

LESSON 5

Prejudice

Goal

To explore the concept of prejudice and to consider the unfairness of judging people on the basis of characteristics over which they have no control.

Materials

Paper and pencil

Key Words and Phrases

Prejudice, unfairness, stereotype, exclusion

Process

1. Write the word *prejudice* on the board. Instruct students to respond in a free-writing exercise about their understanding of the word and any feelings that the word evokes for them. Allow 5-10 minutes for the free-writing activity.
2. After completing the writing assignment, have the class work together to create a web for the word *prejudice*. Record students' responses on the board.
3. Provide students with a definition of prejudice and then ask them to consider how prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes. The following is a suggested definition:

Prejudice is prejudging or making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes.

4. Continue a whole-group discussion using some or all of the following questions:
 - a. Do you think that prejudice is often a result of judging a person or group on the basis of things over which they have no control? (e.g., skin color, size, gender) Elicit examples.
 - b. Is it fair to judge people by such characteristics? If not, why do you think it happens so often?
 - c. What are some ways that people learn prejudices? What are some reasons why prejudice is so difficult to "unlearn?"



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- d. Have you ever felt excluded? Explain the situation and how you felt. Do you think that the exclusion was based on prejudice or something else? How did you decide whether or not prejudice was the reason for the exclusion?
 - e. What is the difference between prejudice and a legitimate reason for not liking someone? Give an example of each that illustrates how they differ.
 - f. Do you think that there are people or groups of people in this school or community who feel excluded? Explain your answer.
 - g. How is everyone ultimately hurt when some people are made to feel excluded?
5. Divide students into small groups and instruct them to develop short skits that illustrate the difference between prejudice and a legitimate reason for not wanting to associate with someone. Provide an opportunity for each group to present its skit to the whole group and follow each presentation with a brief discussion.
 6. At the conclusion of this lesson, encourage students to ask their parents or other family members to tell them about experiences of prejudice that they have experienced or witnessed. Tell students to ask the people who are telling them about these experiences to share how they felt at the time and how they feel now thinking back on the experience.

Connection to Standards

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking

- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Language Arts: Writing

- Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
- Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions

Life Skills: Thinking and Reasoning

- Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning

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

Behavioral Standards

- Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function