Whole Classroom Activity

Getting to Know Each Other Through the Unity Circle

Aim: To help students (and teachers) to learn to appreciate differences and the benefits of choice and community. This activity is particularly suitable to younger students.

Ask your students to think of a word that describes them, or that they identify with.

Depending on the age group and timing, you may wish to give an example for yourself, and give students the evening to think of their word.

On the day of the activity, ask your class to write their word down on a piece of paper. Form a circle with your students. Then, either choose a volunteer, or begin by presenting your chosen word and briefly explain why you selected it.

For example, “I chose the word dancer because dancing allows me to express my emotions”. Or, “I chose the word Boricua because I was born in Puerto Rico and I identify with the community”. Or, “I chose the word pitseleh because I’m the youngest of my siblings and that’s what my entire family calls me in Yiddish”.

After each student presents his or her word, ask the others if they can accept them as part of the unity circle.

Should any student present themselves with a word that is negatively perceived, his peers may ask not ask him to be part of the unity circle. Use this as an opportunity to engage in dialogue: give the student a chance to explain his or herself and/or come up with another word, and then pose the question to his peers once again. Continue until the whole class, including the teacher, have been inducted into the unity circle.

You can wrap up by reminding students that it wouldn’t be very interesting if we were all alike and there were no differences among us to make each person unique. You can also emphasize to students that everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and is thus diverse in their own way.

-Adapted from the film Arranged, 2007