

# Promoting Cultural Understanding and Developing Cultural Competence

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## Lesson Goals:

The goal of this program is to help individuals develop skills, acquire behaviors, and expand their beliefs and attitudes in order for them to effectively work and interact with, and respect individuals from different backgrounds.

## Objectives:

1. Individuals will be able to define cultural competence and identify its components.
2. Individuals will understand the importance of identifying their own biases and exploring their own culture.
3. Individuals will understand that cultural competence is a lifelong process of development.
4. Individuals will begin to develop some skills that will help them become more competent in responding to people of diverse backgrounds.

## Before the Meeting:

Read the Leader Guide and Participant Manual in full. Decide on which activities to use for the meeting. Make necessary copies.

## After the Meeting/Evaluation:

Before participants leave, ask them to fill out the evaluation form and submit to you. Please return copies to Maria de Guzman, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 135 Mabel Lee Hall, P.O. Box 880236 Lincoln, NE 68588-0236.

## Recommended Resources:

1. *Enhancing cultural competence in out-of-school time programs: What is it, and why is it important?* 2007. By E.K. Kennedy, J. Bronte-Tinkew, & G. Matthews. Practitioner Insights: Research-to-Results. [http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child\\_Trends-2007\\_01\\_31\\_RB\\_CultureCompt.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2007_01_31_RB_CultureCompt.pdf)
2. *Culture and Parenting: A Guide for Delivering Parenting Curriculums to Diverse Families.* By L. L. Ontai and A. M. Mastergeorge. University of California-Davis. <http://groups.ucanr.org/kids/>
3. *Youth Leader's Guide to Building Cultural Competence.* 1994. By Advocates for Youth. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/guide/>
4. *A Class Divided.* Aired on PBS for the program *Frontline*, this program illustrates Jane Elliott's ground breaking and award winning work on discrimination. While teaching a third-grade class in Iowa, Elliott provided her students first-hand experience on discrimination. Her work has been referenced for decades in college courses in sociology, education, psychology, and many other disciplines. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/>
5. *101 Ways to Combat Prejudice: Developing a Common Language.* A joint project between the Barnes & Noble Co. and the Anti-Defamation League, this free booklet gives concrete action steps: [http://www.adl.org/prejudice/prejudice\\_terms.asp](http://www.adl.org/prejudice/prejudice_terms.asp)

## Activities:

Choose one or more of the activities below. All activities focus on exploring one's own background and heritage, and introduce participants to the role of culture in their lives, thus beginning the process of developing cultural competence. Because of the overlap in questions and goals for Activities 1 and 2, it is recommended that you choose between the two, rather than doing both.

### Activity 1: The Name Game (10 to 20 minutes)

Divide your audience into smaller groups (ideally two to five people in each group). Each person will write their *full name* on a piece of paper (you can provide index cards). Ask each person to share with their group the *origins of their names* (e.g., were they named after someone?) and any other information regarding why they were named as such. Ask participants to share what their name signifies to them. After sharing, ask the group to re-join the larger audience. Discussion questions for the larger group:

- What were some of the reasons and origins of names?
- Does the name reflect anything about your history? Your background? Your culture? Your family?  
*The facilitator can note that the diversity in names, the diversity in name origins and processes of choosing*



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names, reflects our diversity in backgrounds, beliefs, ways of life, and even culture. It is another way where our background and culture touches our daily lives without our even thinking about it.

- What does your name signify? Is it important to you at all? How would you feel if someone changed your name to make it “better?”

*The facilitator can note each name is very significant. It speaks of our families, our histories, our culture. Thus, it is extremely important that people are respectful of others’ names. Note that throughout history, people’s names have been changed by others (e.g., Ellis Island immigrants). Ask the group to think about what this might have felt like and what might it have signified.*

### **Activity 2: Personal Profile (15-30 mins.)**

Adapted from Patricia A. Hendricks - Targeting Life Skills Model

This activity can be done individually or in groups. Provide participants with a piece of paper, markers, and masking tape. This icebreaker allows participants to share information about themselves and their heritage in a non-threatening manner. Caution should be taken in that people in your audience may not have fond family memories or even know about their family heritage. Make sure to let participants know that they do not have to share anything they are uncomfortable sharing.

*Directions: Depending on the size of your audience, each person can do the activity alone or in small groups. Provide each person (or group) a piece of newsprint or other paper. Ask them to draw an outline of a person on paper. Tell the participants that they will share some things about themselves through this activity. If they are doing this as a group, they will have to note down all their responses on that one piece of paper, so make sure to give them a large sheet. Note that you can make a photocopy of the list below. Ask them to do the following:*

1. Write your first and last name above the “body’s” head. Married women may want to include their maiden/given name.
2. Near the mouth, write the language(s) spoken by your grandparents.
3. On the right arm, write the country your ancestors emigrated from and how many generations your family has lived in this country.
4. On the left arm, tell where you grew up.
5. On the right hand, write one to three home and/or family traditions you enjoy the most.
6. On the left hand, write examples of folk art that were passed down in your family.
7. In the tummy area, write your favorite comfort foods.
8. On the head, write a family tradition you want your children or grandchildren to know.
9. On the shoulder area, write the problems, concerns, or challenges that you think/feel families face today.
10. On the right foot, write at least three adjectives that best describe your assets.
11. On the left foot, write about your favorite holiday or a special event celebrated in your family. For example, what you did, ate, shared, etc.
12. On the right leg, list two to three skills you enjoy sharing with others.
13. On the left leg, list something about yourself that you would like us to know more about.

### **Discussion:**

After the participants have finished their personal profiles, ask individuals to post their profiles on the wall. Individuals may share their profiles briefly or everyone can walk around the room to read each personal profile. As a group, discuss discoveries you made about each other:

- How are you similar? Different?
- In what way is ‘culture’ or your heritage reflected in your descriptions? Note that in many ways, culture affects almost everything about who we are. While it is more obvious in some things like our holidays or language — in fact, how we think, how we see the world, and how we live our lives — are all influenced by our cultural background.
- Are there ways you think cultural background and history gives you unique strengths?
- Ask participants to look at what they wrote; ask them to think about what parts might differ had they been raised in a different culture, country, or other ethnicity.
- What new appreciations about others did you discover as a result of this activity?

### **Activity 3: Self Assessment (10 to 20 minutes)**

Ask each participant to take the self-assessment quiz. Participants do not need to share their responses. To process the activity, the facilitator will emphasize that one of the first steps in developing cultural competence is awareness of one’s own background and one’s own prejudices. If participants answered three or more *absolutely not* or *not sure* responses, they need to work through various issues regarding their attitudes toward race and culture. Note that most everyone needs to work more on this as it is a lifelong process.

### **Activity 4: Experiencing bias/discrimination (15 to 25 minutes)**

Groups can discuss the following, either in a large group or smaller ones:

1. With what cultural/ethnic/community groups do you identify?
2. Have you ever experienced discrimination or bias? Have people made judgments about you based simply on your group membership? This can include being part of social status, geographical region, clique in school, or any other group.
3. What are some of the biases that people hold about some groups? Do you think this is fair?
4. What are some things we can do to combat prejudice? If cultural competence has to do with beliefs/attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors/skills, what steps can we take to grow in each of these domains?

### **Processing:**

Note that biases and prejudices are almost impossible to avoid. We form judgments about others all the time based on their looks, their geographic origins, and other superficial features. It is for this reason that we need to be very much aware of our biases and make sure that they do not negatively influence our behaviors. Finally, it is through continued learning and exposure to people of different backgrounds that our biases and prejudices are broken down and we should all aim to continue to grow in these areas.

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## Evaluation Form

1. Which of the following describes you (check all that apply)

- parent
- educator (teacher, school administrator)
- official from a volunteer organization. If so, name of organization \_\_\_\_\_
- other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why did you attend this program?

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3. Please pick the number that best describes your experience in this program:

	Strongly agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Strongly disagree
a. There was <b>new</b> information presented.				
b. The program provided information that I can <b>apply in real life situations.</b>				
c. This program helped me think about culture/race in a more positive way.				
d. I learned something new in this program.				
e. This program helped me see the importance of cultural competence.				

4. As a result of this program, I will make the following changes:

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5. What I found most useful in this program was:

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6. My suggestion for improving this program:

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