
Is for God to just reach out
And turn off the light!

(*Where the Sidewalk Ends* , p.81) After discussing how we as human beings share so many things in common, I would ask my students to imagine a world where everyone looked, dressed and acted the same. In Peter Spier’s *People* , a book that cultivates appreciation of the diversity of our physical and cultural characteristics, there are two large-page illustrations at the end that I would show the class. The first presents an urban setting where all of the buildings are brownish, all vehicles green, and all people are of one skin color and are dressed in identical, brown clothes. I would ask the students to imagine what life would be like in such a setting and to write about it in their journals.

I would then ask the class to join me in “turning on the lights” and take a look at all the *difference* that surrounds us. The second illustration in Spier’s book shows an urban setting rich in diversity of ethnic groups and store fronts. As we attempt to gather adjectives for our word-bank, I would ask the students to describe what they see in the contrasting illustration—which they could refer to later when writing about the scenes they are to create, mural-style, on large pieces of butcher-paper (and which may be entitled “The Beauty of Difference”). Before beginning the murals, I would read *People* aloud to the class, noting as we go the numerous differences we may encounter in the people around us. This book will be available for them to refer to as they create their murals.

To appreciate the diversity we have right within our own classroom, we would go on to take thumbprints of

ourselves, each of which will be unique, and compare our eye shape, hair texture and skin tones. *People* lends itself well to an exploration of these differences because of its skillful focus in the very beginning on the varying physical characteristics of people.

We vary in our preferences, not just in our looks. To illustrate this, I would have the students complete a series of simple sentence-starters, some of which might include:

My favorite food is _____.

I never like to _____.

I like reading books about _____.

When I grow up I want to be a _____ because _____.

My favorite pet would be _____.

Three wishes I would make if I could would be _____.

The clothes I most like to wear are _____.

Usually after school I like to _____.

Eloise Greenfield has written a wonderful poem describing all of the things that make up this individual:

By Myself

When I'm by myself
And I close my eyes
I'm a twin
I'm a dimple in a chin
I'm a room full of toys
I'm a squeaky noise
I'm a gospel song
I'm a gong
I'm a leaf turning red
I'm a loaf of brown bread
I'm a whatever I want to be
An anything I care to be
And when I open my eyes
What I care to be
Is me

(taken from *Honey, I Love*) Following the structure of this poem, I would ask my students to list sounds, songs, rooms or buildings, musical instruments, food and plants that would describe them. A variation of the game, charades, could be played where children attempt to act out the object most like them for others to guess. They would then create their own version of “By Myself.”

The next book I would use is Norma Simon’s *Why Am I Different?* , which very simply, but quite effectively, has children explaining to the reader the many and varied ways that they are different—in preferences, type of family, abilities, type of home, foods they eat, occupations of their parents, etc. This book celebrates the uniqueness of each individual, suggesting that the differences in people is what makes our world such a rich and interesting place. She promotes the idea that the strength of our culture lies in our diversity and in the contributions that individuals continually make. I would then ask the class to participate in a ‘living Venn diagram’ activity to get a clearer idea of the preferences, similarities and differences found in our class. This activity is outlined in detail in Lesson Plan One found in this unit.

Continuing with the theme of appreciating similarities and differences, we might move on to a wonderful story by Patricia Polacco, entitled *Mrs. Katz and Tush* . In this story the two main characters, different in race and culture, age and gender, develop a lasting friendship and come to see how their heritages share common themes of suffering and triumph. Its great appeal lies, I think, in its centering around an event that children can relate to: the adoption and caring for a runt kitten (without a tail, in fact) which draws Larnel, a young African-American boy and his older neighbor, Mrs. Katz, a Jewish emigrant from Poland, closer together. An unlikely pair, they become close friends. Through them we learn about their ancestors’ similar beginnings in slavery and the years of segregation and discrimination. After reading this story I would ask the students to think about the two main characters, their differences and similarities. Their responses could be depicted on a ‘Venn diagram’ like this:

(Figure available in print form)

Can people who are very different from each other become friends? Children would be asked to reflect on their own prior experience. Stories could be shared orally or in journals. Because the characters are so well-developed in this story, it lends itself well to creating a play or puppet show about them. We leave the book with a strong sense of what Larnel and Mrs. Katz were really like, so much so that the students could probably predict in future journal entries how they would act in other every-day situations, such as:

☐☐Larnel’s birthday party

☐☐Caring for a stray puppy

☐☐Larnel’s house loses its heat

☐☐Larnel’s team wins the championship

☐☐Mrs. Katz buys a new hat

Section III—Understanding Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination

With the book, *Mrs. Katz and Tush*, we approach the concept of stereotypes. A stereotype can be defined as a judgment made about a group of people based on only a small amount of information. Stereotypes exaggerate beyond the facts and often use words like all, none, always, never and every. Some examples I might include would be: Athletes are never studious. Teenagers are not respectful of adults. People who wear glasses are always very smart. Girls do not like sports. I would then posit the question: If our main characters didn't know each other and relied only on stereotyping each other, what might they think? Perhaps the following adjectives would be offered:

Mrs. Katz	Larnel
crabby, mean	noisy
critical	unfriendly, disrespectful
not cool	reckless
sickly	interested only in hanging
rich	out with his friends

We would discuss how each stereotype is not really true and in this case does not allow for individual differences. Another activity to help students identify stereotypes would be one where they were given a list of statements that they were to label as either facts or stereotypes. The list would consist of such statements as: Children can never make decisions for themselves. There are mostly women teachers at our school. Girls cannot play basketball. They would complete the exercise working in groups of three or four, later coming together as a large group to discuss their findings.

From this concept we could move into the notion of prejudging people before getting to know them. Taro Yashima's *Crow Boy* will lead us nicely into this new subsection. In this story, set in a Japanese village, a small boy who is known by the name, Chibi, is rejected and continually ridiculed by his classmates. Because he is very quiet and shy, they think he is stupid. No one plays with him and he is left by himself. Yet he comes to school every day, and it is not until five years have passed that an individual breaks the pattern of prejudice and discrimination. A new teacher encourages Chibi and appreciates his drawings and his knowledge of nature. At a school talent-show Chibi demonstrates his talent of birdcalling, specifically imitating the voices of crows. Both adults and children are amazed at his skill and feel ashamed of their thoughtless treatment of him for all those years. From then on Chibi, given the new name, Crow Boy, is accepted and appreciated for what he really is by the village.

To simulate being an outsider like Chibi we might form a circle and lock hands to keep out a select few (who could handle the situation well enough) who would try hard to break through to get in the circle. Then we would all come back together to talk about what it felt like to be an insider and an outsider. Further discussion and writing might center around such topics as: If I were 'Crow Boy' I would have _____. Ways I could have made someone like 'Crow Boy' feel accepted in my class are _____. Think of a time when you felt that no one accepted you. Describe it.

There are direct ways to communicate to others when you find yourself in conflict situations. Lesson #16 (intermediate level of the section on relationships) in the *Project Charlie* curriculum advises the person to begin with effective body language which includes: standing or sitting up straight, looking directly at the other person and maintaining eye contact. As you talk in a normal voice, you make your point in an honest and direct way.

Using “I” statements can effectively convey your feelings to the other person without judging, threatening or blaming them. Lesson # 17 in this same section provides students with role-play situations where they gain practice in making these “I” statements. The following structure is suggested:

I feel _____ when you _____ because it seems
_____. I want you to _____.

Another activity to follow the reading of *Crow Boy* would be to have each student imagine he/she is either Chibi or his friend. They would then practice making “I” statements addressing jeering classmates or villagers. Below is one possible role-play situation:

Chibi is being teased by other classmates for the different-looking clothes he wears to school. Imagine that you are either Chibi or his friend and write an “I” statement to express your feelings. In order to include practice using good body language, have the students actually “act out” their responses.

To explore the effect of prejudice and discrimination further, I plan to use the immortal Dr. Seuss’s *The Sneetches* . Before reading it to the class, I would use the following simulation activity which enables students to experience feeling judged and being excluded because of a physical trait that they have no control over: wearing a star. This activity is outlined in detail in the previously mentioned book, *Appreciating Differences* (pp. 46-48). In brief, the class will be divided into two groups randomly, one being told privately by the teacher that they will wear stars and receive special treatment. The other group remains uninformed and without a star. After a period of time, the teacher declares that a mistake has been made and those with stars are to give them to those without, who then receive special treatment. After more time has passed, the students are told to dispose of the stars, that they are all special and they don’t need stars to prove it. The teacher then promotes a discussion centering around students feelings and insights gained from the experience and their recalling any real-life instances of unfair treatment. I would then read *The Sneetches* aloud which, I think, will have a greater impact coming after the simulation activity.

Discrimination based on a trait that one has no control over—in this case, a person’s nationality or ethnicity—is powerfully portrayed in a book by Ken Mochizuki, entitled *Baseball Saved Us* . It is about life in an internment camp in the desert for Japanese immigrants and their children during World War II. The story is told through the eyes of a young Japanese boy. There was no privacy for families in such a camp and they were left with endless hours and nothing to do. Tension among the inhabitants builds until, finally, the boy’s father comes up with the idea of playing baseball, preparing a baseball field and setting up teams. People rally together and are able to channel their feelings of helplessness and anger into a constructive physical and social activity. The boy’s struggle continues even after they leave the internment camp and return home, as he remains excluded in the larger community and is continually ridiculed by his classmates. What finally binds him together with his classmates is a baseball game, where he is able to play an important role in his team’s winning.

Following the reading of this book some students in the class could role-play the following situation:

Ken is on your baseball team and is up to bat next. As he gets into position to hit, the opposing team members start shouting out, “The Jap’s up next. He’s no good! He can’t hit! Easy out!”

After they have finished the role playing, have the students describe how they felt playing the parts they did.

Ask the students (actors and audience) to define the problem and come up with possible solutions. Ask them if they have ever been in a similar situation.

The World of Difference Institute Elementary Guide provides additional role-play situations (pp. 135-137) on the theme of prejudice and discrimination that would effectively extend this lesson. Also, the *Project Charlie* curriculum provides 'We All Lose Situation Cards' (p. 276) in Lesson # 15 of the intermediate level section on relationships similar in content and format to those just mentioned.

The unit ends with my students just getting their feet wet in the matter of becoming more open to the diversity around them, but it is a beginning, a seed to nurture, as we make our way through the school year together.

Lesson Plan One

Objective: To learn about the characteristics that make us either different from or similar to others.

Materials: Large pieces of white and yellow rope, small and large index cards, markers.

Procedure:

1. Ask the students "Are each of you different in some ways from your other classmates? Let's find out." Instruct the students to simply stand up every time they fit the characteristic described. Read from the following list of characteristics.

Which of you: Is wearing a watch? Has gone camping before? Can play a musical instrument? Has a baby brother or sister? Is wearing black socks? Likes to eat salad? Has a birthday this month?

2. Clear a large space in the classroom to lay out the two colors of rope and make a 'living Venn diagram'. Arrange the yellow pieces of rope into two interlocking circles so that it looks like a Venn diagram. Then arrange the white piece of rope so that it encircles the yellow circles and serves as the universal set.

3. Tell the class: "Let us further explore our similarities and differences." Students should already be familiar through past lessons with using and interpreting Venn diagrams. Place a large label written on a large index card with the word 'pizza' in one yellow circle and another with the word 'spaghetti' in the other yellow circle. Instruct the students to go stand in the circle that shows their preference. If they like both pizza and spaghetti, they are to stand in the space where the circles interlock. If they like neither, they are to stand in the universal set space.

4. Pull one student out to be the reporter. He/she is to count and total the members of each 'set' (i. e., 6 students like pizza, 8 students like spaghetti, 7 students like both and 1 student likes neither).

5 . Continue this activity choosing specific items from such categories as: activities we like to do, foods we like to eat, school subjects we're good at, books we like to read, facts about our families and places we like to go.

6. Further activities could include students conducting surveys of student preferences, collecting and totaling the data and displaying the results on a large class bar-graph to provide a real visual presentation of individual similarities and differences within the class.

Lesson Plan Two

Objective: *To discover that the letters in your first name create a pattern.*

Materials: *The Patchwork Quilt by Valerie Flourney, large graph paper, crayons, unifix cubes in assorted colors, glue, scissors, 5" x 5" squares of tag board, origami paper (in assorted colors and designs) cut into 1" squares, butcher paper.*

Procedure:

- 1 . As a warm-up in becoming more familiar with the names of everyone in the class, begin by having the students sit in a large circle. Tell the students, "I want you to think of the beginning sound in your first name and then think of something you like that also has that same beginning sound. For example, a student named Karissa might say: 'I am Karissa and I like cream puffs.' They both begin with the /k/ sound." Allow the students some thinking time before the circle game begins.
- 2 . Either you begin or a student who is ready can begin. After he/she finishes, the next student in the circle must first repeat that student's response before saying his/hers. We continue around the circle until everyone has participated. The challenge lies in trying to repeat in correct sequence all previous names and responses before adding one's own.
3. Students would then return to their desks where they would be instructed to write their first name, one letter per box, horizontally across the first row of large graph paper. They would then assign a different color to each letter in their name and color it in. Following this they are to continue writing their name, leaving no box empty, over and over until they have filled the whole side of the graph paper. Repeating the initial pattern of color, they would then color in each of the remaining squares.
4. Students would then be asked to show the class their name-pattern paper and describe the pattern of color created by their name. Such name-patterns could also be recreated using trains of unifix cubes.
5. To convey what a quilt is and how it is made, read the book, *The Patchwork Quilt* and discuss it.

6. Students are then given a blank sheet of 5" x 5" tag board. They are instructed to select from and gather precut 1" squares of origami paper (assigning one pattern or color for each different letter in their name) and create the letter-patterns in their name, gluing down each square horizontally across the tag board.

7. After creating the pattern once, they determine how many more of each square they need and repeat the name-pattern with origami squares until the entire tag board square has been filled.

8. These name 'quilt' squares would then be glued on a large piece of butcher paper creating a class quilt to be hung in the classroom, displaying the unique pattern of each person's name.

(This quilt activity was adapted from *Beyond The Book* .)

Lesson Plan Three

Objectives:

To compare story characters with people you know and write about it.

To choose a story character and, using a report card format, grade him/her on different subjects.

Materials: *Mrs. Katz and Tush* by Patricia Polacco, journals, loose-leaf paper, pencils, rulers.

Procedure:

1. Begin by reading and discussing *Mrs. Katz and Tush* .
2. Begin a discussion of how story characters may remind us of people we know. Ask students to give examples they think of.
3. Ask the students to open their journals and using a ruler, help them to divide the page into three columns, the first two about 2 inches wide leaving the last column considerably wider. Ask them to label the first column, 'Character', the second one 'Someone I Know' and the third, longer one, 'How are they alike?'
4. On large chart paper following the same format, the teacher then models a character comparison (ideally from a well-known story), writing to familiarize the students with how it is done.
5. Students are then instructed to select a character from Polacco's story and write a comparison. As students write, teacher circulates, giving assistance and direction as needed. Allow 20-25 minutes for writing.

6. Students are then called to sit in a large circle bringing their journals with them. Here volunteers read aloud their character comparisons.
7. Such discussion of the qualities of the story characters help lead us into our next activity which is making a report card for a main character in this story. We begin by listing the qualities or abilities of the characters that can be judged.
8. To prepare the report card divide a sheet of loose-leaf paper into three columns entitled 'Subject', 'Letter Grade', and 'Comments'. The character's name, of course, is written at the top of the paper.
9. A report card may look something like this:

Character—Larnel

Subject	Letter Grade	Comments
Kind	A	Larnel brings Mrs. Katz a kitten to keep her company
Determined	A	Larnel keeps searching for Tush.
Helpful	B+	Larnel sometimes helps Mrs. Katz get ready for celebrations.
Open	A	Larnel is willing to try new foods.
Listening	A	Larnel loves to listen to Mrs. Katz's stories.

10. Such report cards could initially be displayed on the bulletin board and later bound together and made into a class book.

APPENDIX A

(figure available in print form)

APPENDIX B

(figure available in print form)

Student Bibliography

Greenfield, Eloise. *Honey I Love* . New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Co.: 1978. A book of poetry about everyday life told from a child's perspective covering such themes as defining one's identity, listening to music, and playing with friends.

Greenfield, Eloise. *Night on Neighborhood Street* . New York: Penguin Books, 1991. A book of poetry recounting everyday happenings occurring on Neighborhood Street. Strong family themes are also included.

Henkes, Kevin. *Chrysanthemum* . New York: Mulberry Books, 1991. A young mouse, initially teased at school for her long name, learns to proudly accept it as unique.

Hessell, Jenny. *Ripeka's Carving* . Auckland, New Zealand: Shortland Publications Limited, 1989. A story of a young girl, Ripeka, exasperated by everyone at school continually calling her Rebecca, finally brings it to their attention by carving her name on her desk.

Hudson, Wade. *I Love My Family* . New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1993. A young African-American boy tells the story of the annual family reunion where we meet many of his relatives and learn about making a family tree.

Jordan, June. *Kimako's Story* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981. A young African-American girl takes us around her New York City neighborhood, recounting her varied experiences with people and places that make it up and delighting us with her poem-puzzles and drawings.

Kroll, Virginia. *Masai and I*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1992. A story of a young African-American girl living in the city who, feeling a strong kinship with the Masai people in East Africa, compares her life to theirs.

Lomas Garza, Carmen. *Family Pictures* . San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1990. A young Mexican-American girl describes treasured family events in both picture and word.

Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us* . New York: Lee & Low Books Inc., 1993. A young Japanese-American boy tells of his life with his family in a Japanese internment camp during WW II enduring much injustice and humiliation. He describes how baseball gave the inhabitants a sense of purpose and direction during this time of suffering.

Polacco, Patricia. *Mrs. Katz and Tush* . New York: Dell Publishing, 1992. An unlikely pair, a young African-American boy and an elderly Russian Jewish immigrant woman, become great friends while tending a runt cat.

Seuss, "Dr." *The Sneetches and other Stories* . New York: Random House, 1961. In the book's main story we meet the Sneetches (both with and without stars on their bellies) who, initially, display strong feelings of intolerance for those different from themselves, but who come to realize how foolish their intolerance is and later appreciate their similarities and individual uniqueness.

Silverstein, Shel. *Where the Sidewalk Ends* . New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1981. A collection of poems and drawings on subjects and themes especially appealing to children.

Spier, Peter. *People* . New York: Delacorte Press, 1980. This book, rich in illustrations and simple in words, celebrates the diversity of

people.

Yashima, Taro. *Crow Boy* . New York: Viking Penguin, 1983. A village discriminates against a young Japanese boy because of his appearance and quiet demeanor until a teacher breaks the cycle and they come to value Crow Boy's abilities and person.

Teacher Bibliography

Banks, James A. & Cherry A. McGee (eds.). *Multicultural Education : Issues and Perspectives* . Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997. Reflecting current research, concepts and debates on the subject of multicultural education, this book begins by defining the major concepts and issues in the field and goes on to discuss the effects of social class and religion on student behavior, beliefs and achievement. Articles are then presented on the ways schools perpetuate gender discrimination and on strategies to help educators create equal educational opportunities for students in the areas of gender, race, ethnicity, language and exceptionalty. This book ends with an exploration of ways to implement school reform within a multicultural framework.

Banks, James A. *Multiethnic Education : Theory and Practice* . Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994. This book begins with a discussion of the dimensions, history and goals of multicultural education and goes on to explore the conceptual and philosophical issues related to education, cultural diversity and ethnicity. Effective teaching strategies in this field are then described. The book concludes with a look at curriculum, examining past efforts of reform and suggesting future directions and goals of a effective multicultural curriculum.

Baratta-Lorton, Mary. *Mathematics Their Way* . Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1976. An invaluable resource for teachers who want to implement effective mathematical activities in their classrooms. A wealth of activities that help children see relationships and interconnections in mathematics is provided.

Brill, Patricia (ed.). *Beyond The Book : Activities and Projects from Classrooms like Yours* . Menlo Park, California: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1997. This book is filled with successful math activities and projects tried in real classrooms and inspired by the book, *Mathematics Their Way* . Each activity is described in words and shown in photographs.

Canter, Lee and Katia Petersen. *Teaching Students to Get Along* . Santa Monica, California: Lee Canter & Associates, 1995. Offers teachers a wealth of effective strategies to teach students to resolve conflicts and treat each other with respect.

Cech, Maureen. *Globalchild : Multicultural Resources for Young Children* . Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1991. Various cultures are explored (in terms of their music, art, food, dress) under the common themes of harvest, masquerade, festivals of light, new year, and spring. This book is designed especially for the elementary school teacher.

Derman-Sparks, Louise and the ABC Task Force. *Anti-Bias Curriculum : Tools for Empowering Young Children* . Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1989. Defines and describes an anti-bias curriculum for young children which can enable them to develop an anti-bias identity and attitudes, learn to think critically and speak up when an injustice in being done. Based on the premise that differences are good, this book offers the teacher developmental information about children and supplements suggested activities so that the teacher can understand the why as well as the what and how of given activities.

Eyre, Linda and Richard. *Teaching Your Children Values* . New York: Simon & Shuster, 1993. This is a book designed to help parents to clarify their own value system and select basic values to teach their children. It focuses on twelve values (including tolerance) and suggests useful methods and activities for adults to use.

Gust, John and J. Meghan McChesney. *Appreciating Differences : Multicultural Thematic Units* . Carthage, Illinois: Teaching and

Learning Company, 1995. This book offers the teacher a collection of interdisciplinary activities to use in their classrooms, covering such multicultural themes as accepting disability, reducing prejudice, acknowledging women, understanding the story of immigration and taking civic action.

Hayden, Carla D. (ed.). *Venture Into Cultures : A Resource Book of Multicultural Materials and Programs* . Chicago and London: American Library Association, 1992. This book is an invaluable resource giving information (bibliographies for adults and children) on seven different cultural groups and suggesting programming ideas (arts and crafts, games, storytelling) relevant to the study of each group. It concludes with a list of organizations to write to further supplement your endeavors.

Hollenbeck, Kathleen M. *Exploring Our World : Neighborhoods and Communities* . New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1997. Geared especially to the primary-aged student, this resource book provides the teacher with quality literature-based, interdisciplinary activities about our communities and the people and places that make them up.

Johnson, Terry D. and Daphne R. Louis. *Literacy Through Literature* . Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1987. An excellent source of activities to use with children's literature that help develop comprehension and appreciation. The students will find these activities fun and challenging to do.

Mattenson, Pearl T. *A World of Difference Institute Elementary Study Guide : An Anti-prejudice and Diversity Awareness Program for Educators and Families* . New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1994. A great resource of lessons for teachers to use in their classrooms covering such themes as valuing oneself as individuals and members of different groups, identifying human similarities and differences, examining cultural diversity, understanding the nature of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, and developing strategies to combat prejudice and discrimination.

Pincus, Debbie. *Interactions : More Effective Communication Among Parents, Students and Teachers* . Carthage, Illinois: Good Apple, Inc., 1988. This book offers over forty activities that can help improve communication among students, and between students and teachers and students and their parents. Includes a section on helping students develop clear statements that best communicate feelings and lead to problem solving and discussions.

Rochman, Hazel. *Against Borders: Promoting Books for a Multicultural World* . Chicago and London: American Library Association, 1993. This ALA Books & Booklist publication helps students (grades 6-12) and teachers choose books promoting diverse cultural backgrounds, including both fiction and nonfiction and Rochman's "booktalks."

Curriculum

Project Charlie : Chemical Abuse Resolution Lies In Education . Edina, Minnesota: Storefront/ Youth Action, 1987. In this social development curriculum for teachers of primary and intermediate level students, activities are provided under the following headings: self-awareness, relationships, decision-making and chemical use. Of particular relevance to this curriculum unit are the sections on seeing ourselves as unique, family, exploring our similarities and differences, looking at prejudice and stereotypes, and discrimination and developing direct ways to communicate with others and be assertive.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>