

# DIVERSITY

*“More common sense can be induced by observation of the diversity of human beings in a small town than can be learned in academia.”*

*-Louis B. Wright*

*October*

## Diversity Key Concepts

It is not hard to soon figure out that we are all different in some way. Some of us are tall, while some are short. Some are skinny, while some are chubby. Some are white, while some are black or brown. Some have dark hair, while some have blonde. Some of us live in the Midwest, while some of us live on the coast. Some go to church, while some do not. Some have two parents, while some only have one or perhaps none. It's a fact of life, not any two of us are the same.

However, the lesson to diversity is not in identifying differences. That's the easy part. Rather, the key to diversity learning is understanding that different people bring different *strengths* to the table. In other words, the focus here is on identifying what traits and abilities people have, not simply acknowledging they are different.

By learning to identify different strengths, we become a better team. Allowing students to learn "I don't have what it takes to do everything, but I don't have too if I learn to include other people" will enable them to open to others and see that being different can be a very good thing.

## **Diversity Activity 1** **Multiple Perspectives**

**Materials Needed:** “Squiggle” originals on different colored paper, additional same colored paper, markers

**Total Time Required:** Up to 30 minutes

**Group Size:** Entire group

### **Instructions:**

1. Copy each of the squiggles on a different colored paper. You should have enough copies for the entire group.
2. Distribute copies evenly so that at each table there are a variety of squiggles.
3. Tell students that you have begun a drawing for them. They are to finish the drawing.
4. When finished, ask all of the students with the same color paper (and the same squiggle) to gather at a table.
5. Have them compare what they did. It is very interesting to see how differently people look at the same squiggle and see what it can become.

### **Debrief:**

Talk about differing perspectives.

Ask them to talk about times when different perspectives have caused a difficulty for a group that they were part of. What can they do to smooth the difficulty?

## **Diversity Activity 2** **Toothpaste Exercise**

**Materials Needed:** Paper plates, tube of toothpaste for each table of 4-6 students, toothpicks, and straws.

**Total Time Required:** Up to 40 minutes

**Group Size:** Entire group

### **Instructions:**

Squeeze an entire tube of toothpaste onto a plate for each group. Working with their group of 4-6, ask each group to put the toothpaste back into the tube using the toothpicks and straws.

### **Debrief:**

The toothpaste represents slurs, hateful words, biases, etc.

How hard is it to take something said or an action back?

Should discuss "jokes". How hurtful are stereotyping "jokes" like those about blondes, jocks, epileptics, etc.? Ask them to try not to use words like "retarded" to describe someone or something.

Talk about gender issues- ask what girls can do or what boys can do? Girls can be doctors, as well, not just boys.

## **Diversity Activity 3** **Group Membership**

**Materials Needed:** Just the students.

**Total Time Required:** Up to 60 minutes

**Group Size:** Entire group

**Instructions:**

Have the students form a large circle.

As you call out different group names, the students are to go inside of each successive circle as they identify with the group.

Begin with low risk groups (i.e. 6<sup>th</sup> grader, brown hair, large family, likes to read, plays sports). Work up to groups that may be discriminated against or underrepresented (i.e. girls, African American, Hispanic, Asian, person with disability).

They should applaud as each group forms in the middle.

**Debrief:**

Ask each group what they feel is the most positive thing about being a member of the group.

How did it feel to be in the center of the circle?

Were you comfortable being stared at?

How did it feel to be outside of the circle?

How did you feel about those with you in the center of the circle or about those in the outer circle?

What did you learn?