NEW FOR 2021!

Featured curriculum by

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy!

"Before we know what our new normal will be, there's a step we need to take before that – to pause and reflect on what matters most to each of us."

Dr. Murthy

POWERFUL | THOUGHT-PROVOKING | INSPIRING

A Transformative SEL Curriculum for Middle School Educators

Teacher Guide

2021 - 2022
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

We are pleased to share with you the sixth edition of Beyond Differences’ back-to-school Program, Know Your Classmates. Thank you from all of us for bringing this important social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum to your school and community.

Today, unlike anything previously experienced in our lives, our country is undergoing a national emotional emergency. Whether due to the pandemic, economic instability, racial injustice, our political divisiveness -- or all of the above -- our children’s education and future are being compromised.

There is widespread trauma, anxiety and emotional distress for both educators and students. Not to be overstated, their mental health and well-being are at risk. Experts believe that we can and must try to reach children with smart, sound SEL curriculum.

Know Your Classmates is an easy-to-access example of a solid Transformative SEL curriculum. Transformative SEL is, according the CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning) a process whereby young people and adults build strong, respectful and lasting relationships that facilitate co-learning to critically examine root causes of inequity, and to develop collaborative solutions that lead to personal, community, and societal well-being.

The entire curriculum was created and designed by teachers, youth leaders and SEL experts to address the challenge of how we, as a society, can help middle school youth become more self-aware about their own family’s identity, traditions and culture while learning acceptance, inclusion and respect for their classmates as well. In other words, the simple values that guide us to become empathic, compassionate and respectful human beings!

Background

Beyond Differences was founded in 2010 by my husband, Ace Smith, and me after the unexpected passing of our daughter, Lili Rachel Smith, who was a 15-year-old high school freshman. Lili was born with Apert Syndrome, a rare cranial-facial anomaly and she died in her sleep just seven weeks after starting high school. She experienced social isolation in middle school, suffering silently and quietly, while the children who had been her friends all throughout elementary school were no longer including her in their weekend and after school plans.

As a close family, we saw the devastating effects being left out had on Lili. We taught her self-confidence, keeping her spirits high and her life full and busy, reminding her that middle school was just a few short years in her long and beautiful life. We promised her things would get better as soon as she was a bit older. Tragically, she didn’t live long enough to experience new friends and social acceptance. Her passing was, as I said, unexpected and heartbreaking for all who knew her.

After Lili’s passing, and newly aware of just how left out she had felt during middle school, a group of her former classmates approached us with an idea to honor her memory. They chose to talk about what it felt like to be socially isolated.

Today, there is research – medical, psychological and academic – that proves social isolation among adolescents is rampant and can lead to adverse medical, emotional and academic outcomes.

Children this age are already exploring their gender identity, ethnic identity and cultural backgrounds. They are forming bias and prejudice. They are noticing differences but may not yet have the language or the skills to appreciate how to relate to others.

What happens if we do not address their early questions and explorations and, in turn, offer youth the insights, skills, tools and positive student mentoring they need to connect with one another and accept differences? The most egregious and frightening possibility is a socially isolated youth grows to become a socially isolated adult who commits community violence.
A less but more prevalent reality are adults who are still carrying with them the labels and experiences they had in middle or junior high school when they felt marginalized, unaccepted, or lonely because of perceived or real differences. Social isolation hurts us all but there is something positive and preventative that can be done!

**Know Your Classmates Program**

We are excited you are bringing this program to your community!

The pages you are about to explore are full of all the instructions and resources you will need to bring Know Your Classmates to your students. Please know that we want you to be successful and will support you every step of the way. Just ask us!

**A Note of Gratitude**

Know Your Classmates initially began as a co-creation and collaboration of love and respect between the Islamic Networks Group (ING) and Beyond Differences in 2016 to counter prejudice and discrimination against American Muslims. To learn more about ING’s ground-breaking work, please visit www.ing.org.

In the fifth edition, we wish to thank our partners and co-creators, the Community Youth Center of San Francisco (cycsf.org) who fully took on the arduous task of partnering with us in re-writing each lesson plan, repurposing old ones for new, and ensuring that the language we selected was driven by our deep belief in social justice and anti-racism. CYC has been 100% committed to this project, alongside Beyond Differences, every step of the way towards publication. They donated the talents of everyone on their team from youth leaders, communication experts, non-profit partners, elected officials and community influencers. Special shout out to Executive Director Sarah Ching-Ting Wan, Daphne Wong-Ha and Ben Mok.

We are forever grateful to all our partners!

**A Special Thanks to Our Staff and Colleagues**

I wish to thank the talented educators and leaders at Beyond Differences who helped create this initiative: our first writer and editor, Air Gallegos, who brought their talent and passion for education and social justice with them to their time at Beyond Differences; Sally Kuhlman, Director of National Programs for Beyond Differences; Lisette Ostrander, Ed.D, Director of Education; Lois McGuire, teacher and author of Don’t Be That Kid; The LEARN Team (Let’s End All Racism Now) Barbara Libby-Steinmann, artist and art teacher; Anna Rochester, artist; and Michael Tyler, author of The Skin You Live In.

I also wish to thank the more than 8,500 schools in all 50 United States who have already participated in our national programs. Special thanks to a special group of our amazing National Teen Board of Directors for working tirelessly to advocate for change in middle schools.

Together, our vision is to create a world where every child is accepted, valued, and included by their peers no matter what their differences.

Laura Talmus
Co-founder and Executive Director
lauratalmus@beyonddifferences.org
FAQS ABOUT BEYOND DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

1. WHAT IS BEYOND DIFFERENCES?

Beyond Differences’ mission is to inspire students nationwide to end social isolation and create cultures of belonging for everyone. We envision a world where all youth are accepted, valued, and included no matter their differences.

We believe that Transformative Social-Emotional learning (SEL) is the key to disrupting social isolation and that young people have the power to change the world, starting with how they treat each other at school and online. Beyond Differences works directly with middle and high school students, on campuses and online, to help disrupt social isolation and promote inclusion in their schools.

Beyond Differences is a student-led social justice movement empowering students to become activists and change the culture of schools. We provide schools with Social Emotional Learning tools to help tackle loneliness and foster a sense of community and complimentary professional development for educators.

Beyond Differences’ award-winning signature programs and SEL curriculum are used in over 8,500 schools across the nation, reaching over 3.5 million students in all 50 states.

2. WHAT IS SOCIAL ISOLATION?

Social isolation is defined as a lack of social connections. Public health research shows that social isolation manifests in youth as depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and an increased risk of substance abuse. Social isolation is especially acute among students who are perceived as “different” because of their physical appearance, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, or other characteristics.

Our world has become increasingly intolerant and divided. We believe the youth of this generation have the power and natural motivation to turn that around and make a difference, starting with how they treat one another at school and on social media.

At Beyond Differences we define social isolation as a lack of quality connections. Being socially and emotionally disconnected from others.

We see this in 3 ways:

Physical Social Isolation – Being physically separated from others. It is objective, the number of people we have, or do not have around us.

Loneliness – which is subjective, it is the gap between what we desire for social connections and what we are actually experiencing.

Social Isolation (not seen) – We also define social isolation as being in the same physical space as others, but being alienated, invisible, not seen. In our opinion this is the most insidious kind of social isolation. This is at the core of the work that we do and why Beyond Differences began.

Beyond Differences signature Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs and professional development offerings for educators aim to spot loneliness and social Isolation and help to intervene and ensure that all students have a sense of belonging and connection.

Access online versions of the KYC lesson plans, slides, worksheets and additional resources here: beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/
FAQS ABOUT KNOW YOUR CLASSMATES

1. WHAT IS KNOW YOUR CLASSMATES?

Know Your Classmates is a Program for middle school children that includes an original curriculum, a national awareness day, and student leadership training. It teaches children how to nurture healthy and open relationships among classmates and counter prejudice and discrimination by learning about their own identity and the identities of their peers.

Know Your Classmates consists of three components:

• **Original Curriculum:** 8 stand-alone lesson plans, aligned to Common Core standards, with accompanying worksheets, links to suggested videos, and fully scripted PowerPoints that will guide you and your class through each lesson. These lessons do not have to be delivered sequentially, but can be chosen according to your interests, what is happening in the news, or in response to the needs of your community.

• **Know Your Classmates Day:** a fun school-wide event that takes place on the same day at schools across the country! Hundreds of thousands of students get to know something new about one another and create an amazing public art piece that displays what they’ve learned!

The national awareness day can be held as the culmination of a series of lessons, as a kick-off to beginning the lessons, or as a stand-alone event.

On Know Your Classmates Day students are reminded of the importance of creating an inclusive community where we will not be scared by one another’s differences but are willing to communicate positively and learn from one another.

• **Student Leadership Training:** additional lessons that guide students through the planning, preparation, and leading of the Know Your Classmates Day. Your student leadership group can continue building their skills and inspire their classmates and peers to create a culture of belonging in their school by leading Beyond Differences’ winter and spring programs, No One Eats Alone and Be Kind Online.

2. WHY SHOULD WE DO KNOW YOUR CLASSMATES?

Know Your Classmates is a starting place for changing the culture of your middle school to one where all students feel included, valued and accepted by their peers.

**Know Your Classmates works because of three simple ideas:**

• **Students can improve their own communities.** Through healthy and open relationships, students can make a tangible change in their community, challenging themselves and others to understand and accept each other’s differences in order to combat social isolation.

• **Inclusive communities are stronger communities.** Inclusive school communities create happier and more successful students while also empowering youth.

• **Inclusion helps prevent bullying.** Social isolation is oftentimes the precursor to bullying. School communities with a culture of inclusion have far fewer instances of bullying.
LESSON 1.
EXPLORING SELF-IDENTITY

OVERVIEW
This lesson is created to encourage positive peer relationships in the classroom. It focuses on fostering a better understanding of self-identity as individuals and within the classroom community and recognizes how privilege impacts our lives. Students explore the question “What is self-identity and privilege?” Identity spans culture, ethnicity, race, gender, family roles, religions, sexuality, age, and other descriptors such as artist, soccer player, cook, brother, sister, athlete.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT
- Reading: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
- Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6
- Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
- Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES including EQUITY ELABORATIONS

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OBJECTIVE
- Students will explore their own identities and learn about the identities of other students.
- Students will learn how identities are both individual and interconnected.
- Students will learn how they impact others’ identities.
- Students will write a narrative that explores how they see their own identity.

KEY POINTS
- Self-acceptance can be challenging when we feel judged. This lesson focuses on understanding the need to embrace your self-identity and those of our classmates and recognize how privilege impacts their lives.
- Each person’s identity is unique, but we don’t need to be afraid of or hurtful due to our differences and privileges.
- It is important to always assume the best intentions in others but also understand that despite best intentions sometimes we can have an unintended impact on others.
- Everyone comes from a different place and background, so it is important to reach out to others and see what we can learn from them.

MATERIALS
- Writing materials - pencil/pens, paper
- Phone to record videos (optional)
• Exploring Self Identity Slides
• Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions
• How Do You Want to be Remembered Worksheet

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at [https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/](https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/)

**ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION**
• Tell the class that we will be talking about identity. Every student in this room has a different identity and different components of what makes them who they are.
• Share the goals of Exploring Identity: (1) To celebrate the individuality and differences of each person and what they have to offer us, our classroom, and the world (2). To establish a deeper appreciation and love for ourselves. If possible, write the two goals on paper to use as a reminder for the 2 weeks.
• Watch “Project Identity” [https://youtu.be/C1d1NYQCkw](https://youtu.be/C1d1NYQCkw)
• Have students journal about the following question: “Who are you?” Tell the class that they will be sharing their answers tomorrow.

**ACTIVITY 2: SHARING OF IDEAS INTRODUCTION**
• Have some students share their responses to yesterday’s question: “Who are you?”
• Have students separate into 3 groups to discuss the following questions. One student will be the recorder and write down responses.
  - **Group 1:** Many people struggle with their identity, specifically around self-image. Why might that be?
  - **Group 2:** Why should we spend time talking about individuality and identity in our class?
  - **Group 3:** What are some ways that we can appreciate ourselves as individuals?
• Each group will designate a student to share their answers with the class.

**ACTIVITY 3: UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE**
• Define Privilege: “An advantage that only one person or group of people has, usually as a result of their position or identity in an organization, community or wider society.”
• Read to students: It is important to recognize that privilege is not an indicator of worth or success. Privilege is a circumstance that can make a person’s life easier, but it does not define who you are. One person can be privileged in one way, but disadvantaged in another way; there is no cookie cutter description for privilege. It is crucial to understand that if you do not have many privileges, you can still be successful; and if you have many privileges, your life does not have to be perfect. Being aware of our privilege can simply allow us to be more grateful and compassionate people. Ask: “What do you think it means to have privilege?” “What is a privilege?”
• Have the class brainstorm ideas.
• Have students journal about the following questions:
  1. What are some examples of a way someone could have privilege?
  2. What are some ways that being aware of our privilege can help us be better leaders, peers, allies and people?
• If there is time, have some students share their answers or tell them they will be sharing their answers tomorrow.

**ACTIVITY 4: IDENTITY MAPPING**
• If students did not share their answers about privilege yesterday, reread the questions and then select some students to share their responses.
• Ask the class: “What is self-identity?” Have students use the following identifiers to define themselves: race, class, gender, ethnicity, culture, immigration status and language.
• Explore the concept of self-identity with students and come up with a working definition. Keep in mind that identity spans culture, ethnicity, race, gender, family roles, religion, sexuality, age, and other descriptors, such as artist, soccer player, cook, brother, sister, athlete.

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• Ask for a volunteer who is willing to share their responses with the class. The teacher can ask the student questions about their culture, ethnicity, race, gender and other identifying characteristics. While the student is talking, another student (or the teacher) will be creating an identity map for the volunteer for the class to see.

• Now that the class has seen an example, instruct them to write their name in the center of a sheet of paper. Students should extend lines outward, just like in the model, writing words and phrases that describe their identity. Tell students to “Get creative! This artwork represents you!”

• The teacher will collect the identity maps and distribute them the next day.

**ACTIVITY 5: SHARE YOUR IDENTITY MAP WITH YOUR PARTNER**

• It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions.

• Distribute the identity maps.

• Have students work in pairs and ask them to share about their identity map and identify the following statements in relation to their identifiers. Tell them to listen carefully because they will be introducing each other tomorrow!

  1. You are most aware of it on a daily basis.
  2. You always think about when you’re at school.
  3. When you’re on the street.
  4. When you’re at home.
  5. You think you are the least aware of on a daily basis.
  6. Was the most emphasized or important in your family growing up.
  7. You wish you knew more about it.
  8. You feel the most disadvantaged or discriminated against.
  9. You feel it provides you the most privilege.
  10. You believe it is most misunderstood by others.

**Extension Activity:** Distribute the Venn diagram or have students draw a Venn diagram. Have students put their names on each side. After listening to each other, the students complete the Venn Diagram, writing in their differences on the two ends and similarities in the center. When students introduce each other tomorrow, they will be able to share commonalities and differences.

**ACTIVITY 6: I’D LIKE TO INTRODUCE**

• Students introduce the person they met with yesterday to the class. If you use the Venn Diagram, they will also share commonalities and differences.

**ACTIVITY 7: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ISOLATION**

• Define social isolation: “The absence or perceived absence of satisfying social relationships or emotional support; the feeling of being left out, lonely or invisible.”

• Have students view “Understanding Social Isolation - Beyond Engaged | Ep. 1” [https://youtu.be/ITNY1_SMHyU](https://youtu.be/ITNY1_SMHyU) which has Beyond Differences Teen Board Members discussing what social isolation is and how it feels to be socially isolated.

• Have a group discussion asking the question: “How did you relate to the video?

**ACTIVITY 8: IDENTITY MARKERS**

• Tell the class that Identity Markers define human groups – “Who belongs and who is excluded.”

• Refer back to the Identity Mapping we did a few days ago. The “Big 8” identity markers are: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion/spirituality, nationality and socioeconomic status.

• Ask students to select one of the following questions (or assign students the question they are to answer) and journal. How do we socially isolate people based on these identity markers?
1. Why do you think we socially isolate people?
2. Have you ever felt socially isolated? How did it make you feel?
3. Have you ever socially isolated someone else? How did it make you feel?
4. How could ignoring one of your identity markers or another’s identity marker cause miscommunication or conflict?
5. What are identity markers you can see? What are identity markers that you CAN’T see? What do you think this means when we meet someone new?
6. What can you do to decrease social isolation?

• Select one student to give their answer to each question.

ACTIVITY 9: HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED?
Tell students: “Our words and actions today create memories that will fill others’ memory boxes tomorrow.”

• Have students complete the “How Do You Want to Be Remembered” sheet.
• Ask for one or two volunteers to read their responses to the class.

ACTIVITY 10: THANK YOU FOR THE COMPLIMENT!

• Briefly review the activities with the class. Ask students to state one specific new thing they learned.
• Ask the class: “How do you feel when someone gives you a compliment?” Tell them that it is important to try to find something positive in people we meet. Introduce today’s activity which will be writing compliments about each other.
• Make individual paper squares with each student’s name on them or use the Beyond Differences compliment template. Every student should receive one square for each of the other students in the class. Write YOU ARE under the student’s name.

Note: If there are 15 students in the class, every student will receive 14 squares with each student’s name in an envelope.

• Place all the squares in an envelope and distribute the envelope to each student. Ask them to complete the sentence with a compliment and put all the squares back into the envelope and return the envelope to you.
• Collect the completed envelopes. Review the compliments. Separate each student’s individual compliments and put their name on the envelope. Distribute the envelopes at the end of the day or the next day.

Note: The teacher needs to look at each square to assure that they are compliments.

• Each student ends their day with an envelope filled with compliments! The students don’t look at the compliments during class but rather take them home. This can be a very powerful activity and it’s better for students to read them alone.
If you want to extend that activity, the next day the teacher can ask the students how they felt receiving the compliments.
LESSON 2.
DO I BELONG? HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

OVERVIEW
This lesson breaks down social barriers in the classroom. It helps build empathy and shows each student what it can feel like to be excluded and isolated. It will help teach students to be more inclusive in the classroom, creating a supportive atmosphere where all students feel accepted, valued and comfortable expressing their ideas and feelings.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT
- Reading: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2
- Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10
- Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
- Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6

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OBJECTIVE
- Students will begin to examine and evaluate individual bias, stereotypes, misconceptions, discrimination to support their reasoning.
- Students will model exclusion behaviors and learn how to make better choices while in a safe environment.
- Students will define what it means to belong, both for themselves individually and for others in our community.

KEY POINTS
- By learning how our behavior can negatively impact others, we can learn how to make better choices as a group.
- It is important to recognize what exclusionary behavior looks like and how it impacts us, individually and as a group.
- Creating classroom norms moves the class towards a more inclusive, caring classroom culture.

MATERIALS
- Writing materials - pencil/pens, paper
- Butcher or chart paper
- “Do I Belong” Slide
- “Do I Belong” Worksheet

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/

ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION
This lesson was developed to help you have an understanding of what it means to belong in this classroom. We will be looking at our actions in order to learn how exclusion and isolation happen.
Define the term “to belong.”

- **To belong:** to fit in and have acceptance in a specific place or environment (group).

Some questions to unpack:

- How do you know if you “belong?”
- What does belonging feel or look like?
- How do we treat newcomers in a group (such as our friends) or a community (such as at school)? Are we welcoming?

ACCESSING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

- Tell students, “You have probably experienced times that you have felt both included and excluded and it is important that we reflect on those moments, so that we are aware of both how we are affected and how we might potentially affect others and ourselves in the future.”
- Allow students to journal about two personal experiences using the “Do I Belong” Worksheet.
- Encourage students to include details such as what happened, how they felt, etc.

ACTIVITY 2: MINDFUL BODY SCAN

After students have journaled, use their journal as points into a mindful body scan.

- Have students sit quietly in their chairs.
- Lead students through three deep breaths in through their nose and out through their mouths.
- Encourage students to close their eyes and be still, reminding them that they are in a safe space.
- Tell students to bring their attention to the top of their heads and see if they feel any sensations (maybe there are prickly or vibrating feelings, maybe tingly or soft.)
- Tell students that you are going to be walking through a visualization of their experiences of feeling excluded and included.
- Tell them to first think about the moment they felt excluded.
- Tell them to imagine themselves in that situation and to pretend they are viewing the experience on a movie screen.
- Ask students, “What is happening in your experience? What words are said? What environment are you in? Who is present? How do you feel? What emotions come up? Where do you find these emotions in your body?”
- Next, instruct students to scan their body for sensations. Tell students, “A sensation is anything you can feel in your body. You may feel strong sensations or weak ones. For example, your heart might be racing or feel heavy. Starting at your head, scan your body slowly. What do you feel?”
- Next, lead students to pay attention to their eyes, cheeks, nose, jaw, shoulders, chests, arms, bellies, back, legs, and feet.
- Ask them if they feel heavy or light, tight or loose, warm or cold, etc.

After students have time to scan,

- Repeat this same process, but have students visualize their inclusive experience.
- When done, ask students to wiggle their toes and fingers and slowly open their eyes.
- Lead a discussion around the following questions:
  - What did you notice in your mindful body scans?
  - Why might it be important to reflect on how we feel in various situations?
  - Were there any emotions that made you feel uncomfortable or were difficult to sit with?
  - How could being still and paying attention to difficult emotions help you?
- Have one or two students share their journal entries with the class.
ACTIVITY 3: NARRATIVE WRITING

• Ask students to turn their brainstorms and body scans into a narrative writing piece.
• Encourage students to really think about their body scans and consider how to turn that into imagery, ensuring that they are showing and not telling their reader how to feel.
• Ask students to write a narrative answering the prompt: Why is aligning your mind and body important? How does it impact your communication with others?
• Review Mindful Body Scan and have one or two students tell the class what they learned from participating in the activity and how they can use it with relationships.

ACTIVITY 4: SELF-AWARENESS

This demonstration will aid in portraying to students how important mindfulness is to healthy communication.

**Say to the class:** Body language is the use of physical behavior, expressions and mannerisms to communicate nonverbally, often done instinctively rather than consciously. Whether you’re aware of it, or not, when you interact with others, you’re continuously giving and receiving wordless signals.

**Step 1:** Ask for two volunteers who would be willing to do a skit for the class.

**Step 2:** Assign a role to each student. One student will be the “approacher” and the other student will be the one who is approached.

**Step 3:** For the first demonstration, instruct the student being approached to act angry and display angry body language. Then, instruct the “approacher” to ask their peer if they want to play a game. As the interaction plays out, have students observe the poor quality interaction as a result of poor mindfulness.

**Step 4:** Go through the whole process again, but this time instruct the student being approached to be mindful and display open, calm body language.

**Step 5:** Emphasize to the class how important it is to be mindful of their body language during their interactions. Tell them that body language is just as telling as words are and is another component of healthy communication that we often overlook.

ACTIVITY 5: COMMUNITY NORMS

**Step 1:** Explain to students that they will be creating community norms that will help them remember what inclusive behavior looks and sounds like and what exclusive behavior looks and sounds like.

**Step 2:** For remote learning, use a white board to brainstorm and have students call out their answers or type one statement at a time in the chat box and ask students to type their responses.

1. When I feel excluded or see others being excluded it looks and sounds like...
2. When I feel included or see others being included it looks and sounds like...
3. When I am excluded or others are excluded I think or feel...
4. When I am included or others are included I think or feel...
5. A way that someone could help me feel included is...

  *It might help to model suggestions for your students.*

For remote learning, give the students a few minutes to scroll through the answers in the chat box.

**Step 3:** Have students share out or type in the chat box which they thought were most important.

**Step 4:** Pull up the slide that says “Do's and Don'ts.” Have students call out things they should do to create an inclusive environment and actions they should avoid that might lead to an exclusive environment. Then, ask students what they think they should do if they feel like their voice is not heard in this community, and what actions they can take to reach out to someone who is being excluded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What actions can you take if you feel like your voice is not heard or you don’t belong?</td>
<td>What actions or words might make others feel excluded or not valued?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What actions can you take to reach out to someone whom you think is being excluded?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTIVITY 6: WRAP UP ACTIVITY DISCUSSION**

Non-violent communication: tell students, “Despite what others think, you are each a part of this community, and you belong. It is important to be able to express when you are feeling excluded and to listen to others to make them feel included.” Partner students by using Strategic and Structured Partnering.

**Structured partnering:** It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the [Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions](https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/).

For remote learning, send pairs of students to breakout rooms.

- Ask students to practice using their voice for inclusion by using the sentence frames:
  
  **Partner 1:** I am feeling excluded because… I would appreciate it if you would help me feel included by… (action step).
  
  **Partner 2:** What I heard you say was… A way that I can help you feel included is…

Model this for students in front of the class and then have each student take turns expressing their exclusion and asking for inclusion.

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**ACTIVITY 7: LEVELING IT UP**

The following 4 activities are for more “advanced” or older students/groups. They can be used instead of or as an extension of the previous activities.

**MATERIALS:**

- Post-it Notes
- Masking Tape
- Whiteboard or poster paper
- “Am I Supportive” Checklist
- “Clique Survey”

**LEVELING IT UP 1: EMPATHY MAP**

- Explain to students: Empathy maps can be a powerful tool to build deeper understanding of how our words and actions connect to our thoughts and feelings. Empathy maps are divided into 4 sections: Think, Feel, Say, Do.

- Give students an example: When I **feel** nervous, I might **think** I’m making a mistake. When I feel this way, I apologize a lot (**say**) and often take deep breaths (**do**).

- On a whiteboard or poster paper, draw a circle at the center and label it “OUR CLASS”. Then divide the board into 4 quadrants labeled **THINK**, **FEEL**, **SAY**, **DO**.

- Each student receives 4 post-it notes. Ask students to write down one emotion they sometimes feel, a thought they can connect to that emotion, an action they take when they have that feeling, and something they might say.

- Have students take turns posting on the board. Set the tone at the start of the activity to ensure active, compassionate listening.
LEVELING IT UP 2: WALK THE LINE

• Select some students to share what they wrote

LEVELING IT UP 2: WALK THE LINE

- Walk the Line is an activity to build empathy and understanding through movement and reflection.
- Place a masking tape line on the floor in the middle of the classroom.
- Divide students in half with each half about 5 steps off each side of the line, silently facing each other.
- Read off a series of questions, from less (I have a sibling) to more personal (I’ve lost a family member). If the student can answer YES to the question, they silently approach the line and stop.
- After about 5 seconds of silent reflection, students return to their position.
- Continue to read a series of 10 or more questions. Examples of prompts on the more personal level might include:
  1. I’ve stayed overnight in a hospital
  2. I’ve been bullied at school
  3. I know someone who takes drugs
  4. I don’t get along with my mother/father
- At the conclusion, students return to their seats and have an opportunity to reflect and journal on what they have learned.
- If there is time, select a few students to share their reflections with the class.
- Please make sure to set norms at the beginning to ensure students will feel safe to move.

LEVELING IT UP 3: AM I SUPPORTIVE?

This activity can help students become more aware of how they are acting around marginalized groups and how they can better support and work with diverse individuals and groups.

- Distribute the “Am I Supportive? Checklist” https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aXvCspDM3CJVSPrNxxksNnU-IowZrY21RtvHR98/edit and tell students to check off any statement that pertains to them. Another option is for you to read each question to the students and have them place a check or not.
- After completing the checklist ask students the following questions:
  1. What would you add to this list?
  2. What makes you feel supported?
  3. Is there anything you think should be removed from the list?
- Have students journal the following question: Is there anything on this list you could do more of? How can you accomplish it?
- Conclude the activity by telling students that they can practice being more supportive by:
  1. Speaking up against injustice, oppression and discrimination in all its forms.
  2. Learning about the issues affecting people who are marginalized.
  3. Reflecting on your biases, power and privilege.
  4. Building trust and relationships with people with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

LEVELING IT UP 4: CLIQUES IN SCHOOLS

This activity will help students recognize the cliques in our school; explore ways to integrate all students and form new friendships and learn how to communicate with people outside of their friendship group/clique.

- Ask the class: What is the difference between a friendship group and a clique? (A friendship group and a clique are a group of friends who like each other. The big difference between a friendship group and a clique is that the clique does not readily allow others to join and often exerts control over its members.)
- Explain to the class: While friendship groups/circles can be healthy and made up of people who share common interests, a clique can be something entirely different. A clique is a group of friends that often has
the following characteristics:

1. Extreme control over the members of the group (“We only wear brand-name clothing”).
2. Strict rules about who is allowed into the group (“We don't hang out with people like THAT”).
3. Inflexible exit from the group (“If she hangs out with THAT girl, we’re not going to be friends with her”).

- Distribute the “Clique Survey from Learning for Justice” [https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/general/survey.pdf](https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/general/survey.pdf) and ask students to complete it. Ask them to list what might have to change in their friendship group to be more inclusive to others.

- End the activity by explaining to the class: So what is so wrong with being in a clique? Because cliques are so exclusive, they can be really restricting. In life outside of school, you will have to communicate with many different kinds of people. Learning to talk to people in different cliques or friendship groups can help you in the future. Also, you might just make a new friend in the process!
LESSON 3. RECOGNIZING BIAS AND EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

OVERVIEW
This activity focuses on raising awareness about stereotyping and intolerance of differences. Students should come away with an increased understanding of how others identify in relation to their surface identities and identity markers. The concepts of bias and prejudice will be broken down in order to underline the harmful effects of group behaviors.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT
• Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10
• Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
• Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.7.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.7.2

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES including EQUITY ELABORATIONS

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<td>Identifying emotions</td>
<td>Coping with discrimination/prejudice</td>
<td>Perspective-taking</td>
<td>Co-construction learning</td>
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<td>Linking thoughts, feelings, &amp; behaviors</td>
<td>Critical self-analysis</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Relationship building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition of beliefs, mindsets, &amp; biases</td>
<td>Problem-focused coping</td>
<td>Respect for diversity</td>
<td>Collaborative problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collective agency</td>
<td>Examining power relationships &amp; dynamics that disadvantage others</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing the impact of one’s beliefs and biases</td>
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</tbody>
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OBJECTIVE
• Students will examine individual bias, stereotypes, misconceptions, discrimination.
• Students will learn how intolerance and discrimination are connected to bias and stereotyping.
• Students will articulate how they will overcome individual bias, stereotyping, and exclusion.
• Students will learn about the model minority myth and how it affects all minorities.
• Students will learn about racism and stereotypes surrounding COVID-19 and how they affect the AAPI Community.

KEY POINTS
• Reflecting on stereotypes shows that they are based on misconceptions and can be harmful.
• Each individual has a responsibility to learn about how to overcome individual bias and misconceptions that are formed.
• Misconceptions can lead to intolerance, stereotyping and discrimination, which negatively affect ourselves and our community.
• We often have more in common with others than we realize, and differences should be embraced and seen as an opportunity to listen and learn from others.

MATERIALS
• Writing Materials - pencil/pens, paper
• Art supplies - scissors, colored paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, glue
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- Projector/ Screen Share for Virtual Learning
- Slide Presentation
- “I AM, I AM NOT” Worksheet (Students can save a new copy and edit directly into the worksheet.)

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/

INTRODUCTION

Show the following video:

“Possible bike thief caught in the act|WWYD” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6rMcYzpsAA

Discussion Questions:

- How did you feel watching the video? Did any part of it resonate with you? Why do you think you feel that way?
- How did people react differently to the white man, black man, and white woman?
- Were the people aware of how they treated the person with the bike a certain way, based on their race or gender? Why do you think that is?

Ask students to define...

Bias vs. Stereotype vs. Discrimination:

- **Bias**: An outlook or opinion in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way to be considered unfair.
- **Stereotype**: A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.
- **Discrimination**: Behavior that treats people unequally because of the group they belong to. Discrimination often begins with stereotypes and prejudices, and can lead to behaviors such as: socially isolating someone, profiling or insulting, or even committing hate crimes or other violent acts.

*Microaggressions*: Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults to marginalized individuals or groups. An example of a racist microaggression would be asking a person of color “Where are you really from?” or saying “I don’t see color.”

ACTIVITY: EXPLORING SURFACE IDENTITY AND STEREOTYPES

Tell students that oftentimes people are categorized based on race, as seen in the video. Then ask them, “What are other ways we categorize or judge people?”

Write “race” on the board first and then let students come up with other characteristics. Students can help lead this activity by writing down these examples on the board as other students come up with them. Some examples might be: ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality, class, physical challenges, clothing, style, weight or body type, athleticism, hair, braces, glasses, body language, introversion, extroversion, other.

THE MODEL MINORITY

Show the following video:

“Why Do We Call Asians the Model Minority?” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrDbvSSbxk8

Organize students into groups of 2-4. Please be sure that groups are assigned, so that no student feels isolated or anxious about finding a partner.

*Structured partnering*: It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide.

Once students are in their groups, have them discuss the following questions:

- How did the model minority stereotype develop, even if it’s not really true?
- How is this stereotype harmful to people in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community? How is this
stereotype harmful to other marginalized racial groups?
• What are other stereotypes that you’ve heard or experienced? How did you feel about those stereotypes?
• How are stereotypes caused by bias? How do they lead to discrimination?
• Why do stereotypes hurt our community? What can we do to challenge stereotypes?

ACTIVITY: CORONA-BIAS
Show the following video:
“Fight the Virus. Fight the Bias”  https://youtu.be/5ocfEGYD_Xw
As a class, discuss the following questions:
• How have Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) people been discriminated against since the start of the coronavirus pandemic?
• How has this discrimination stemmed from bias and stereotypes?
• How has the pandemic been difficult for you and your family?
Brainstorm: How can we as a class stand up and support our AAPI students? Make a list of your ideas.

ONLINE ACTIVITY:
Have students pick an item from the list you brainstormed, and pledge to take that action to Stand Up for AAPI Youth. For example, “I pledge to stand up for AAPI by calling out hateful language.” Encourage students to join the movement, and share their pledges online with #StandUp4AAPIYouth.

WRAP-UP ACTIVITY: STUDENTS GO DEEPER
STEP 1: Give each student a I AM, I AM NOT Worksheet. Instruct them not to write their name on it.
STEP 2: Ask students to think about a bias or stereotypes they have experienced because of their identity. Remind them that we all have biases, and that recognizing bias is the only way to prevent it from turning into prejudice. Instruct students to write three parts of their identity under “I AM...” and three untrue stereotypes or bias that people hold against them because of that identity under “I AM NOT...”.
Examples: “I am a woman, but I am not weak,” “I am Asian, but I am not good at math,” or “I am Muslim, but I am not a terrorist.”
STEP 3: Ask the students to present the I AM, I AM NOT worksheets.
STEP 4: Encourage students to take a photo of their worksheets to share on social media by using the hashtag #StandUp4AAPIYouth
STEP 5: Lead students in a class discussion about the activity they just completed. Ask students to share out their thoughts and feelings on these discussion questions:
• What did you learn from reading the “I am, I am not” share outs?
• Show of hands: did anyone see a stereotype on one of their classmate’s papers that they have believed before, even if you weren’t conscious of that belief?
• We all have unconscious biases, which often lead us to believe stereotypes. How can these biases and stereotypes have a negative impact on ourselves and those around us? How can we challenge these biases and stereotypes?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
• “I am not Your Asian Stereotype”  https://youtu.be/_pUt7z751Naw
• “If Microaggressions Happened to White People”  https://youtu.be/KPRA4g-3yEk
• “The Look”  https://youtu.be/aJav36Nbn58
• “Beyond Engaged: Recognizing Bias”  https://youtu.be/ITNY1_SMHyU
*The videos we have recommended have been curated by educators and youth leaders from Beyond Differences™, a non-partisan, non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire students at all middle schools nationwide to end social isolation and create a culture of belonging for everyone. They are not expressing an endorsement or opinion of Beyond Differences. Please use your own discretion when using or assigning these videos and resources.
LESSON 4.
LIVING IN THE US- PLURALISM, IMMIGRATION, AND REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

OVERVIEW
This lesson looks at the United States as a pluralistic society. It takes a look at immigration and representation in the media when it comes to those that are BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, People of Color living in America. It helps expand the concept of diversity in the United States and how media portrayal is a big part of public opinion.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT
• Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10
• Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
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<td>Respect for diversity</td>
<td>Relationship building</td>
<td>Identifying social problems</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Co-construction learning</td>
<td>Reflecting</td>
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<td>Co-creating a sense of belonging</td>
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OBJECTIVE
• Students will understand what pluralism is and how the United States reflects on the idea of pluralism.
• Students will explore what it means to be an immigrant in the US and how they connect with immigration.
• Students will identify how the media is portraying false representation in the AAPI community.
• Students will dive deeper into what it means to have a diverse and inclusive setting.
• Students will learn why it’s important to understand pluralism, immigration, and representation.

KEY POINTS
• The United States is a pluralistic society filled with immigrants from all over the world.
• We must respect each other’s differences, values, beliefs, interests, passions, and culture.
• As a society, we must recognize that there’s a lack of representation in the media.
• More importantly, we must understand that what we see in the media does not accurately reflect a group of people in the United States.

MATERIALS
• Writing Materials - pencil/pens, paper
• Projector/ Screen Share for Virtual Learning
• Slides
INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING PLURALISM AND HOW THE UNITED STATES IS A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

Journal Reflection:
Define pluralism for students

**Pluralism:** a situation in which people of different social classes, religions, races, etc. co-exist in a society but continue to have their different traditions and interests.

Have students journal and brainstorm answering the following question: How is the United States pluralistic?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What are the things you and your family like to do that reflect your culture here in the United States?
- What are experiences you and your family have had living in the United States that are both positive and negative?
- What are aspects of living in the United States that you love and make you feel included, and what are aspects of living in the United States that might make you feel uncomfortable or excluded?

**ACTIVITY: EXPLORING IMMIGRATION**

**DEFINE IMMIGRATION**

**Immigration:** People moving to live permanently in a foreign country.

Show the video: “It Wasn’t Easy Growing Up As An Immigrant” [https://youtu.be/tlxSJW_Q2mQ](https://youtu.be/tlxSJW_Q2mQ)

**PARTNERS**

Organize students into groups of 2-4. Please be sure that groups are assigned so that no student feels isolated or anxious about finding a partner.

**Structured partnering:** It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the [Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions](https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/) under Lesson 1 at [https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/](https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/)

**SUGGESTED DEBRIEF QUESTIONS**

- What were some challenges that the storyteller faced when immigrating to the United States?
- How can you relate to the experiences of the storyteller?
- How does immigration contribute to a pluralistic society?

**ACTIVITY: REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA**

**Representation:** The way that people, ideas, media, and events are presented to us.

Show the following video(s):

- “How Asian Representation in Movies & TV Changed This Decade | NowThis” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnHUHI5ra08](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnHUHI5ra08)
- “Media Representation - Q&A with Hudson Yang” ([If you don't have time to show the whole video start at minute 10:33](https://youtu.be/Qo0sTiyyhec))
DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- What characters do you see in the media that represent you?
- How does media representation impact the way you see yourself and those from other communities?
- How does the lack of media representation impact how you see others?
- Why is media representation important in a pluralistic society?

WRAP-UP: STUDENTS GO DEEPER

- The United States is pluralistic as a result of people migrating here from every corner of the globe. How does this influence your identity?
- Our experiences of living in the United States are all different and all valuable. There is a lesson to be learned in everyone’s experience.
- Have students reflect on where they came from, what makes them unique and their experiences of living in the United States by interviewing their classmates in pairs using the “I am From” interview template.
- After completing the interview, ask students to transfer their partner’s responses to the “I am From” poem template. Encourage students to read their poems aloud for their classmates to celebrate the diversity of their peers.
- Have students hang their poetry in the classroom to remind each other of the diversity in our community.

VIDEOS ON IMMIGRATION

- “Tan Le: My immigration story” https://youtu.be/hCop3lGZH2o
- “What’s missing from the American immigrant narrative | Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVUkKKc3Vvk

VIDEOS ON REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

- “(UPDATED!) All-Time Top Movie Franchises 1979 - 2019” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5G8S8-Ts6c
- “Asian Misrepresentation in Media TedxCollege” https://youtu.be/nRvWwrQWvSvK

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LESSON 5. HUMAN CONNECTION - EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

OVERVIEW
This lesson is designed to have students explore the importance of empathy and human connection. It asks students to define empathy and learn the difference between empathy and sympathy. Through this lesson, students will be challenged to share their experiences and perspectives with their classmates. They will be asked to listen to others’ perspectives without judgment and to think of ways that they can improve their connections with their classmates and their peers. Students will also learn about the connection between love and social isolation.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT
• Reading: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
• Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6
• Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
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OBJECTIVE
• Students will define sympathy and empathy, evaluate whether they agree or disagree with Brené Brown’s point of view, and create their own claim using supportive evidence.
• Students will evaluate the importance of connection in the classroom.
• Students will explore the connection between love and social isolation.
• Students will share their experiences and perspectives with other classmates, show that they are listening and connecting with empathy.
• Students will respond to real situations of empathy and work together to respond.

KEY POINTS
• Sympathy and empathy are different. Sympathy is feeling bad for someone, but empathy requires the ability to see someone else’s perspective, stay out of judgment, recognize someone else’s emotion, relate to that emotion, and then communicate about that emotion.
• Empathy and communication are essential to human connection. Showing love strengthens it.
• Showing empathy is not always easy and requires being vulnerable, seeing from another perspective, and being able to listen without judgment.
• It’s important to recognize labels and understand their importance and how we can use them to define and uplift ourselves.
MATERIALS
• Writing materials- pencil/pens, paper
• Know Your Classmates Lesson 5 Slides

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/

KEY TERMS
• Empathy: The feeling that you understand and share another person’s experiences and emotions through perspective taking, staying out of judgment, and communicating about emotions.
• Sympathy: Feeling bad or showing concern for someone.
• Stereotypes: An often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about all people or things with a particular characteristic.
• Labels: A classifying phrase or name applied to a person, also relating to one’s identity or sense of self

INTRODUCTION
Write the words empathy and sympathy on the board. Ask students to define what these words mean and what their initial understandings of empathy and sympathy are.

Then, ask students what they think is the difference between the two words.

Tell the class, “Today we will be talking about human connection and the importance of empathy and sympathy.”

Instruct students to watch the “Brené Brown on Empathy” video and take notes on both the difference between sympathy and empathy, as well as, how Brené Brown creates her point of view.

Ask them to focus on what empathy is.

Ask students to share out and more clearly define empathy. You can guide students to the definition listed above.

Optional Journal Reflection:
Have students journal about the following questions:
• What is Brené Brown’s point of view? Do you agree or disagree? Be sure to use evidence to support your claim.
• How do you show compassion and empathy at school?
• Do you think you know your classmates? Why or why not?
• Do you think your classmates know you? Why or why not?
• Can we show empathy and compassion without knowing one another? Why or why not?
• Why is feeling connected to one another important?

DISCUSSION:
Tell students, “As a class, we come together from different families and different cultures. We might even speak different languages. By being empathic, we can grow and learn from our classmates. When we don’t act with empathy, it can lead us to create stories for others instead of listening and letting others create their own stories. This can lead to labels and stereotypes which can be harmful.”

Define stereotypes for students by using the definition from above.

Labels:
Tell students that they will be watching a short video* about the importance of labels. As they watch, they should think about the following questions:
• How are labels and stereotypes harmful?
• How can having empathy help deconstruct or change stereotypes?

• How might labels be seen in a positive way?

Show the following video(s):

“Why do labels matter?” https://youtu.be/P_GkSHBVHzc

Additional optional video:

“The Beauty of Human Skin in Every Color” https://youtu.be/NiMgOklgeos

Ask students to journal about the following questions and then share out as a class.

• Why should labels be recognized?

• How do labels relate to our identity?

• What are some labels your friends and family identify with?

• What are some labels you identify with?

Expressions of Love:

As humans, showing love is one of the most important things we do to feel connected to others, but what happens when people experience a lack of love? Exclusion and isolation are key factors to experiencing a lack of love, which can have dramatic life-long effects on people. There are a lot of factors that make it hard for our world to show love, but one of the first steps to showing love can be to include and connect with others around us. Learning someone’s name and just saying hello can be the first bridge we build with people. It’s all about showing that you care.

Structured partnering:

It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions.

WRAP-UP ACTIVITY - EMPATHY SCENARIOS

Students will have time to write in their journals, a response they’d like to hear from someone if they were being vulnerable about something going on. Ask students “How would you like them to respond?”

Next, students will be assigned (or given the option to choose) 1 of 3 scenarios. Each scenario is an example of someone being vulnerable and open about how they’re feeling. In partners, the students will read through their scenario and discuss how they would respond, using what they’ve learned about empathy and compassion.

This activity allows the students to work together, connect, and create a better understanding of empathy through real situations.

Some examples of how students can respond are by using phrases such as “Thank you so much for sharing that. What I heard you say was… that must have been… Thank you again for sharing.”

Instructions

Read through the dialogue of Person 1 talking to Person 2, and then roleplay what would happen after. Take turns playing each role.
**SCENARIO 1 - FEELING LOST**

*Characters*

**Person 1:** for the past few months, they’ve been feeling really lost in life. Not having that motivation they’re used to, it’s gotten to the point where they feel like nothing matters anymore and they don’t know what to do about it. They don’t want to feel judged for what they say and being vulnerable isn’t something they’re used to.

**Person 2:** A close friend of person 1 and the only person person 1 feels comfortable talking to about something so serious. They’re someone who knows person 1 really well and is unaware that their friend has been feeling this way.

*Scenario*

**Person 1** and **Person 2** are texting and **Person 1** decides to open up about how they feel, hoping **Person 2** can help in some way. Opening up and being vulnerable is something new for **Person 1**.

*Dialogue*

**Person 1:** Hey, can I talk to you about something?
**Person 2:** Yeah of course
**Person 1:** I know you don’t usually see me like this but something’s wrong.
**Person 2:** How so??
**Person 1:** I don’t know how to explain but I haven’t been acting like myself lately. I feel.. lost, like I don’t know what to do anymore. I’m sad everyday, I can’t even sleep because of it.. I don’t know what’s causing it but I just want this horrible feeling to stop..

When you play **Person 2**, respond empathetically and practice being as supportive as possible. What would you say to comfort your friend? How would you show support for them?

When you play **Person 1**, try to imagine the feelings they’re going
through. How would you react when your friend supports you? What worries would you express to them?

**SCENARIO 2 - RACIST COMMENTS**

**Characters**

**Person 1:** Recently this student has been getting bullied about their race, where their parents are from, and how they look. This student doesn't feel comfortable talking about it to teachers or an adult. The only person they feel comfortable opening up to is their friend.

**Person 2:** A student who’s been a friend of **Person 1** since they transferred to the school. They’re unaware of what **Person 1** has been going through for the past few months. The bullying, name calling, racist comments.

**Scenario**

**Person 1** and **Person 2** just got out of school and are walking home. **Person 1** takes this opportunity to tell **Person 2** what’s been going on.

**Dialogue**

**Person 1:** Something’s been going on and I know I can talk to you about anything.

**Person 2:** Are you okay?

**Person 1:** I don’t know. When you’re not around, people like to call me names. They say go back to your country, you don’t belong here, no one likes you. At first I brushed it off because I didn’t know what else to do. But everyday I get called these things and everyday it feels worse. I get pushed, laughed at. I don’t know how much I can take. I wanted to tell you what was going on but I just didn’t know how.

When you play **Person 2**, respond empathetically and practice being as supportive as possible. What would you say to comfort your friend? How would you show support for them?
When you play Person 1, try to imagine how you would feel. How would you react when your friend supports you? What worries would you express to them?

**SCENARIO 3 - COMING OUT**

*Characters*

**Person 1**: a student who comes from a religious background. Their family disapproves of the LGBTQ+ community and same-sex relationships. Their classmates and peers frequently use harmful phrases like “that’s so gay” or “no homo”. They have known that they identify as gay for a while, but out of fear of rejection from their family, friends, and community they have never told anyone.

**Person 2**: the best friend of Person 1. They have used phrases like “that’s so gay” or “no homo” in the past along with their peers, not realizing the harm that these statements can have. Even though they have not been a good ally in the past, they do support the LGBTQ+ community.

*Scenario*

Person 1 and Person 2 are hanging out together. Person 1 decides to take this opportunity to come out to Person 2. Person 1 is very scared because this is their first time coming out to anyone, and they fear the rejection of Person 2.

*Dialogue*

**Person 1**: So, there’s something I’ve been meaning to talk to you about.

**Person 2**: Okay, sure.

**Person 1**: I have to tell you something… something I haven’t told anyone else. But you have to promise not to tell anyone, and you can’t freak out. Okay?

**Person 2**: What happened? Did you get in trouble?

**Person 1**: No, I just… you’ll see. Can you just promise, please?

**Person 2**: Um… okay, yeah. I promise.

**Person 1**: Okay. Well, the thing is - wow this is hard to say - um….. I’m gay.

When you play Person 2, respond empathetically and practice being as supportive as possible. What would you say to comfort your friend? How would you show support for them?
When you play Person 1, try to imagine how you would feel coming out for the first time. How would you react when your friend supports you? What worries would you express to them?

**WRAP-UP DISCUSSION - EMPATHY SCENARIOS**

Lead students in a class discussion about the activity they just completed. Ask students to share out their thoughts and feelings on these discussion questions:

- Why is it important to show empathy to others?
- How did it feel to have someone respond to you empathetically?
- How will you continue to show empathy to others?

*The videos we have recommended have been curated by educators and youth leaders from Beyond Differences™, a non-partisan, non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire students at all middle schools nationwide to end social isolation and create a culture of belonging for everyone. They are not expressing an endorsement or opinion of Beyond Differences. Please use your own discretion when using or assigning these videos and resources.*
LESSON 6.
DIVERSE EXPRESSION OF GENDER

OVERVIEW
This lesson is designed to have students explore gender expression as part of their identity. It asks students to be able to distinguish the difference between sex and gender and recognize how these concepts interact. Through this lesson, students will be challenged to share their personal experiences and perspectives of gender with their classmates. They will be asked to learn about experiences of gender different from their own, and question the gender norms that society creates for us.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT
• Reading: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
• Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6
• Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
• Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES including EQUITY ELABORATIONS

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<td>Perspective-taking</td>
<td>Active listening</td>
<td>Assessing the impact of one’s belief &amp; biases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examining beliefs &amp; biases</td>
<td>Collective agency</td>
<td>Respect for diversity</td>
<td>Co-construction learning</td>
<td>Identifying social problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examining personal and social identities</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>Reflecting</td>
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<td>Co-creating a sense of belonging</td>
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OBJECTIVE
• Students will define sex and gender and analyze the difference and relationship between the two concepts.
• Students will learn different gender terms and concepts.
• Students will evaluate gender as a social construct and analyze the different ways people express gender.
• Students will reflect on the different gender roles and norms that exist in society, and how they impact us.
• Students will practice valuing and appreciating their classmates’ gender expressions.

KEY POINTS
• Sex refers to biological/physical characteristics (e.g., genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics), while gender refers to personal/social identity (e.g. gender roles, norms, personality traits, fashion choices, etc.). Both concepts are social constructs.
• A social construct is an idea that has been created by and accepted as truth by a particular group of people or culture. Social constructs are not naturally occurring or immutable truths, however they hold immense power over how people understand and interpret their world.
• A person’s gender is not defined by their physical body. However, a person’s gender identity can be influenced by their body, and their interpretation of their body can be influenced by their gender.
• Transgender is an umbrella term that refers to any individual whose gender identity does not align with the sex
that they were assigned at birth. Sex/gender assigned at birth refers to the process where other people (e.g., doctors, parents) define a person’s gender based on their biological characteristics.

- Cisgender refers to people who identify with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth (e.g. a baby is born with a vagina, the doctors and parents tell the baby that she’s a girl, she grows up to identify as a girl).

- Gender expression refers to the ways that people display or embody their gender, such as through clothing, behaviors, personality traits, hobbies, attitudes, social roles, experiences, etc. Everyone expresses their gender differently, including cisgender people. It is important to value and respect one another’s individual choice of gender expression so as not to exclude or isolate.

- Many of the ideas our society has about gender roles and norms are harmful because they limit everyone’s ability to express their authentic selves, including cisgender people.

MATERIALS

- Writing materials — pencil/pens, paper
- Know Your Classmates Lesson 6 Slides
- Know Your Classmates Lesson 6 Worksheet

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/

INTRODUCTION

Ask students to think and journal about the first time, or a significant time, that they were aware of their gender (boy, girl, non-binary, etc.). Have students who are comfortable share out.

Using the gender unicorn as reference, define the following terms for the class:

- **Assigned Sex:** the sex that one is given (or assigned) at birth based on their biological/physical characteristics. Sex characteristics include genitalia, reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics, among other physical traits. An individual’s assigned sex can be male, female, or intersex. Intersex is a term that describes an individual whose physical characteristics do not completely align with medical definitions of male or female (e.g., genitalia is not clearly a penis or a vagina, inconsistency between reproductive organs and internal genitalia). Please note that the term “hermaphrodite” is considered disrespectful to the intersex community, however your students may be more familiar with this term.

- **Gender Identity:** the personal sense of one’s own gender. Gender is an internal identity that is often influenced by societal ideas of gender and also a person’s physical body. Gender is who you are inside, and it doesn’t always match your assigned sex. Examples of Gender Identities include: boy, girl, nonbinary, agender (having no gender identity), among many many others. There are infinite possible gender identities, and each is unique to the individual. Societal ideas of gender identity often include sexual orientation as well. For example, men are “supposed” to be attracted to women, and vice versa. In this way, other sexual orientations can be seen by society to challenge traditional gender roles.

- **Non-Binary:** an umbrella term for any individual whose gender identity falls outside of the gender binary, or the
“traditional” two genders of woman and man. Every non-binary person is different. Some may identify as neither a man nor a woman, some may identify as both, some may identify as changing from one to the other, and some may identify in a totally different way. Many non-binary people are trans because their gender identity does not align with the sex that they were assigned at birth.

- **Cisgender:** when an individual’s gender identity aligns with their assigned sex. For example, if someone is born with a penis, is assigned male at birth, and identifies as a man, he would be cisgender.

- **Transgender:** when an individual’s gender identity does not align with their assigned sex. For example, if someone is born with a penis, is assigned male at birth, but identifies as a woman, she would be transgender.

- **Gender Expression:** gender expression is how you express your gender identity on the outside. No matter what your assigned sex or gender is, you can express yourself in different ways. Gender expression can be masculine, feminine, or adrogyous (which means a combination of both). Just because you express yourself one way, doesn’t mean that is how you identify. For example, a boy can wear make-up (something typically considered to be feminine) and it doesn’t mean that he is a girl. He is still a boy, he just happens to be expressing himself in a more feminine way. On the other hand, a girl can wear a suit (something typically considered to be masculine) and it doesn’t mean that she is a boy. She is still a girl, she just happens to be expressing herself masculinely.

- **Gender Pronouns:** are one way that we express our gender. Pronouns are used to refer to one another. For example, she went to the store or he took a bite of the apple. Some of the most common pronouns are she/her/hers (feminine), he/him/his (masculine), and they/them/theirs (gender neutral). People may also use other gender neutral pronouns like xe/xem/xyrs or ze/hir/hirs. It is important to respect one another’s pronouns. If you aren’t sure what pronouns someone uses, the best thing is to ask.

Once you are done, open up a discussion among the students and allow them to ask questions about what they just learned.

**ACTIVITY: GENDER ROLE BOXES**

**STEP 1:** Before starting the activity, show the following 10 minute video:

“Toilets, bowties, gender and me” [https://youtu.be/NCLoNwVJA-0](https://youtu.be/NCLoNwVJA-0)

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**STEP 2:** Hand out a Gender Role Boxes Activity Worksheet to each student. Inform students that during the activity they will be using some words that are very offensive and triggering to many people, especially LGBTQ+ students, and that they should use those words respectfully and only in the context of the activity.

**STEP 3:** Instruct students to start by listing the expectations held for men and women inside their respective boxes.

Questions that can be used to guide their answers:

- How are men/women supposed to be different?
- What feelings are “real men”/“real women” supposed to have?
- How do “real men”/“real women” show their feelings?
- How are “real men”/“real women” supposed to act sexually?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>“Act Like a Man”</strong></th>
<th><strong>“Act Like a Woman”</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples of phrases that go in the “Act Like a Man” box:</td>
<td>Examples of phrases that go in the “Act Like a Woman” box:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong</td>
<td>• Pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tough</td>
<td>• Dainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In control</td>
<td>• Passive, submissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Don’t cry</td>
<td>• Nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assertive</td>
<td>• Cook, clean</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dominant</td>
<td>• Nurturing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make money</td>
<td>• Gossip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good with cars</td>
<td>• Emotional/Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Play sports</td>
<td>• Take care of kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attracted to women</td>
<td>• Follow men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Funny</td>
<td>• Don’t sleep around</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 4:** Next, ask students to list the “names” men and women who don’t fit the expectations in their box are called, writing their answers outside and around the respective boxes.

**NOTE:** These names can be very triggering and harmful, especially for LGBTQ+ students. Remind students to be respectful when discussing them, and not to use them outside of the context of the activity. These terms may also make you, the educator, uncomfortable. This is absolutely normal, as these terms are often used to harm other people, and if you are not comfortable discussing these terms and what they mean, skip Step 4. As an alternative, you can discuss the general responses and attitudes people have when someone doesn’t fit their gender expectations (e.g. people consider women who are ambitious to be overly aggressive and unfriendly, people consider men who are sensitive to be weak).

**NOTE:** Consider discussing with your students how most insulting things you can call other people refer to girls/femininity (e.g. c*nt). This can be a good opportunity to discuss how sexism harms boys as well, preventing them from a full authentic life because being like a girl is considered to be the worst thing they can do.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>• Wimp</td>
<td>• Slut, whore</td>
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<tr>
<td>• P*ssy</td>
<td>• Bitch</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Queer</td>
<td>• Hysterical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• F*ggot</td>
<td>• Tomboy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Homo</td>
<td>• D*ke</td>
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</table>

**STEP 5:** Once the students have completed the worksheet, split them into small discussion groups of 2-4. Please be sure that groups are assigned, so that no student feels isolated or anxious about finding a partner.

**Structured partnering:** It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the [Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions](https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/) under Additional Resources at https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/.

**STEP 6:** In their groups, have students discuss the following questions:

- Does anybody fit completely in either of these boxes? Why? Why not?
- How does society make these boxes? What stereotypes do they come from?
- How do the boxes harm us and limit gender expression for everyone, including cisgender people?
- How are these boxes harmful to trans folks who were born in the wrong box? How are they harmful to non-binary folks who don’t fit in either box?
- What are the implications of the names that people get called when they don’t fit inside their assigned box?
- How are these names and stereotypes harmful to LGBTQ+ people, or people who love the same sex?
- What can you as students do to get rid of these boxes in our society?

**STEP 7:** When students are done discussing, have someone from each group share, and open up a class discussion.
### LESSON 7.
### DIVERSE EXPRESSION OF CULTURE

#### OVERVIEW

This lesson is designed to have students explore the importance of culture and diversity. It asks students to be able to define culture and how we express culture. Through this lesson, students will be challenged to evaluate the danger of excluding others simply because they do not understand their experiences or cultures. It also asks students to dig deeper into their own cultural identity and think about what they share outwardly with the world and what their classmates might not know about them. Students will be asked to listen to other perspectives and experiences and make connections to their classmates’ expression of culture.

#### COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

- **Reading:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
- **Writing:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6
- **Speaking and Listening:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
- **Language:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.7.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.7.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.7.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.7.6

#### SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES including EQUITY ELABORATIONS

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<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>Acknowledging diverse social norms</td>
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#### OBJECTIVE

- Students will define culture and discuss different ways that culture can be expressed.
- Students will reflect and evaluate the effects of feeling excluded because of cultural differences.
- Students will list examples of different cultural aspects that they have in their own identity and evaluate which aspects others see the most and which aspects might be hidden.
- Students will learn the difference between cultural appropriation, assimilation, and appreciation. They will discuss why cultural appropriation is harmful.
- Students will engage in conversations with their classmates about their cultural identities.
- Students will listen to aspects of other classmates’ cultural identities and show respect and appreciation by sharing out what they learned about their peers.

#### KEY POINTS

- Culture consists of beliefs, a certain way of thinking, behaving, or working, customs, arts, a way of life, etc. of a
particular society, group, place or time.

- Culture is important; it gives us a way to connect with others, but if we are not inclusive of others’ cultures, it can also feel very alienating, exclusive, and isolating.
- Sometimes we cannot see all the aspects of someone’s culture, or why they do the things they do; it is important to be open to conversations, learning, and listening.
- The more we know and learn from one another, the more we can appreciate the diversity of our class.
- Cultural appropriation is different from cultural assimilation or appreciation. Cultural appropriation is harmful and unacceptable.
- Taking a “colorblind” approach and refusing to learn about and recognize our different cultures and experiences is harmful because it keeps us from fully understanding and embracing one another.
- Knowing about classmates’ cultures enables everyone to grow in empathy and be aware of multiple perspectives and experiences of the world.

**MATERIALS**

- Writing materials- pencil/pens, paper
- Know Your Classmates Lesson 7 Slides
- Know Your Classmates Lesson 7 Worksheet

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/

**INTRODUCTION**

Tell students, “Today we are going to be exploring and talking about cultural identity and expression. We have been talking a lot about identity and expression, but what does the word ‘culture’ mean? Think about all the different ways you express your ‘culture.’ Talk to the person sitting next to you about your culture, and see if together you can come up with a list of things that make culture. For instance, I might share what celebrating a holiday with my family looks like and determine that in my family religion and food creates our culture.”

Have students share with one another. Write the word culture on the board and have students call out different aspects that create culture. Write these aspects on the board.

**Define culture for students:**

Culture: the beliefs, the way of thinking, behaving or working, the customs, arts or the way of life, etc. for a particular society, group, place or time.

Tell students, “Culture is important; it gives us a way to connect with others, but if we are not inclusive of others’ cultures it can also feel very alienating, exclusive and isolating.”

**ACTIVITY: HIDDEN AND UNSEEN IDENTITIES**

Have students watch the following videos:

- “This is Me- Misbah” https://vimeo.com/181123125
- “In the Ring with a Muslim Muay Thai Champion” https://youtu.be/12Bst168aRQ

Tell students:

“There are aspects to our identity that others might not know or might not see. In Misbah’s experience she felt like people could only see her scarf and not her. On the other hand, sometimes there are aspects of our identity that we also don’t show to everyone around us, like in Ruqsana’s case.”

**Structured partnering:** It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions
Once they have seen the video, put students in pairs or small groups in virtual breakout rooms and ask them to share about their identity map and identify the following statements in relation to their identifiers.

- How do you think Misbah feels in the video? How do you know?
- What might people not realize about Misbah? What are her peers missing out on?
- How has Misbah been excluded? Have you ever been excluded before? How was it similar or different?
- How do you think Ruqsana felt in the video? How do you know?
- Why do you think Ruqsana hides some aspects of her identity below the surface? How do you think this affects her?
- Have you ever had to hide a part of your identity or culture? What was that like for you?

After students discuss with their partners, open the discussion up to the class and ask a few students to share.

**CULTURE: ASSIMILATION V. APPROPRIATION V. APPRECIATION**

Have students watch the following video:

“7 Myths About Cultural Appropriation DEBUNKED!” [https://youtu.be/KXejDhRG0UL](https://youtu.be/KXejDhRG0UL)

As a class, discuss these questions:

- What is the difference between cultural assimilation, appropriation, and appreciation?
- Why is cultural appropriation harmful to marginalized cultures and groups?
- How can we call out and prevent cultural appropriation?
- What are some ways that you can ensure that you are appreciating instead of appropriating?

**WRAP-UP ACTIVITY: CULTURAL ICEBERG**

**STEP 1:** Using the Lesson 7 Slides, show students the example of the Lesson 7 Worksheet.

**STEP 2:** Ask students to think about aspects of their culture and identity that they think are above the surface (those that can be seen) and below the surface (those that others may not see right away). Have them complete the Lesson 7 Worksheet individually.

**STEP 3:** Once the students have completed the worksheet, split them into small discussion groups of 2-4. Please be sure that groups are assigned, so that no student feels isolated or anxious about finding a partner.

**Structural partnering:** It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the [Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions](#)

**STEP 4:** Remind students that... “The object of this exercise is to learn about one another. The more we know and learn from one another the more we can appreciate the diversity of our class. It enables us to grow in empathy and contributes to our overall knowledge of the world. Make sure you are listening to everyone in the group, so that we all feel comfortable and heard and we are all learning from one another.”

**STEP 5:** In their groups, have students discuss the following questions:

- What is one aspect of your culture that you put above the surface? What are two aspects of your culture that are below the surface?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you didn’t feel seen or understood because people couldn’t see the aspects of your culture that are below the surface? Which parts of your culture were they not able to see? How did you feel?
- How is it harmful when we take a “colorblind” approach and refuse to recognize our different cultures and experiences?
- How can we make sure that we are recognizing and celebrating everyone’s differences?
STEP 6: Bring the class back together, and ask students to share something that they learned about someone else in their group.

DISCUSSION: UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE

Read to students: It is important to recognize that privilege is not an indicator of worth or success. Privilege is a circumstance that can make one’s life easier, but does not define who you are. One person can be privileged in one way, but disadvantaged in another way; there is no cookie cutter description for privilege. It is crucial to understand that if you do not have many privileges, you can still be successful, and if you do have many privileges, your life does not have to be perfect. Being aware of our privilege can simply allow us to be more grateful and compassionate people. What do you think it means to have privilege? What is a privilege?

Allow students time to brainstorm ideas.

Definition of Privilege: an advantage that only one person or group of people has, usually as a result of their position or identity in an organization, community, or wider society.

Discussion questions:
1. What are some examples of a way someone could have privilege?
2. What are some ways that being aware of our privilege can help us be better leaders, peers, allies, and people?

WRAP UP ACTIVITY: LET’S GO DEEPER

Using the Iceberg Activity worksheet, ask students to think about how they express their identity and culture.

• What are things about your identity/culture that people can notice right away?
• What are things that are just a little below the surface?
• What are the things that are deep below the surface?

*The videos we have recommended have been curated by educators and youth leaders from Beyond Differences®, a non-partisan, non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire students at all middle schools nationwide to end social isolation and create a culture of belonging for everyone. They are not expressing an endorsement or opinion of Beyond Differences. Please use your own discretion when using or assigning these videos and resources.
LESSON 7: DIVERSE EXPRESSION OF CULTURE

Directions: Think about how you express your identity and culture. What are things about your identity/culture that people can notice right away? What are things that are just a little below the surface? And, what are things that are deep below the surface? Fill out the iceberg accordingly.
LESSON 8.
ALLYSHIP AND BYSTANDER EFFECT

OVERVIEW

This lesson helps students understand and expand the concept of allyship. Students will learn when and how to be a good ally, the different kinds of allyship and that it’s the marginalized person/people themselves who decide what’s supportive, and helpful to them - not the potential ally. They will learn active listening skills, intent vs. impact and work on how they can become their own Ideal Ally. Students will practice what active and empathetic listening looks and feels like to help strengthen their communication skills and friendships. Allyship as a concept is both defined and explored. The bystander effect is introduced and how it affects the way people behave in public. The lesson wraps up with a brainstorm/activity regarding how to build a community filled with allies - to help in the healing of our community.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

• Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10
• Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA- LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6
• Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.7.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. CCRA.L.7.2

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES including EQUITY ELABORATIONS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Awareness</th>
<th>Self-Management</th>
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<td>Critical self-analysis Collective agency</td>
<td>Examining power relationships &amp; dynamics that disadvantage others</td>
<td>Active listening Building relationships</td>
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<td>Recognition of beliefs, mindsets, &amp; biases</td>
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OBJECTIVES

• To understand the complexity of what it means to show ally behavior and train students in these skills.
• To increase students’ empathy and compassion for those who are targeted/othered (through active listening).
• Students will consider different responses to troubling/bullying behavior and how that might change depending on the situation. Discussion of how to support in a way that feels supportive.
• To encourage students to Identify issues in their school community. Who is othered/ oppressed and part of “perceived outgroups” from their point of view?
• Students will understand what the bystander effect is.
• Students will come up with proactive ways to create an inclusive environment.

KEY POINTS

• Allyship is an ongoing process.
• Being an ally is being an individual who unites themselves with another to promote a common interest where both benefit (it’s not about you as the ally feeling like the hero).
• The importance of active listening - the best way to be an ally is to listen and educate yourself.
• You don’t make or dub yourself an ally - there needs to be a connection and permission from the person or
people you are hoping/trying to support.

- Allyship takes practice as we must constantly learn and unlearn problematic/offensive behaviors.
- Privilege is not just about cis gender straight white people (it’s situational) - different people have privilege in different situations.
- Just because you didn’t intend to hurt someone, your words and actions may still have a negative impact.

**MATERIALS**

- Writing Materials - pencil/pens, paper
- Projector or Screen Share for Virtual Learning
- Slide Presentation
- Impact vs. Intent Worksheet
- The Ideal Ally Worksheet
- How I will be an Ally Worksheet

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at [https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/](https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/)

**ACTIVITY 1: ACTIVE & EMPATHIC LISTENING SKILLS**

**OBJECTIVES**

- What are qualities of a good listener?
- What does active listening look and feel like?
- What does empathetic listening look and feel like?

**Active listening** is a skill you can use to ensure that other people feel they have been heard and understood, and can share their thoughts and feelings freely. Active listening also helps to avoid conflicts caused by misunderstandings.

**Active Listening Skills** (have students help you define these ahead of time - what do these look like/sound like)

- Paying attention
- Withholding judgment
- Reflecting
- Clarifying
- Summarizing
- Sharing

Pair students up using our Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions and have them practice these two skills...

**Give them this prompt:** tell the other person your name and how you came to be called that name. What does your name mean? Where did it come from? What does it mean to you? The other person will practice active listening by reflecting, clarifying, etc., and then summarize at the end to check for accuracy. Then have students switch roles.

**Structured partnering:** It can be very hard for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions.

**Empathic listening** is a structured listening and questioning technique that allows you to develop and enhance relationships with a stronger understanding of what is being conveyed. This takes active listening techniques to a new level.
Teacher Tip: Do a quick role play here to model this with a student volunteer or give 2 students a prompt/scenario and have them role play it while pausing a few times to point out good examples of: paraphrasing, following up, and being non-judgemental.

Empathetic Listening Skills
- Be nonjudgmental
- Give the person your undivided attention
- Listen carefully (to feelings and facts)
- Don’t be afraid of silence
- Restate and paraphrase
- Follow up

Wrap up with a quick discussion:

How did this exercise feel?
Was it nice to have someone pay that kind of attention while you were telling your story?

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCTION: HOW TO BE AN ALLY

Show the following video*. “How to be an Ally” https://youtu.be/_dg86g-Q1M0

Discussion Questions:
- What did you learn from the video that you don’t already know?
- What are some of your biggest takeaways from this video?
- Did it bring up some questions for you?

ACTIVITY 3: DIFFERENT KINDS OF ALLYSHIP

Allyship begins when an individual with privilege (the person of privilege can shift given different circumstances) seeks to support a marginalized individual/group.

Nicole Asong Nfonoyim-Hara, Director of the Diversity Programs at Mayo Clinic, defines the act of allyship as “when a person of privilege works in solidarity and partnership with a marginalized group of people to help take down the systems that challenge that group’s basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society.”

There are Different Kinds of Allyship.
- A person or group who is being marginalized must be given the opportunity to define for themselves how allies can be helpful.
- Allyship works when it’s an offer of support. Allyship - does not mean being in the way. It’s how can I/we help that person or group?
- Different communities may have different needs. You may see or experience racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, social isolation/bullying for any perceived “difference” or a combination of 2 or more.
- Always good to say... “We stand with you” or “We are behind you” and offer practical support that is helpful and identified by those with whom you seek to ally.
- Performative allyship - your allyship needs to feel supportive; it’s not about you.
- Amplify the voices and messages of others. One way you can be an ally is to help amplify the voices of BIPOC, differently abled and LGBTQ students.
- Speak up in your own social circles. If you hear offensive/derogatory/racist language about a group of people, speak up. Let your friends know that it’s not OK.
- You can be an ally to one or *many * (in solidarity with others to change/take down the system that challenges that group’s basic rights.)
DISCUSSION: SCENARIOS

- Encourage students to articulate their beliefs regarding behavior toward others and to think about intentional ways to take care of other members in their school community.
- When is it appropriate to step in/intervene? Ignore the situation/walk away? Get a teacher or other trusted adult?
- How to support without making it worse.

Divide classroom into 4 corners with the following 4 options

Read each scenario listed below and ask students to go to the corner with the solution they would choose. Direct students to discuss with others in the same corner. Ask a couple students from each corner to share why they chose that option. Then move on to the next scenario and ask students to decide if they will stay in the same corner or move to another one.

1. Intervene myself - right then
2. Wait and then talk to the person in private later
3. Seek help/support from a teacher, principal or other trusted adult
4. Ignore or walk away

Scenario #1: Layla is an out lesbian at your school. One day, when you’re walking down the hall, you see and hear someone shout at Layla, who is at her locker. “Dyke!” Those standing around laugh, and then walk away.

Scenario #2: When you go to the bathroom, you see graffiti inside the bathroom stall: “Melanie is a tranny.”

Scenario #3: An AAPI student walks down the hall and a classmate says, “You people are the reason we have to wear masks and the musical was cancelled.”

Scenario #4: A friend of yours calls a new student at your school a bad/racist name because of their skin color.

Scenario #5: Ms. Jones, your teacher promised that you wouldn’t be tested on anything except chapter 4 on the upcoming test. When you take the test, though, there are a few questions from chapters 5, too. You hear someone say, “I can’t believe she did that! That whole test was so gay!”

Scenario #6: A teacher at your school keeps referring to Muslims, Jews, Mormons (Catholics, Hindus, whatever you want to use - but use a few) as all being one way and making a generalization that lumps everyone who practices that religion into one group in a negative or stereotyped way.

With each scenario, invite a couple of students from the different corners to say why they chose to stand in a certain corner.

Ask them to give an example of what they could say to the person being harassed or bullied to help them feel supported

What could you say to the person who said the hurtful words/did the bullying?

How could you help make this better going forward/make a change?

*Make sure to hear from students in all four corners during the lesson. As your students say why they have chosen a particular action/corner, acknowledge their reasoning.

To generate further discussion after you have presented the scenarios, ask some open-ended questions:

- Did you respond differently to the different scenarios?
- What are some of the reasons you chose one corner versus another?
- With whom did you feel most comfortable intervening?
- When were you more likely to ignore the situation? Why?
- Would you respond in some other way not represented by the four corners?
- What are proactive ways to create an inclusive environment?
ACTIVITY 4: CREATE YOUR OWN GUIDE TO BEING AN ALLY

Allies support and advocate for equality alongside their marginalized friends or community members.

IDEAL ALLY

Ask Class: What is an ideal ally IYO? When you hear the word allyship, what words, actions, behaviors, characteristics, or people come to mind?

Teacher: Using the Ideal Ally worksheet students will create an ally that reflects on their thoughts and opinions about what an ideal ally is. Once students are done with their Ideal Ally worksheet, have students share with a partner and debrief with the following questions:

*PARTNERS* Organize students into groups of 2-4 using our Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions. Please be sure that groups are assigned so that no student feels isolated or anxious about finding a partner.

Once students are in their groups, have them discuss the following questions:

- What values does your ideal ally uphold?
- What actions does your ally take to support others?
- How does your ideal ally help to change situations/systems that exist to make them better and/or more inclusive?
- How similar/different is your Ideal Ally to you?
- Do you believe that you can practice allyship at home, school, and your other communities? If not, what are the reasons why?

If they don’t come up with these ideas on their own, please include:

- Actively initiate conversations about equality with people — be vocal when you hear something is offensive or that isn’t inclusive.
- Proudly identify yourselves as an ally in all aspects of your lives, from home, to work, to school, to sports and in your faith communities. You don’t always have to do this by saying you’re an Ally; actions speak loudly.
- Be a role model for others. You can and will inspire others.

ACTIVITY 5: INTENT VS. IMPACT

DEFINE INTENT AND IMPACT

Intent: Intention or Purpose: what you mean when you do something

Impact: Effect or Influence: what your actions do to others

Tell students, “Just because someone didn’t mean something that they said to be offensive, doesn’t mean it hurts any less. It’s like if you step on someone’s toe. Just because you didn’t mean to step on their toe, their toe may still hurt. We may be saying something with good intentions, but if its impact on someone else is negative, we need to think about what we said. If someone calls us out for saying something harmful, we don’t need to be defensive. The best thing to do is to understand how our words impacted the other person, apologize, and learn from our mistakes.”

Using the INTENT VS. IMPACT Worksheet, ask students to fill out the venn diagram comparing the similarities between intent and impact. When students are finished, call on some volunteers to share out.

ACTIVITY 6: BYSTANDER EFFECT

DEFINE BYSTANDER EFFECT

Bystander Effect: Is a social psychological phenomenon in which individuals are less likely to help a person who is being targeted/harassed when other people are present (when there’s a crowd, in public with other folx, etc)

Show the following video*:


After students have watched the video, as a class, do the following debrief:

- What were some things you noticed about the bystander effect from the video we watched?
- Were you ever in a situation where you felt like you experienced the bystander effect? How did you feel in that
situation? What do you wish you did differently?
• How is the bystander effect harmful to our school community?
• What are some things you could say or do in a situation where you’re “in” the bystander effect?

Discuss what it means to be a bystander.
• How do you think the person being harassed/bullied feels if people don’t do anything?
• How do you feel when you don’t do something?

ACTIVITY 7: HOW I WILL BE AN ALLY

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Students will list issues in their school community.
2. Within your school community, is there a specific person/group of people that especially needs your allyship right now? It’s not always about race/ethnicity or LGBTQ allyship. Look for other students who are shy, socially isolated, have learning differences, religious differences, look different in some way, are foster kids, have economic differences, etc.
3. With the list, students will find ways to be an ally to support their community members/classmates during times they need support and overall.

QUICK DEBRIEF QUESTIONS
• How do you build a community filled with allies in your classroom?
• What issues in your community do you want to tackle together?
• What action steps can we take to address these issues as allies?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
“Beyond Engaged: How to be an Ally” https://youtu.be/s5VAcZWHk0A Beyond Differences Teen Board Members discuss what it means to be an ally and share tips on how to be an ally.

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LESSON 9.
WHAT POWER DOES YOUR STORY HOLD?

OVERVIEW
In this lesson we will explore the power of our personal stories. We start with a poet who was the youngest featured artist in the Obama White House and we end with an inspiring story of Lili Rachel Smith who overcame social isolation and whose memory helped inspire thousands to change the world. What will your story have the power to change?

MATERIALS
• 8 x 11 white paper
• Crayons/markers or colored pencils
• Writing Materials - paper, pencils, pens, etc.
• Timer - a clock, watch, phone, or something similar will work
• Computer / internet access

VIDEO INTRO:
There are many ways we can tell our stories. Some people write books, paint paintings, or sing songs. Mayda del Valle grew up on the South Side of Chicago, the daughter of Latinx and African immigrants. She found her voice in the writing and performance of Slam Poetry.

When you watch her tell her story think about the following:
• How does Mayda use specific details to make her story resonate with others?
• How does she go from telling her own story to inviting others to tell their own?

Watch*: “Why I’m Loud as Hell: Mayda del Valle at TEDxYouth@Hollywood” (6 min 40 sec)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2O2EpxLY4w

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Discussion Questions:
Mayda says that “Each and every one of us has a story to tell! Every one of us are story makers.” The basis for her story is being short and then she turns it into something powerful. What could be the little thing about you that could become powerful to others?

Mayda also says, “All of our individual stories, our collective stories… have the power to change the world.” If everyone in your class was free to nurture and share their stories without judgment, how would your class, school, community and the world change?

ACTIVITY: WHAT IS YOUR STORY?
Answer Mayda’s questions:
• What is your story?
• What is the story you tell yourself?
• What is the story you tell the world?

You can draw your responses, write a poem, or write out your responses. Whatever feels most comfortable to you.
Take 15-20 minutes to respond to the questions.

- Set a timer for 15-20 minutes
- Pass out the plain paper, crayons, pen and pencils.
- Have students draw or write out their responses to the 3 questions above.
- After 15-20 minutes, pair students up. Have students sit side by side with their backs to each other (students will be shoulder to shoulder and each facing a different direction). Sharing stories and not looking each other in the eye is a powerful way to practice active listening.
- Have students describe THE EXPERIENCE of participating in this activity. They do not need to share what they wrote but have them share how it felt to draw or write out the responses to these questions with their partner. If they are comfortable sharing what they wrote/drew, they can also share that with their partner.
- Closing: As a large group, ask the following questions to the group one at a time. Have a few people share their responses to each question.
  - What felt easy about the activity?
  - What felt challenging or like a stretch?

**Lili's Story: The Founding Story of Beyond Differences**

Beyond Differences, the organization that brought you Know Your Classmates® Day, was born out of one middle school girl's experience of social isolation that transformed into a force for change. Lili Rachel Smith was a foodie, fashionista, animal lover, and had a laugh that drew people to her. She was also born with a rare craniofacial anomaly somewhat like Auggie in the book “Wonder.” In elementary school, Lili was part of a fun, active, group of friends, but then, things changed.

In middle school, Lili experienced painful social isolation. Back then, her parents didn’t have the words to describe what was happening to Lili. She wasn’t being bullied, but she felt invisible, disconnected, and separate from her peers.

Lili had a passion for life and advocating for social change. It came naturally to her. She was born curious about everyone’s experience of how they fit in - or not - and how they developed the leadership skills to influence others. She wanted to know everything in detail. Thankfully, teachers helped her nurture this passion and so did the family friends she had outside of school. Those people made her feel accepted and seen.

Sadly, Lili passed away from medical complications due to her condition when she was just 15½ years old. After her death, Lili’s classmates learned about the painful social isolation she had felt in middle school. Her story inspired them to come together and build something in honor of her resilience and compassionate spirit. This was the beginning of Beyond Differences.

Lili’s brave story has touched millions of youth in schools across the nation (and beyond!) and that is the reason we are here today.

**As a group, watch “Lili’s Story”** [https://youtu.be/vXkfpR5wO-k](https://youtu.be/vXkfpR5wO-k)

After watching the video, pair up in groups of 2-3 and spend about 5 minutes answering the following questions. You can set a timer to help keep you on track:

- Lili's story has been influential across the nation. Why do you think it resonates with so many people?
- How has telling Lili’s story enabled others to tell their own stories?
- Why do you think it is important to talk about experiences of social isolation/loneliness at school?

What both Mayda and Lili teach us is we all have a story of social isolation! They also teach us how powerful that story can be in ending social isolation.

We each have the power to learn each other’s stories, find common ground, make connections, and create communities where everyone belongs.
If we harness the power of our stories we can end social isolation and change the world... just like Lili.

We explore more about our stories, the stories we tell ourselves, and our stories of social isolation/loneliness in our No One Eats Alone® curriculum.
LESSON 10
PLAN KYC DAY

OVERVIEW

As student leaders you will work as a team to bring Know Your Classmates (KYC) Day to your school community. Ideally, your student leadership group will be made up of students who have already been through some of the Know Your Classmates lessons. Your leadership group will be in charge of planning and organizing Know Your Classmates Day. You will challenge teachers to get their classes involved and, on Know Your Classmates Day, will organize the activities.

The student leaders will be in charge of letting the school community and possibly the press know about Know Your Classmates Day. You will make sure everyone feels included!

As student leaders you will model how to be an activist, an ally and how to build community through positive communication by leading the Know Your Classmates Day activities. You will help to inspire others to get to know their classmates and work together to coordinate and lead the activities to create a culture of belonging at your school!

LET’S GET STARTED

Plan Know Your Classmates Day

• Think about how you are empowering your school to end social isolation. Make sure you are working to both sign up for tasks and plan for Know Your Classmates Day.

Read this whole student leadership unit and decide how many planning and preparation meetings you may need. It could be once a week for a few weeks, or every day for a shorter period of time.

Tools to help you get started! (included below)

• Planning for Know Your Classmates Day
• Know Your Classmates Tip Sheet: How Do Schools Do it?

*All worksheets and slides can be found online at https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/

STEP 1: GET YOUR TEAM TOGETHER!

• Recruit a leadership group.
  ❖ Consider the student council, your friends, classmates you don’t know well but would like to get to know better, or anyone else who is interested in helping.
• To help prepare your group for leadership and get everyone excited about Know Your Classmates Day, you should complete the activities in Lesson 9 - What Power Does Your Story Hold?

STEP 2: BRING THE ADULTS ON BOARD

• Get permission from your teacher or another adult in the school to host this event.
• Enlist adults in the school to get involved: principal, vice/assistant principal, counselors, teachers, etc.
  ❖ Try to get every teacher to agree to participate with their class.
  ❖ Keep track of each class because your team will be giving them materials and meeting with each one to help out. Make sure each participating teacher has access to the lesson plans. All the resources can be found here: beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/
STEP 3: DECIDE WHERE AND WHEN, WHAT AND WHO

- Determine time of the event and which class it’ll take place in. National KYC Day is October 15, 2021 but your school can celebrate on whatever day is best for your community!
- Think about how you will celebrate! You can play music, hold a raffle, or check out the “Know Your Classmates Tip Sheet” for more ideas.
- Assign tasks so you know who is responsible for what.

STEP 4: SPREAD THE WORD

Promote and publicize:
- Posters and signs – create images for social media, posters and signs. Be sure to use the hashtag #KnowYourClassmates when posting online and tag Beyond Differences!
- Ask your school to make announcements leading up to your Know Your Classmates Day celebration.

STEP 5: WALK THE TALK: REACH OUT TO OTHERS

Think about the following questions:
- Sometimes it is difficult to reach out to peers in our classroom because we think that they are different from us. What is the risk of not reaching out to others whom we think are different?
- Why is reaching out to others important?
- How do you think reaching out to others might benefit you, your class, and your school culture?

PREPARATION

Before KYC Day make sure all participating teachers have:

The LEARN Community Art Project instructions https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/

“The Check In” - 8 Questions from the U.S. Surgeon General https://drive.google.com/file/d/1du9FzbevRK199sWDA0XiC3eTbyDyG6f/view?usp=sharing

KYC DAY ACTIVITY OPTIONS

We have brand new powerful, thought-provoking and inspiring activities for KYC! Review the activity options with your teacher, school counselor or principal and decide if you will do both activities on KYC Day or just one.

1. The “Check-in”
2. The LEARN Community Art Project

This project requires support from the adults at your school and the following supplies:
- Watercolor paint sets
- Paint brushes
- Paper to paint on
OPTION 1: THE “CHECK-IN”

Note to Teachers: “The Check-in” is a set of eight guiding questions posed by the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, the Nation’s Doctor, for students to discuss with their classmates. Clarity in ourselves will help us come to terms with the uncertainty of these times.

- Divide students into pairs* where they can ask each other questions. Please be sure that pairs are assigned, so that no student feels isolated or anxious about finding a partner.

  *Strategic and Structured Partnering: It can be a nightmare for a socially isolated student when a teacher says “pick a partner.” See the Strategic and Structured Partnering Suggestions.

- Remind students of the importance of creating an inclusive community where we are not scared by one another’s differences but rather willing to talk and communicate positively and learn from one another.

- Instruct students to select questions from “The Check-in” https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/ that they are willing to share with a partner.

- Ask students to share their responses to the questions they chose with a partner and then finish up by saying, “What I heard you say was....”

- After this, organize a discussion with the whole class to talk about what they learned from their partner.

- Ask students to discuss ways they continue these new connections and friendships more regularly throughout the school year.

OPTION 2: THE LEARN COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

Note to Teachers: Arts Based Curriculum Teaching Self-Love & Acceptance: LEARN is inspired by the work of the Brazilian artist Angelica Dass, whose internationally acclaimed project, Humanae, photo-documents humanity’s true skin color. Her portraits illustrate differences in color tone and raise questions about colors typically used to describe skin and by implication, questions about race. Similarly, by using watercolors, students are asked to mix paint and name their skin color, in a self-portrait. Instead of race-based terms like “white”, “Black” or “Asian,” children are encouraged to create a broader, apolitical and inclusive palette.

Additionally, the award-winning children’s book, THE skin YOU LIVE IN, by African American author Michael Tyler, is an integral literary component used to teach the lessons. For example, a teacher might ask, “How many colors are found in the human rainbow?” and “What is your skin color?” The answers received have been an imaginative and delightful variety from, “pasta skin with no sauce” to “cinnamon latte” and “warm sunset,” to name a few. Correspondingly, students often react with laughter and appreciation for the skin tone names their classmates coin. Inspired by Tyler’s book, favorite foods suggestive of skin tones are used, and conversations become a “getting to know you” exercise in fellowship. In filmed interviews, written affirmations and poems, students enjoy describing their skin tones, for their teachers and their classmates.

All the steps for leading the LEARN activity can be found on the KYC Community Art Project slide deck (found online under the KYC Student Leadership Unit) https://www.beyonddifferences.org/know-your-classmates-teacher-guide/.
LESSON 11. NEXT STEPS!

HOW DO WE CONTINUE CREATING CULTURES OF BELONGING IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES?

Change doesn’t happen in one day or with one event!

Real change comes from taking small, consistent action steps daily, weekly, and monthly!

Here are some actions you can take daily, weekly, and monthly to start creating cultures of belonging in your school!

Get a group of students together, and start to take action and spread the word!

1. **Daily** - take notice of the students in your class and school. Say hi to people you don’t usually say hi to, say people’s names when you speak to them (and check in with them to make sure you are saying it correctly), compliment someone if you are feeling brave.

2. **Weekly** - Ask your school/teacher if every Monday you can set up a system of student morning greeters for when students arrive at school. Have students take turns every Monday to stand near school/class entrances and greet the students coming into class.

3. **Weekly/ Monthly** - Organize weekly or monthly events that promote belonging and connection:
   - For example, every Friday or once a month, set up a table with an Acts of Kindness Jar at lunch filled with little sheets of paper with random acts of kindness on them. Have students pick a paper and encourage them to do it for someone they don’t know.
   - Do a Random Acts of Kindness Challenge. Set a school or class goal for # of acts of kindness for the month. Create a central box in the school office or a classroom. Create Random Acts of Kindness slips of paper. Have students write down their random acts of kindness and submit them to the central box. Have someone make a tally of the kindness acts weekly. Create a bulletin board that keeps an ongoing tally of the school’s Random Acts of Kindness. Have weekly shout outs to encourage participation and also a celebration when you reach or surpass the goal.
   - Encourage students to take ownership of rallying teachers and peers to take time out of their ordinary school day to focus on building social connections and community, by either setting up optional meetings outside of ordinary school times or dedicating time during class or lunch for more interaction among students. This is especially important during the pandemic. Social Isolation is at an all time high. It is important that we continue to make time to connect with others.

These are just a few ideas! What ideas do you have?

Thank you for being an activist and a youth leader and helping to create a culture of belonging for everyone in your school!

We love seeing what you are doing at your school! If you post images or photos from the event or activities to your school’s social media, be sure to tag Beyond Differences and use the hashtag #KnowYourClassmates