

# LESSON 2

## Who Am I? Introduction to Diversity

### Goal

To examine the similarities and differences that exist among people and to develop a working definition of diversity.

### Materials

Blank, five-pointed stars with space in the middle for students to write their names or paste a picture; markers; chart paper

### Key Words and Phrases

Similarities, differences, diversity, personalize, category, web

### Process

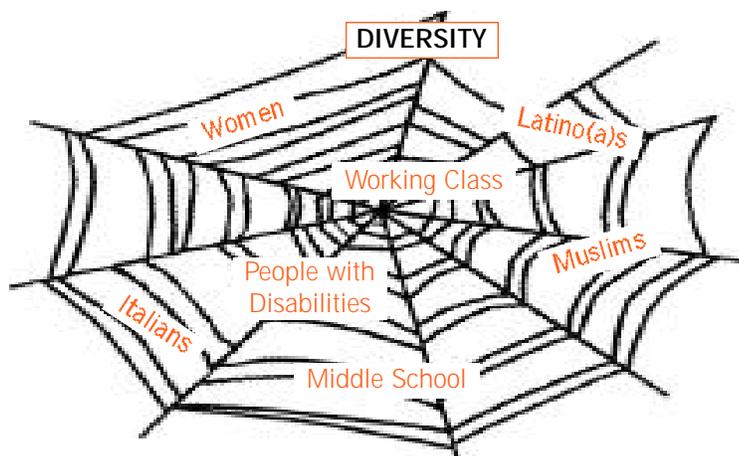
1. Give each student a star to personalize. Have students either write their names or paste a photograph of themselves in the center of the star.
2. Tell students that each point of the star represents a category. Tell students to write their answers for each category at the points of their star.
3. After students have completed their stars, have them move around the room and find as many matches with other students as they can. Have students make a list of all the classmates with whom they have something in common.
4. List the five categories on a piece of chart paper and elicit students' responses for each category. After the lists are complete, have students discuss the following questions:
  - a. Are you surprised at the number of similarities that exist among the people in this class? Why or why not?
  - b. How is recognizing these similarities important to how we work together?
  - c. Could any of these similarities cause problems? Explain your thinking.
  - d. What kinds of differences exist among the people in this class?
  - e. How is recognizing these differences important to how we work together?
  - f. Could any of these differences cause problems? Explain your thinking.
  - g. Why is it important to recognize both the similarities and differences that exist among people?



**NOTE:** The categories should be the same for all students and decided upon in advance of this activity. Suggested categories include state or country where I was born, a hobby I enjoy, my strongest quality, a volunteer activity that I am involved in, my favorite subject in school, my intended career.

5. Ask students to think about the meaning of the word diversity. Either as a whole group or in small cooperative groups, have students prepare a web using the word “diversity.” Have them include both their own general understanding of the word and as many examples as possible (e.g., different races, religions, languages).

Example:



6. Have the class work together to develop a working definition of diversity that takes into account all of their thinking. Write the class's definition on a piece of chart paper.
7. End the lesson by asking students to reflect on why they think you have had them participate in this assignment and how having a class definition of diversity can be useful.
8. Post student stars, the compilation of student responses, and the class definition of diversity in the classroom.

**NOTE: This lesson is particularly useful in the beginning of the school year to help students become acquainted with students they may not know.**

Adapted from *Opening the Door to Diversity: Voices from the Middle School (Resource Guide)*. 1999. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

## Connection to Standards

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking

- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Life Skills: Working With Others

- Contributes to the overall effort of a group

Civics

- Understands the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, beliefs, and principles of American constitutional democracy
- Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society