

Teaching for **SOLIDARITY**

Vision and Values: A community cohesion project Session One – You: Your identity and sense of belonging

Aims:

- To recognise this project is a national initiative
- To agree ground rules for the project
- To understand a definition of community cohesion
- To consider some of the complexities of identity and belonging

Outcomes:

- Students will create agreed ground rules
- Students will be able to define the concept of community cohesion
- Students will be able to describe some of the complexities of multiple identity

Resources:

- Map of England
- Flipchart paper and pens, post-it notes and dots/stars
- Copies of either: *Identities, diversity and common values* or the relevant pages from *Race and Membership in American History*

Introduction – to share with the group (5 minutes)

Teachers all over the UK are concerned about how many of their students demonise people for what they believe or where they come from and hostility towards the 'other'. It might be hostility towards people with disabilities, Polish immigrants, gay people or Muslims.

We are building on the success of projects all over the country including Derby, Croydon, Kent and Manchester, where staff and students organised projects to address issues of concern to them in their communities e.g. drug abuse, the BNP, treatment of Travellers, racism etc.

Schools/Colleges have a duty to promote community cohesion in order to combat intolerance and extremism and to promote understanding and harmony within communities.

In this project – Croydon College, De Ferrers Technology College in Staffordshire & Rush Croft School in Waltham Forest worked together for the academic year in order to address key aspects of community cohesion. A small group of staff and students in each College/school studied the same three lessons), then met in Croydon on October 22nd 2008 for activities and to plan local projects. They met again in Spring 2009 to report on how their projects were going.

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Activity 1: Ground rules (10 minutes) Depending on group size & time available

Very important, in order to create a safe environment and for everyone to feel able to participate e.g. about use of language. Freedom of speech vs respect.

How do we want to work together? (taken from the Citizenship Foundation's *Youth Act training manual*) Aim – five agreed principles

Draw a big circle on flipchart paper on the floor and invite everyone to put:

1. What they want in the group on post-it notes (e.g. Have fun, respect for each other's opinions) and put them inside the circle (maximum 5 things).
2. What they don't want in the group on post-it notes (e.g. no swearing, no fighting) outside the circle (maximum 5 things). You can get everyone to draw round their hand inside the circle and write things they want inside their hand and sign it and do the same for outside the circle

Ask each person to read out the statements in their hand outlines, find out the ones that are similar – no-one should dismiss any comments – try to incorporate. Group similar post-its together e.g. all those which refer to 'no name-calling' etc) and decide on general ground rule that describe this group of post-its.

Now – can you come up with five agreements? Give everyone five dots/stars to put against the most important ones – add up and find the top five. They can all put their dots on one if that is the most important rule for them. The rules with the most dots form the group's contract. Is everyone happy?

The ground rules most often agreed on are around: respect; no abuse; listening to each other. You might want to laminate copies once agreed.

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Activity 2: What is community cohesion? Ask students for their definition.

A definition often used:

- A common vision and sense of belonging by all communities
- Diversity appreciated and valued
- Similar life opportunities for all
- Strong and positive relations in schools and the wider community

It looks at how people and communities can improve their quality of life by building a better understanding of the things they have in common, so removing the focus on the things that keep them apart. We need to consider divisions and **connections** around class, age, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and faith.

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Activity 3: Your identity

We've thought of three ways in for students to think about their own identity. Which one you choose will depend on how much time you have and your own preference re style, materials etc:

- a. *Identities, diversity and common values* is taken from *Right Here Right Now – Teaching Citizenship Through Human Rights* produced as part of the Human Rights in Schools project run by the Ministry of Justice and the British Institute of Human Rights with support from Amnesty International and the Department for Children Schools and Families. (60 minutes) You can use a simplified version of the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Here's a link to the UNDHR too <http://www.udhr.org/udhr/default.htmor>
- b. *What my name means to me*. Everyone (staff if they choose to) tells the group what their name(s) mean to them and its origin if known (25 minutes). Or
- c. Create an individual identity chart *Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement* by Facing History and Ourselves pp. 8 – 12 in. You can either do the identity chart activity in full as on p. 11 – 12 in the Connections section (60 minutes), or ask students to complete an identity chart for themselves with prompts about categories e.g. family, where born etc. (20 minutes)

Plenary discussion, if not addressed in the above activities Extract from this – the complexity of our multiple identities, belonging, class, age, sexuality, disability. Personal/individual/changing nature/not boxes. And the limits of labels, 'She's old', 'He's a Muslim' etc. Who am I? What do I do? What do I stand for? Where am I going? What makes us who we are? Is it where we were born? Where our parents are from? Where we live? A disability? Where we go to school or work? Community? Passport? Age? Faith? Team? Lives of our ancestors? Look at those who've shaped our lives. Global, EU, UK, local, individual identities.

What sort of 'groups' do you belong to? Sport/performing art group? Religious group? What are the rules of belonging? What must you do to remain part of it? Ethos? Code? Dress? Is there a behaviour code? An 'in group' and 'out group'?

End with this quote: 'At the core of diversity is respect; respect for the individual, for beliefs, for culture, for personal fears, for choice and individual identity. The greatest fear of any living being is to be rejected; to have what he or she holds dear ignored and marginalised; and the greatest desire is for acceptance; to be significant in the scheme of things, and on one's own terms too. That is the ideal. The third desire is for high self-esteem: to feel valued and appreciated. In order to achieve these ideals in a diverse environment, there will be much jostling for position; much bigotry, fear and suspicion.' (Elaine Sihera)

Time for written reflection: Do you agree? Is there room for everyone?