

Title: Finding Strength in our Differences

Grade: 5th

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name calling is often present on playgrounds, in hallways, and in classrooms, and is used as a way to insult or put down other students or to gain a superior position toward another student. This lesson encourages teachers and students to look at similarities and differences among students. It illustrates that name calling not only harms the immediate victim of the verbal assault, but also harms all members of a community. According to the SFUSD 2006-2007 School Climate Survey, 79% of 5th grade students stated they hear “gay” or “fag” as a put down. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to address non-derogatory use of the terms gay and lesbian.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify traits that make people different from and similar to one another
- Explain the importance of accepting and appreciating both differences and similarities
- Recognize that respecting differences enables us to live together more easily
- Realize that name calling is hurtful
- Develop ways to stop name calling within the school community

TIME

- Two classes of 20 to 30 minutes each

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Butcher paper
- “Paper Person” student worksheet for each participant
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Homework activity sheet “Strength in our Differences”

VOCABULARY

- **Diversity:** Many differences
- **Cultures:** Shared values and beliefs that shapes behavior
- **Ethnicity:** Common ancestry
- **Family:** A unit of two or more persons, related either by birth or by choice, who may or may not live together, who try to meet each other’s needs and share common goals and interests.

- **Gay:** A term to describe people of the same sex who have feelings for one another in a romantic way. The term is usually used to describe men.
- **Lesbian:** Women who have feelings for one another in a romantic way.
- **Respect:** To be considerate of another.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

Day one:

Hand out the “Paper Persons” and have student cut them out. Explain that the “Paper Person” will represent them. Tell students to color the forms to represent how they would like to be seen.

Collect the people drawings, and make a chain of them, linking them around the room along the board or on bulletin board with tape or thumb tacks.

Discuss the similarities that exist (e.g., they are all roughly the same age, size, all in the same grade, etc.). List these similarities on butcher paper.

On a separate sheet of butcher paper, have students brainstorm some of the differences of the “Paper People.” After the students have completed the activity, point out that some of the differences are obvious, and others are not. Ask students what obvious similarities and differences can be seen, such as the color of eyes, hair, clothing style, or ethnicity. Other less obvious traits – or what can’t be seen as easily – might include; where they were born, what their neighborhoods are like, who they live with in their families or what they might believe in. It is important to emphasize that there are differences and similarities they are able to see and those that are not as visible.

Refer to the “Paper People” that are linked around the room. Point out that while each individual paper person is different, when they are linked together, they create a whole mural. Similar to the class, each person is different, but together they create a whole. Explain that when people work together, respecting similarities as well as differences they accomplish more, the school community is a better place, etc. Ask for further suggestions about how their classroom, school, neighborhoods, can be safer when people respect one another.

Ask students what things get in the way of protecting the mural or staying linked with one another. Answers might include being mean to each other, fighting, pushing in line, “put downs,” not listening to others, or name calling based on one’s appearance, race, gender, family, or perceived sexual orientation.

Ask why some people make fun of differences. Answers may include lack of information about others, disliking someone, or fearing someone who is different. People use “put

downs” to hurt other people. Point out that often when someone starts name calling, anger can escalate to physical violence.

Give students the attached “Strength in our Differences” worksheet and have them complete it as homework. Have the students interview their parents/guardians, or another adult, using the questions on the back of the worksheet. Reemphasize that when students respect each other’s similarities and differences, they help everyone in our communities live together in a peaceful way.

Day Two:

Have students take out the worksheets “Strength in our Differences.” List on butcher paper student responses of what “put downs” they heard. As the students give their answers, detach the chain of “Paper People” in various places by taking tacks out.

Given the statistics from the School Climate Survey, the term “That’s so gay” or “fag” should come up. However, if it is not mentioned, ask students, “Did anyone hear “That’s so gay” or “fag” used as a put down?”

Ask students if, after discussing put downs at home, they came up with any other reasons to explain why people use put downs. Add put downs to the butcher paper list.

Explain that people are unable to work together when the chain of respect is broken. Further, when a person puts down another based on race, gender, sexual orientation, family, appearance, ethnicity or place of birth, it affects everyone – not just the person being called names, as can be seen by the broken chain around the room.

Ask students what things they can do when they hear or see someone putting down another person. Ask for ideas they have about how they can repair the hurt. As the suggestions are mentioned, have a student helper re-link the chain of paper people around the room while writing the suggestions on butcher paper.

Also discuss with students ways students might respond personally if they are called a name. Some suggestions might include: ignoring the name-caller and walking away, spending time with friends who respect them, informing an adult, remembering that they are worthwhile, and reminding themselves that people who call names are often angry or insecure about unrelated things, and call others names as a way of expressing this.

Conclude by asking students for ideas that the class can do as a group to keep their paper people “linked.” How can they extend this concept to the larger school community?

Note: Students may not have heard slurs related to sexual orientation. If they have not, merely state that this form of name calling is inappropriate, as well as any other.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Hand out student/caregiver worksheet “Strength in our Difference” at the conclusion of the first class.

Name _____

Strength In Our Differences Worksheet

Prejudice is usually a negative opinion of another person or group of persons based on not enough information or on perceived differences. Prejudice can lead to name calling as well as to violence. One way to prevent prejudice is to remember to respect differences that exist among people, including race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

DIRECTIONS: Think about your day today: on your way to school, at recess, at lunch, and on the way home. Answer the following questions in the space below.

1. What “put-downs” or names have you been called recently: _____

2. How did you feel when you were called these names? _____

3. List “put-downs” that you heard at school or on the way home today: _____

4. List the nice or helpful things that you heard: _____

5. How could you help someone who was just called a name or “put down”? _____

Parent/Caregiver Worksheet

Strength In Our Differences Worksheet

Prejudice is usually a negative opinion of another person or group of persons based on insufficient information or on perceived differences. Prejudice can lead to name calling as well as to violence. One way to prevent prejudice is to remind our children to respect differences that exist among people, including race, religion, place of birth, gender, or sexual orientation.

Directions: After answering the following questions posed by the “student interview.” discuss both your answers and the student answers to similar questions.

If you have ever been “put down” or called a name, what were some of the names you have been called:

How did you feel when you were called these names? _____

List the “put-downs” that you heard today:_____

List the nice or helpful things you heard: _____

Why do you think people call each other names?_____

What suggestions do you have to help someone who is called names?_____

