



The Society for Safe & Caring Schools & Communities
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Supporting a Safe and Caring School— Assembly Script 5 for Elementary Schools

Respecting Diversity



Note to Principals:

These scripts are designed to be used in assemblies as introduction to the topics in the Safe and Caring Schools Program. The Principal takes a key role in delivering the message in the assembly.

Please read over each script before implementing. You are welcome to adapt the script to suit your school audience.

Assembly Script 5—Topic 3A

Respecting Diversity

Objectives

This assembly script has the following outcomes:

- to introduce students to the concept of diversity and perspective
- to demonstrate the value of diversity in a community

Materials Required

- a sound system for CD of music (optional)
- an overhead projector and screen
- recent news articles or headlines dealing with conflict
- recent news articles or headlines showing people working together in spite of differences
- “Flower Power” materials

Introduction

As students gather for the assembly an appropriate song may be played to introduce this month’s topic. The Principal should welcome and greet the students as usual for assemblies.

The Principal should briefly review any activities that the school had last month to recognize the fourth monthly topic—Building Self-Esteem in Others.

Respecting Diversity

Say: When we started our Safe and Caring program a few months ago, one of the first topics presented was on the root causes of violence. You may remember that one cause of violence is often a lack of respect for diversity—for differences. When children are asked why they pick on another student, the reasons they often give are “too fat, too skinny, too tall, too short, has too much money, doesn’t have enough money, too smart, too dumb”. In other words, people are often picked on for any reason that makes that person different.

Here are some examples of conflicts taking place in the world today, because of differences of race, language, religion, or culture.

(Read out some of the headlines you have chosen. Comment briefly on the reasons for the conflict. If suitable, you can also make overheads of the headlines to focus attention on them.)

Say: Unfortunately, there are many examples in our world of people not respecting the rights and beliefs of others. This often results in conflicts that destroy, hurt and scar people.

We don’t have to follow these examples.

Say: Here are some other examples that show a different method of responding to diversity.

(Show or read some headlines or stories about groups working together in spite of differences. If possible, use some examples from the school community—foreign exchanges, international school trips, etc. Comment on the effect that these activities have on increasing respect for diversity.)

This month, we are going to spend some time thinking about our own perspectives or point of view. Each of us looks at the world in a different way, depending on our own experiences, background, learning, and beliefs. In a Safe and Caring school, we respect and celebrate our differences, recognizing that our differences that makes us strong.

Put up OH 1—Perception

Ask a student what they see in the picture. Then, ask if anyone sees something different. Point out that, depending on your perspective or point of view, the picture can be of an old woman or a young woman.. Have a student come to the OH and trace the two different pictures so all can see them.

Say: This picture can be viewed two ways. It all depends on the point of view or perspective you have at the time. Diversity is the same. We sometimes see it as a threat or something to fear, because a person is not “like us”, or we can welcome differences, because they make our world more colourful, exciting and beautiful.

Activity

You will need to prepare your teachers for this activity. Prior to the day of the assembly, have each teacher write on a coloured piece of paper, shaped like a flower petal, characteristics about themselves that are different from other teachers in the school. These could include ethnic background, likes and dislikes, family characteristics, physical characteristics, etc. The petals need to be large enough to be seen by students at the assembly. If the school staff is very large, you may need to select a representative group.

Have ready a large sheet of poster paper. In the middle of this paper should be a circle (with room around the sides to place flower petals). In the circle, you have already written (large enough to be seen by the students) characteristics that the staff all share.

Say: The staff would like to share with you a visual example of how important diversity is to a group. In the centre of this poster we have written the things we have in common (read some of these out loud.)

These are the characteristics we share. They help us to feel close to the group and give us something in common. However, the real strength of our school staff is in our differences. The different coloured flower petals will complete our display and show the beauty of diversity within our community.

Invite each teacher on come forward and share their differences. Then, have them stick the petal onto the poster to complete the display.

Put up OH 2 and 3 as closure. Read it through reminding the students that this month we will focus on respecting and celebrating our differences.

Thank the students and close the assembly as usual. The staff flower power poster should be displayed in the school during this month.

Follow-Up Activities for the Classroom

1. Do the “Flower Power” activity in your classroom, either as a whole group, or divide the students into smaller groups and have them each complete a “flower” for their group. Display these as examples of the diversity within the classroom.
2. Try the “Maligned Wolf” story activity. Discuss with students the differences in the story when we hear the wolf’s point of view.
3. Invite students from different cultural backgrounds to share their culture with the class. Create displays that can be posted in the classroom or the halls to display the diversity within the group.
4. Invite guests to come in and share stories or teach a craft indigent to a particular culture.
5. Students in classes could create a classroom list of rights and responsibilities that show respect for diversity.
6. The Safe and Caring Schools website—www.sacsc.ca/lessons/introduction/—has some excellent lesson plans on this topic. From this page, click on *Unit and Lesson Plans*, then go to *Topics and Concepts* and then to the “Respecting Diversity and Preventing Prejudice” topic.
7. The media awareness site (www.media-awareness.ca) has a section on Stereotyping that offers lessons dealing with respect for diversity.

Activities for Student Leadership Groups

1. Create a display that focuses on the diversity of the school community. Pictures and brief write-ups could focus on the many gifts and talents displayed by members of the school community.
2. If there are students from other countries in the school community, as exchange students or recent immigrants, invite them to create a display showing their culture's diversity.
3. This would be an excellent month to have a "Cultural Celebration" series of activities. Each week a different group could be invited to visit the school to present songs or dances. The student leadership committee could sponsor noon hour fun events that focus on a particular culture.
4. A student leadership group could work together to create a list of "School Rights and Responsibilities".

The Maligned Wolf

by Leif Fern, San Diego, California

The forest was my home. I lived there and cared about it. I tried to keep it neat and clean.

Then one sunny day, while I was cleaning up some garbage a camper had left behind, I heard footsteps. I leaped behind a tree and saw a rather plain little girl coming down the trail carrying a basket. I was suspicious of this little girl right away because she was dressed funny – all in red, and her head covered up so it seemed she didn't want people to know who she was. Naturally, I stopped to check her out. I asked who she was, where she was going, where she had come from, and all that. She gave me a song and dance about going to her grandmother's house with a basket of lunch. She appeared to be a basically honest person, but she was in my forest and she certainly looked suspicious with that strange getup of hers. So, I decided to teach her just how serious it is to prance through the forest unannounced and dressed funny.

I let her go her way, but I ran ahead to her grandmother's house. When I saw that nice old woman, I explained my problem, and she agreed that her granddaughter needed to learn a lesson all right. The old woman agreed to stay out of sight until I called her. Actually, she hid under the bed. When the girl arrived, I invited her into the bedroom where I was in the bed, dressed like the grandmother. The girl came in all rosy-cheeked and said something nasty about my big ears. I've been insulted before so I made the best of it by suggesting that my big ears would help me to hear better. Now, what I meant was that I liked her and wanted to pay close attention to what she was saying. But she makes another insulting crack about my bulging eyes. Now you can see how I was beginning to feel about this girl who put on such a nice front, but was apparently a very nasty person. Still, I've made it a policy to turn the other cheek, so I told her that my big eyes helped me to see her better.

Her next insult really got to me. I've got this problem with having big teeth. And that little girl made an insulting crack about them. I know that I should have had better control, but I leaped up from that bed and growled that my teeth would help me to eat her better.

Now, let's face it, no wolf would ever eat a little girl; everyone knows that, but that crazy girl started running around the house screaming, me chasing her to calm her down. I'd taken off the grandmother clothes, but that only seemed to make it worse. And all of a sudden the door came crashing open and a big lumberjack is standing there with his axe. I looked at him and it became clear that I was in trouble. There was an open window behind me and out I went.

I'd like to say that was the end of it. But that grandmother character never did tell my side of the story. Before long the word got around that I was a mean, nasty guy. Everybody started avoiding me. I don't know about that little girl with the funny red outfit, but I didn't live happily ever after.

When people are different...misunderstandings happen.

If they are not resolved, misunderstandings can cause resentment, and resentment leads to stereotyping—judging people without really knowing them.

Stereotyping causes prejudice, dislike and suspicion.

As a school community, we can work together to solve our misunderstandings and accept our differences.



All people are like all other people in some way.

All people are like some other people in some ways.

All people are like no other people in some ways.





The face of a young or an old woman?