



**Student
Wellbeing Hub**

Influences on identity

Lesson plan for years 5 and 6





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Influences on identity

The Respectful Relationships curriculum commonly includes a focus on identity. The premise is that the better students understand themselves and how they tick, the more effective they will be in terms of building relationships, communicating and understanding their emotions.

Lesson plan

The following teaching sequence aims to support understandings of identity with a specific focus on cultural identity.

It is designed for use with students in Years 5 and 6.

Before you start



Working with cultural differences requires sensitivity. Download and view the presentation [Culturally responsive teaching \[pptx, 13.3mb\]](#). It's designed to help teachers to think about how to respond to a range of perspectives.

Australian curriculum links

Health and Physical Education

- Examine how identities are influenced by people and places ([ACPPS051](#))
 - Exploring how personal and cultural identities change over time
 - Investigating how personal and cultural identities are influenced by the groups and communities to which we belong and the places to which we feel connected

Activities

Activity 1: Images

This activity is based on [Lesson 3: Identity and characteristics](#) from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Step 1

Download

Download and print the following two handouts from the Student Wellbeing Hub:

 [Describe these babies \[pdf, 0.8mb\]](#)

 [Describe these people \[pdf, 1mb\]](#)

Step 2

Describe

Ask students to first describe what they see in the handout 'Describe these babies' and then 'Describe these people'.



The intention of this activity is to stimulate thinking about how we become individuals differentiated by a range of influences and yet, at the beginning of life, it can be hard to find many specific differences among the images of the babies – and some of these, such as the headband in one photo, have been imposed by adults. The images of adults have been selected for the facets of identity that can be seen (eg career, interests, gender, heritage, etc).

Step 3

Discuss

Discuss and highlight that our identities are made up of different characteristics that develop and change over time. Explain that identities are 'who we are'. Use these questions:

- Why could you describe more things in the adults?
- What helped you describe the babies?
- What changes as they grow up?
- What things stay the same?



- What are the influences on identity as we grow older on what sort of adults we become? (Discussion might include family structure, relationships with others, gender, cultural background, work/study opportunities, media, specific skills or interest, religion.)

Step 4

Conclude

The conclusion of this discussion will include some understanding that:

- We all have a number of influences on our identity.
- Some of these things might change over time.
- Not all of these facets would be obvious to other people.

Activity 2: Diamond ranking

This activity asks students to use sticky notes to think about influences on their identity.

Step 1

Speculate

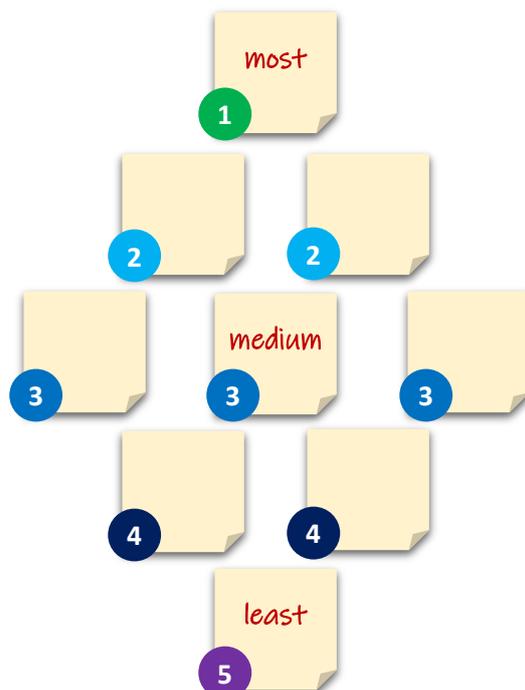
Encourage students to look again at the [baby photos](#) from activity 1 and to speculate what they think will be the major influences on the development of a baby's identity as it grows up.

Write each influence down on a separate sticky note.

Step 2

Rank

Rank the influences from most influential to least influential by ordering the sticky notes into a diamond shape.





Step 3

Look inward

Ask students to think about their own influences on identity and to list the words on sticky notes. Please be mindful that it may not be easy for all students to share openly about their heritage, family background or specific family circumstances. Exercise professional judgement when using the following activities.

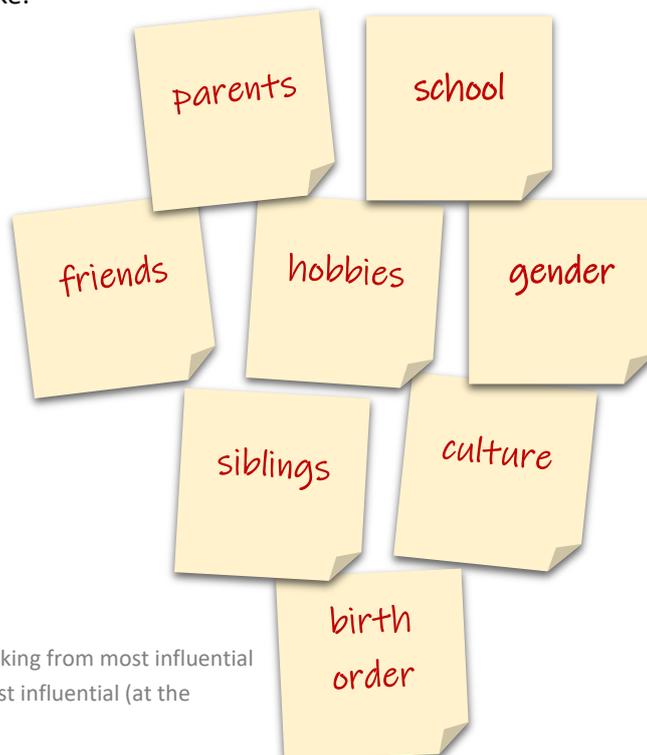


Sample: Students should create their own tags on the basis of the class discussion about influences on identity.

Step 4

Diamond

Then ask the students to arrange their notes in a diamond exercise. They may find it hard to prioritise the list from most influential to least influential but this process will challenge their thinking about what is important. They may wish to work on this privately. Emphasise that there is no one right answer and that what they prioritise might shift over time and be different to the choices their friends make.



Sample: Student diamond ranking from most influential (at the top of the page) to least influential (at the bottom of the page).

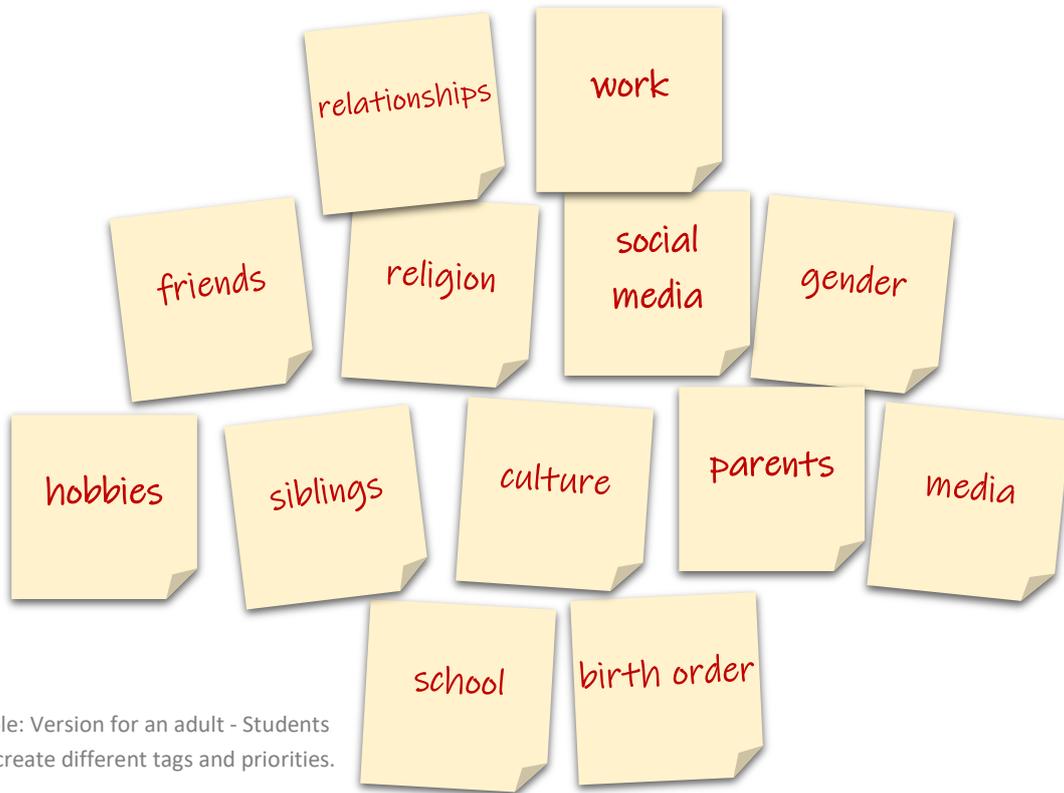




Step 5

Discuss

Encourage the students to discuss the ways in which identity might be framed as an adult.



Sample: Version for an adult - Students may create different tags and priorities.

Step 6

Conclude

The conclusion of this discussion will include some understanding that:

- We all have a number of facets to our identity – but they may influence us in different ways and to varying levels.
- Some of these things might change over time.
- Not all of these facets would be obvious to other people.



Activity 3: A focus on culture

This activity asks students to think about the influence culture has on their identity.

Step 1

Discuss

Facilitate a discussion about the following questions:

- How many students included culture as one of the influences on their identity?
- How would you describe your cultural background?
- How important is cultural identity to you?
- What sorts of influences do you think it has on your personal identity?
- Has your cultural background posed any challenges for you?

Step 2

Imagine

Ask students to relook at the arrangement that they have created about themselves.

Then ask them to imagine that they have to move, along with their families, to another country. Make a tag with 'New culture' written on it. Where would this tag fit into their diamond from activity 2?

Ask them to talk about the facets of identity which would be influenced by this shift. Which elements might move around under the pressure of a move like this? Would there be any difference if it was a country where you did not speak the main language?

Extension activities

Choose from one or more of the following teaching ideas:

a) Explore cultural identity through story

Find text materials to investigate the impact of culture on identity and wellbeing.



Search the [NCACL Cultural Diversity database](#) for picture storybooks and fiction that are suitable for this investigation. Filter the search for books suitable for upper primary by topics such as 'cultural traditions', 'racial identity', 'refugees' and/or 'relationships'.

An inquiry question might be: What is it like to grow up between two cultures?



Alternatively, you could use a short film text to discuss this topic. Suggested film and transcript: [Asian and Australian: it's easy to be me](#)



b) Artists explore ideas about identity

Use these web pages as a starting point to looking at how different artists make us think about identity:



Michael Cook – [Majority rule](#)

Bayeté Ross Smith – [Our kind of people](#)

Hou Leong – [Australian photographers](#)

c) Celebrating identity

When she was 10 years old, African-American girl Marley Dias got angry about the books they were assigned to read at school. 'Every single year they wanted us to read a book about a white boy and his dog.' She decided to collect books with black girl leads to raise awareness of books with diverse characters. Her target was 1,000 books.



View the video [Meet Marley Dias, The Force Behind #1000BlackGirlBooks](#)

Use this video as a springboard to explore:

- other examples of student agency around identity (the [Indigenous Hip Hop Projects](#) would be a good starting point.)
- a review of the texts in the school library and how well they address areas like diversity.

d) Transition to secondary school

If your students are close to transitioning to secondary school, they will be thinking about how this move will impact on them and the people they might become. Ask students to reflect on their lives to determine what currently wields the greatest influence on their identities and what they are hoping for in the immediate future. Students can write their thoughts in various formats, including short poems, artwork and personal writing. Possible ideas to use as a focus include:

- a current culture or identity they possess and how it shapes them
- varying current cultures or identities they possess that clash, or are distinctly different
- a time or place when their identity or identities clashed with others
- an identity or identities that they would like to embody





- an identity they would prefer to abandon or escape.

e) Short & curly



[Short & Curly](#) is an ethics-based podcast for kids and their parents. After listening, students might create their own podcast about one of the following questions.

- Can you change your identity? Or parts of your identity? If so, why might this happen?
- What influence does your culture have on you?
- Are people more similar than they are different?

Encourage them to interview people to obtain a range of views.

