

Building Bridges Between Us

Summary

This lesson will help students understand the personal behaviors that contribute to, or detract from, a safe and caring community.

Main Core Tie

Health Education I (7-8)

[Strand 1: HEALTH FOUNDATIONS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF HEALTHY SELF \(HF\) Standard HI.HF.3:](#)

Materials

- [Posters:](#)

"Diversity Enriches...", "Men Build..."

- [Worksheet: "Discovering Our Differences" Bingo](#)

Books: *The Butter Battle Book*, Dr. Seuss, Random House 1984; *The Sneetches and Other Stories*, Dr. Seuss, Random House, 1961.

Music: "Love Can Build A Bridge," *The Judds: Greatest Hits Volume 2*, Curb Records, 1996

Materials Toothpicks and small marshmallows; A length of 1" tubular webbing for each group of 7-9 students

Intended Learning Outcomes

Identify personal behaviors that contribute to, or detract from, a safe and caring community; e.g., service, respect, civility, inclusion, apathy, aggression, gang involvement, criminal behavior, prejudice.

Instructional Procedures

Lesson at a Glance

Discuss diversity and how differences may cause conflict.

Read one of the selected books and discuss the themes of the book.

Play "Discovering Our Differences" Bingo and discuss the value of diversity.

Play Raccoon Circles and discuss the themes and ideas generated by the game.

Build toothpick-and-marshmallow bridges and discuss ideas and themes generated by the activity.

New Vocabulary

diversity

respect

aggression

prejudice

culture

civility

apathy

Introduction (Setting Focus)

Briefly discuss that, obviously, everyone is different and unique. Some individuals do not get along with others because they lack knowledge about the other person or do not accept the other's individual differences.

Discuss differences and how they may cause contention or indifference between people, e.g., culture, clothing, gender, economics, experiences, religion, preferences, ethnic background, appearance, or social group. Two books by Dr. Seuss which are readily available, *The Butter*

Battle Book and The Sneetches and Other Stories, could be used to initiate discussion. Use the following prompts:

- What are some of the differences between people in the book and at our school?
- Which differences could cause conflicts?
- How do people in contentious situations see differences?
- How does lack of mutual respect contribute to conflict?
- Who created the conflicts in the book?
- How do third parties or non-participants in a conflict contribute to disharmony?
- What reduces conflict and contention?
- How can people learn to appreciate and value differences?
- How are differences between people a good thing?

Each student completes a "Discovering Our Differences" bingo sheet.

Each student answers the questions in each square of the bingo sheet.

Students move about the room and find others who have different answers for a bingo square than what is written on their own sheet.

The person with the different answer writes his or her name in the bingo square.

To add interest, students may receive a sticker or something similar each time they get a bingo. The bingo may be five across, five down, or five diagonally.

Discuss the bingo activity using the following prompts:

- What was surprising about the activity?
- What differences were discovered?
- Was it easy or difficult to find people who were different?
- How can differences can be positive and useful?
- How can diversity be a source of strength?
- How can diversity add variety and enrichment to life?

Body (Strategies/Activities)

Choose an object in the room and discuss how it is composed of various objects and parts.

How many objects are made of just one thing?

How do the parts of anything work together to complete the whole?

How do different people work together to create a working society?

Raccoon Circle Activities

The purpose of these games is to find commonalities that exist within a diverse classroom. In addition, students can learn how to use diversity to solve problems. Raccoon Circles do not start as circles but as a 10-14-foot piece of 1" tubular webbing (available in a variety of colors at camping and sporting goods stores). Divide the class into groups of 7-12 members. Give each group a Raccoon Circle and play any of the following games:

Cross My Line

Stretch the webbing into a straight line on the floor. Half of the group stands on one side of the line and half stands on the other. Explain that there are only two rules to the game:

Rule #1: Get as many people as you can from the other side of the line onto your side.

Rule #2: The entire group says when the game is over. Discuss this and the following activities using the following prompts:

- What happened during the game?
- How effective were the various techniques used by the opposing teams?
- Who were the leaders of the groups?
- Who decided to listen to suggestions and ideas that were different?
- Which method proved most successful to finishing the game?
- How do different people think of different ideas?

If the same idea is always used and always fails, how can people find new solutions?
What would happen if everybody was physically identical and thought the same way?
When is diversity an asset?

The Bus

The Bus starts with lines of material for two Raccoon Circles stretched parallel to each other. Participants "get on the bus" by gathering between the two lines. The teacher is the bus driver and calls the stops. "Everybody off! Those who like chocolate ice cream best get off to the left. Those who like vanilla best, get off to the right." The object is to find interests, activities, thoughts, likes and dislikes that students have in common. Play the game using some of these "bus stops": cold/hot; loud/quiet; running/walking; hamburgers/hot dogs; school/home; mountains/desert; airplanes/submarines; tall/short; math/English.

Nuclear Fence

Stretch the webbing between two people at just about waist height. The remainder of the people in the group must get from one side of the web to the other using these four rules:
Rule #1: The group must always be in contact with each other. Each person must be physically touching one other person in the group at all times, even if they are on opposite sides of the webbing.

Rule #2: No one may touch the web.

Rule #3: No part of any person (including shoes, hair, fingers, etc.) may be under the webbing.

Rule #4: The only way across the webbing is over the top. No other route is permissible.

Raccoon Circles

Tie the ends of the webbing together using one of the following methods:

The Example Knot (or Water Knot)--Tie a loose overhand knot into one end of the web. This is the example knot. Follow the example, starting with the other end of the web, end for end, and follow the example until the knot is duplicated in parallel fashion from start to finish.

The Friendship Knot--Tie a loose overhand knot in one end of the web. Thread the other end through the loop created by the first knot. With the second end, tie a second overhand knot around the webbing. There are basically two knots together, so they pull against each other in an impasse.

Trust Balance

All members of the group hold the webbing with both hands, feet directly under the rope. The entire group slowly leans back and balances the circle. The balance is fragile at first but will develop as members begin to trust themselves, the group, the webbing and the facilitator. Often, younger members may wish to disrupt the balance because this is the only way they know to relate. Use this competitiveness to advantage by discussing how people can relate in different ways.

Build a Bridge activity

Pairs of students make a list of everything they have in common. Give each pair a marshmallow and a toothpick for each item they have in common. Students collaborate with their partner and build a bridge using the marshmallows and toothpicks. The bridge is representative of how we can bridge the gap between other people even when they are different from us. Play background music such as "Love Can Build a Bridge."

Students show completed bridges to the class and tell at least two things they have in common

with each other. Display the bridges in the classroom.

Closure (Wrap-Up and Extension)

Discuss ways to encourage and support diversity, and ways to show respect for people who are different.

Discuss how people can gain balance and harmony even though they are different.

Discuss how people can build bridges with others.

Authors

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