



APPRECIATING DIFFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGING STEREOTYPES: “LEMONS” AND “APPLES”

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 3 – 8

LENGTH OF TIME: 45 minutes

GOALS

- To appreciate that individuals in a group are different and similar.
- To acknowledge that we all have stereotypes and bias about groups of people.
- To get students to think about how stereotypes prevent people from being seen as individuals and the importance of respecting other people.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to identify and appreciate differences and similarities.
- Students will be able to identify and acknowledge stereotypes and biases that they hold.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (Also SL 3.1, 4.1 and 6.1)

EDUCATORS' NOTES

This is a great ice-breaker or community-building activity.

MATERIALS

- One lemon or apple for each student or small group of students (this lesson can be done with other fruits, vegetables or other classroom items you may have around that look similar but have slight variations.)
- Chart paper

ACTIVITY

- Arrange chairs in a circle or have students sit on the floor in a large circle. (If you are able, this is the best way to do this activity.)
- As a large group, make a list of all the things that the students know to be true about lemons or apples. Record their answers on chart paper.
- Put all the lemons or apples in the middle of the circle and have the students look through them and pick one they find interesting. Alternatively, pass out a lemon or apple to each student.

Modification: If you are working with a large group of students, you can also divide them into groups of three to four and give one apple or lemon to each group.

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- Ask each student/group to look at their apple or lemon very carefully. Give them two or three minutes to get to know their apple or lemon. Ask them if they are sure they know their lemon or apple really well.
 - Then put all of the apples and lemons in a pile and have the students (or one student from each group) search through the pile to find their own.

Modification: You may need to have the students form two groups. Then have two piles so that there is plenty of space for the students to look for their apples or lemons.

DISCUSSION

- When the students are all sure they have their own, ask students if they used any of the characteristics (stereotypes) of lemons or apples the class listed to find them. The answer will most likely be no. Sometimes determining whose is whose is a lesson in itself.
- Ask:
 - What did you use instead? Individual traits? Unexpected characteristics? Close observation? Parts you especially liked? Parts you especially didn't like?
 - Would you say that every lemon or apple is unique? Could we also say that about every person?
 - Have you ever had certain ideas or assumptions about someone that changed once you got to know them?
 - Has someone ever had certain ideas or assumptions about you that changed once they got to know you?

Modification: To draw attention to certain kinds of stereotypes, you could ask students if people have ever made assumptions about them because of their gender or gender expression, because of their race or ethnicity, because of where they live or because of their religion...

- Discuss what "stereotype" means. Talk about how easy it is to group things and people into categories without paying attention to individual characteristics. There is little harm in doing this with objects, but when we do this with people, it is called "stereotyping," and it prevents us from seeing people as individuals as well as truly getting to know and understand them.
- Talk about how when we get to know someone and get past the stereotypes, we often become more understanding of and more compassionate toward them. We may like them more or feel connected to them. We start to see them as an individual. It's those differences that make us special/unique/interesting.

EXTENSION

This brief question and answer activity can be done with an example of a stereotype that one of your students brought up, one you make up, or one of the examples below.

Begin with giving an example of a common stereotype that your students might relate to, then ask the class:

- Do **some** kids _____ (repeat the stereotype) ?
- Do **all** kids _____ (repeat the stereotype) ?

For example: Anthony says, “Everyone thinks I must like basketball because I am tall and I am Black, but I have never liked playing it that much.”

Ask the class:

Do **some** kids who are tall like basketball?

Do **all** kids who are tall like basketball?

Do **some** kids who are Black like basketball?

Do **all** kids who are Black like basketball?

So, people see Anthony and think, “Oh, they must like basketball because they are tall and they are Black.” These are both stereotypes. They are assumptions that you make just because of how Anthony looks. Once you get to know Anthony, you will find out what they really like to do.

For example: Maya says, “When people see me playing catch, they either seemed surprised that I can throw the ball or they ask if I play softball. But I play baseball. I’m a pitcher in Little League.”

Ask the class:

Do **some** girls have a hard time throwing a ball?

Do **all** girls have a hard time throwing a ball?

Do **some** girls who play ball play softball?

Do **all** girls who play ball play softball?

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Do students understand what a stereotype is?
- Do they understand how stereotypes can be hurtful?
- Can they appreciate that our differences make us unique and special?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- [Children’s Books to Prevent Bias-Based Bullying](#)
- [Lesson Plans to Prevent Bias-Based Bullying in School](#)
- [Preventing Bias-Based Bullying – School Resources](#)
- [Welcoming Schools Professional Development Trainings](#)