Respect for all: How are we different? (Challenging racism through 'circle time')

This activity was used with children in key stage 1, years 1 and 2.

Aim

- To understand, identify and respect the differences and similarities between people.

Activity objectives

- To develop self-awareness, positive self-esteem and confidence.
- To learn to respect the differences between people in the class.
- To show respect for people's cultures by listening to what they say and by making positive statements about their views and perspectives.
- To recognise ways in which personal behaviour affects other people.
- To know that there are similarities and differences between people and to develop an understanding that difference does not mean better or worse (the differences include gender, language, appearance, ability, family structure and cultural background).
- To develop skills of thinking, looking, listening, speaking and concentrating.

This activity relates to the following components in the key stage 1 PSHE and citizenship framework:

- taking part in discussions (2a);
- recognising choices they can make (2c);
- learning that they belong to various groups and communities (2f);
- recognising how their behaviour affects other people (4a);
- identifying and respecting the differences and similarities between people (4c);
- learning that there are different types of teasing and bullying (4e);
- considering social and moral dilemmas (5g).

Activity description

This lesson was the fourth in a series on the of theme identifying and respecting difference.
• Lesson 1 Who am I?
• Lesson 2 Who are you?
• Lesson 3 How are we the same?
• Lesson 4 How are we different?
• Lesson 5 What hurts us when we are excluded?
• Lesson 6 Let's celebrate our uniqueness.

The lesson followed a defined 'circle-time' structure (a specific use of circular space for trying out creative ideas), but could be adapted to fit in with other established circle-time routines or to suit the characteristics of the group.

**Introductory game**

The teacher called out questions to group the children in different ways. For example:

- Whoever has lived here all their lives come into the middle of the circle and join hands.
- Whoever speaks Bengali, come into the middle of the circle and count to five.
- Whoever wears glasses come into the middle of the circle and shout "We do!".
- Whoever has family in another country come into the middle of the circle and pretend to post a letter to a relative.

The final statement could be one that everyone has in common such as:

- Whoever is in year 1 come into the middle and shout "We are!".

**Story in the round**

The teacher talked briefly to the children about the positive role that diversity plays in our lives. The teacher and children then developed a story (in the round) about a world where everyone was the same. For example:

- In Purple World, everyone was the same. There was only one colour, purple, so everything you saw was purple. There was only one kind of food, purple soup, and everybody ate the soup at the same time. There were no boys or girls, just purple people who all looked the same. They all went to a purple building on purple day and they all said the same prayers and sang the same songs.

The children then talked about how the people on Purple World might feel. Afterwards, they looked around the classroom and celebrated the differences they saw among their classmates.

The children then completed the statement 'I'm different because ...'

**Silent statements**
The teacher stressed that differences make our world an exciting place to live, and asked questions such as 'Stand up and cross the circle if ...':

- you're wearing short socks;
- you like mangoes;
- you like parties;
- you have a pet;
- you get hurt if somebody makes fun of your family.

The children then devised responses to use when they are hurt because of a difference. For example 'I'm me and you're you. We're the same and we're different too.'

**Open forum**

A puppet told the children that he was sad because people make fun of him, just because he likes sewing. He showed the children something he had made and then asked the children to help him. The children responded.

**Game**

The introductory game was played again, but the children were encouraged to come up with characteristic examples of their own.

**Closing ritual**

Everyone joined hands in the circle and repeated the response: 'I'm me and you're you. We're the same and we're different too'.

**Commentary**

These activities are most effective when a class has a well-established ethos of circle time and when the children feel at ease with their peers (although this series of lessons could help to create the necessary ethos for circle time). Sensitivity is required when playing the game and when considering which silent statements to use.

The lesson gave children opportunities to reflect on their own lives and to consider the lives of other people within their community. The lesson also offered the chance to investigate 'imaginary' situations such as Purple World and the sad situation of the puppet who liked sewing.

The children listened to each other and demonstrated mutual respect, and were careful not to do or say anything that might cause offence. The use of circle time proved to be a valuable device for
promoting respect for diversity. The technique offered opportunities to raise issues relating to anti-racism including teaching about the benefits of the multicultural communities to which we belong. The final statement in the closing ritual could be created by the children.

**Follow-up activities**

The next lesson in the series (lesson 5: What hurts us when we are excluded?) uses similar circle-time techniques to give the children an opportunity to consider in more detail how their behaviour might affect other people (eg to look into the racist elements of bullying). The children will learn how to identify racist bullying and what to do if they see or experience it. The children will develop their understanding of concepts like 'good and bad' and 'right and wrong'. They will be challenged to think about just why racist bullying is unacceptable.

The final lesson (lesson 6: Let’s celebrate our uniqueness) will offer opportunities through circle time to celebrate diversity while developing an understanding that 'difference' between people does not mean 'better' or 'worse'.

The issues raised by these lessons can be revisited later in the children's primary education years. The lessons also lay the foundation for researching diversity and the richness of our multicultural heritage.

**Resources**

The citizenship schemes of work can be found at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes
The online national curriculum can be found at www.nc.uk.net

| PSHE and citizenship introduction | All subjects and activities | Respect for all introduction |

**WWW links**

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