

VALUING DIVERSITY

Years 2-4

WE ARE DIFFERENT, WE ARE THE SAME

Why is it important to explore diversity with your students?

Children begin school with varying levels of exposure to others who are different from themselves. They will encounter other students, teachers and members of the wider school community who come from different cultural backgrounds, speak different languages, behave differently, have different abilities and skills, and who come from different socio-economic strata. It's entirely natural for children to notice difference and to express curiosity. Pretending differences don't exist often results in unintentional stigmatisation, so it's far better to invite open, respectful discussion. Creating an environment where children can ask about difference allows for greater inclusion and acceptance. Adopting a positive approach can begin with a simple question: *What makes you and/or your family special?*

Lesson aims

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- recognise and identify differences and similarities in individuals and groups
- explain the term 'diversity'
- discuss ways to respect and celebrate difference and diversity

Curriculum links

Health and Physical Education: Personal, Social and Community Health Strand

[ACPPS024] Recognise similarities and differences in individuals and groups, and explore how these are celebrated and respected

General Capabilities: Personal and Social Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Intercultural Understanding



Focus setting

There are several big books teachers can use that focus on learning about difference and similarities, exploring diversity and individual uniqueness. This video, although American, could also be used as a discussion starter https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HHv2XguT_c

Activity

Have students sit together while the teacher demonstrates. Show students two eggs of the same size (suggest you use hard boiled) – one egg with a brown shell and the other with a white shell. Discuss with children via key questions such as:

- Who likes to eat eggs? Those who *like* eggs form a group and sit together, those who *don't* like eggs form another group and sit together
- How many ways can you eat eggs? [show pictures of scrambled, fried, boiled, omelette, poached]
- What other foods are made with eggs? [eg show pictures of cakes, muffins, fried rice, quiche etc]
- Look at these two eggs. How are these eggs **different**? [colour]
- Who likes the brown egg? Those who like the brown coloured egg form a group.
- Who likes the white egg? Those who like the white coloured egg form a group.
- We know these eggs are a different colour but could they also be the *same* in some way? [teacher peels off the shells revealing the inside of both eggs]
- What do you notice? Are they similar or the same on the inside?
- Do you think they would both taste the same? Could they both have been used to cook cakes, muffins and breakfast eggs? [a practical way to answer this could be via children making and eating pancakes].

Recap points about "same and different", group likes/dislikes etc. These could be displayed on the whiteboard or on post-it notes.

NB this activity can also be done with red and green apples, graphite lead pencils with various coloured/patterned outer covering etc.

Activity

Ask children to think about what makes someone different then try to categorise eg

- appearance *ie hair colour/texture/length; height; wears glasses*
- abilities and skills *ie sporty; musician; uses a wheelchair*
- cultural background *ie wears a headscarf; speaks another language; customs*



- families *ie has brothers/sisters; has two mums; lives with grandparents*
- groups *ie sports; swimming squad; lifesavers; dance; gymnastics; chess*

Responses to the above can be displayed and at this point introduce the word **diversity**.

Activity

- 1 Create a short survey similar to the one below and have students move around the room and find classmates who match each attribute.
- 2 Note: these focus statements are *examples only*, teachers can amend as appropriate to their own classes.
- 3 Once the short surveys are completed ask questions such as:
 - Was it easy to find a classmate for each statement?
 - How many were the 'same' as you?
 - What were some of the 'differences'?
 - Did you find out something you didn't know about a classmate?
 - Would you like to find out more about any of your classmates' answers?
 - You might like to write your own survey about diversity that another class could use.

DIVERSITY IN OUR CLASSROOM

FIND SOMEONE WHO...	Name of classmate	Same as me or different Y/N?
Loves to swim	Ruby	Yes
Wears glasses	Ethan	No



Can say words in another language	Jiang	No
Has a pet cat	George	Yes
Was born in another country	Samira	Yes

Resources

For other great ideas to celebrate diversity visit the Harmony Day website

<https://www.harmony.gov.au/get-involved/schools/primary-school>

The Australian Human Rights Commission has developed a series of resources including an ebook, song, educator guide, posters and lesson plans in this toolkit *'Building belonging: A toolkit for early childhood educators on cultural diversity and responding to prejudice'*. This was developed by Annie Pettitt and Siobhan Tierney and produced in conjunction with Kimberlin Education.

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/building-belonging-toolkit-early-childhood-educators-cultural-diversity-and>

