

SECTION VII

Professional Development Activities for Teachers

People perceive the world in different ways, learn about the world in different ways, and demonstrate what they have learned in different ways. The approach to learning and the demonstration of what one has learned is influenced by the values, norms and socialization practices of the culture in which the individual has been enculturated.

Swisher and Deyhle,
*The Styles of Learning Are Different, But the
Teaching Is Just the Same*, 1989



Professional Development Activities

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Development Dots: A Pre and Post Activity

Participants and Purposes:

You can do this activity on your own, with students, or with colleagues. It is meant to help you or others self-assess knowledge about socio-cultural impacts on the classroom.

Materials:

1. A copy of the two handouts, **Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners: Knowledge of Students' Culture, Language, Gender, and Ethnicity** and **Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners: Assessment Skills for Developing, Administering, Interpreting, and Communicating About Student Learning**.
2. Two colored sticky dots per person for each time you plan to use this activity. If you do it pre and post, each person will need four dots.

Suggested Time:

15–30 minutes

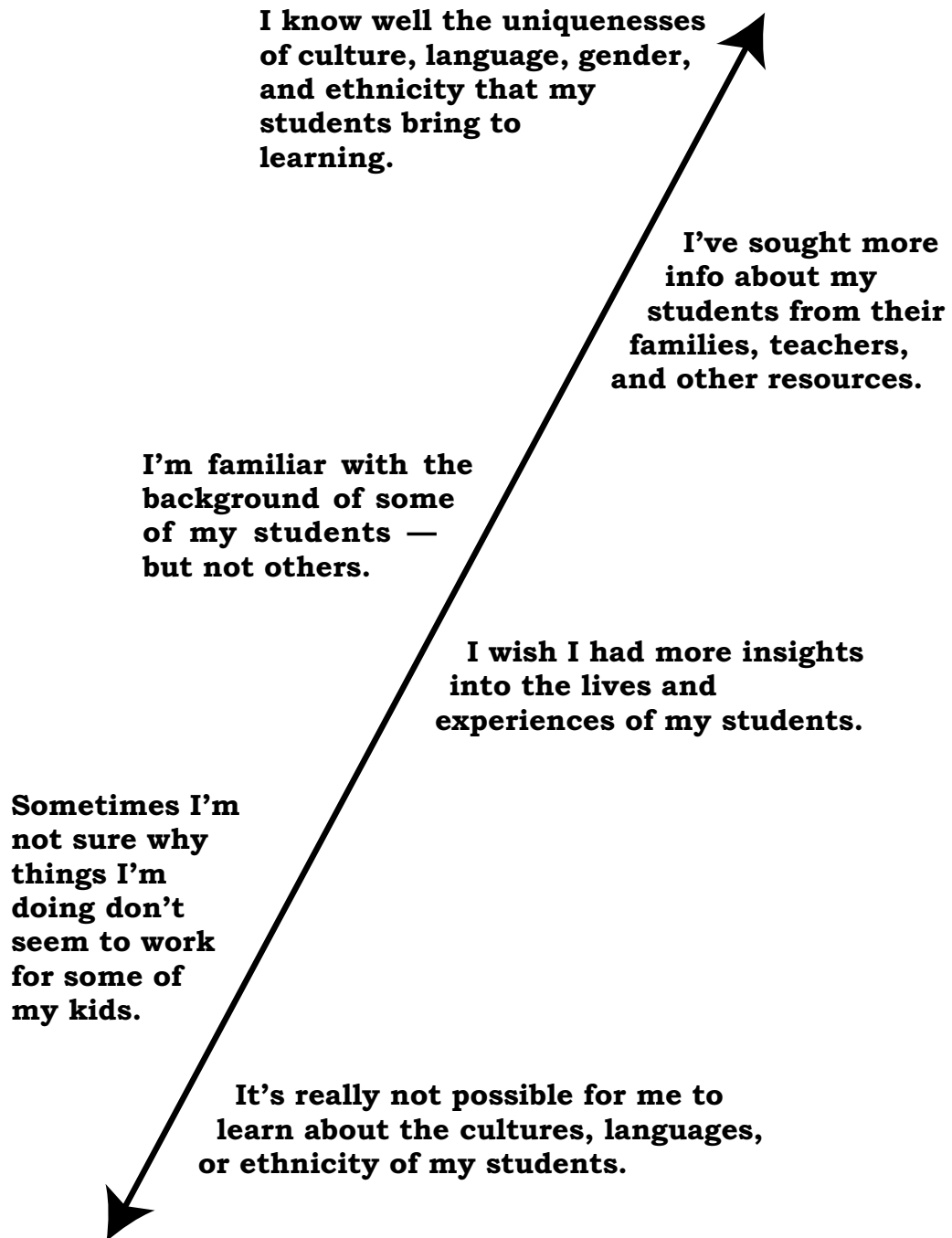
Directions/Notes:

- Using **Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners: Knowledge of Students' Culture, Language, Gender, and Ethnicity**, ask participants to place a colored dot along the line next to the statement that most closely describes their current situation. Ask them to date it and plan to revisit this judgment when they've completed *Making Assessment Work for Everyone*.
- Using **Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners: Assessment Skills for Developing, Administering, Interpreting, and Communicating About Student Learning**, ask participants to place a colored dot along the line next to the statement that most closely describes their current situation. Date it and plan to revisit this judgment when they've completed *Making Assessment Work for Everyone*.

Notation:

You may also do this on a large sheet of chart paper, so a group of participants can share what they've learned. Use chart paper to hand write a copy, or use a copy enlarger.

**Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners:
Knowledge of Students' Culture, Language, Gender,
and Ethnicity**



DIRECTIONS: Place a colored dot along the line next to the statement that most closely describes your current situation. Date it and plan to revisit this judgment when you've completed *Making Assessment Work for Everyone*.

**Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners:
Assessment Skills for Developing, Administering,
Interpreting, and Communicating About Student Learning**

I can develop, select, and adapt assessments that meet keys to quality. My understanding of student strengths is built into the assessments I use and in my interpretation of the results.

I can recognize potential sources of bias in assessments and can usually offer alternative ways for students to show their learning.

I'm familiar with some barriers to good assessment, but am not always sure what to do about it.

I wish I had better ways to assess the learning of my students. The barriers seem impossible to overcome.

I'm sure some of my students are doing better than their assessments show, but I don't know how to get better pictures of their learning.

DIRECTIONS: Place a colored dot along the line next to the statement that most closely describes your current situation. Date it and plan to revisit this judgment when you've completed *Making Assessment Work for Everyone*.

Are We Different?

Participants and Purposes:

You can do this activity with your students or your colleagues. It is meant to help us see that even in our sameness, we are different, and in our differences, we have similarities. As participants discuss their differences and similarities they will come to a closer understanding of the impact of diversity.

Materials:

A cut-out set of symbols for each person to do the activity. A complete set is one of each symbol for a total of six. The camera-ready copies that follow are made so that you can run a whole sheet of each symbol on a single color of paper.

Suggested Time:

15–30 minutes

Directions/Notes:

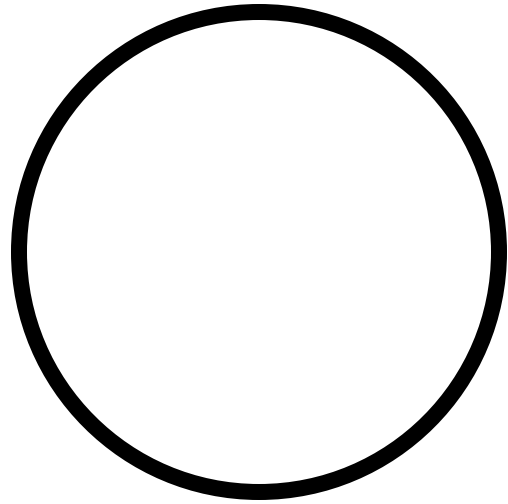
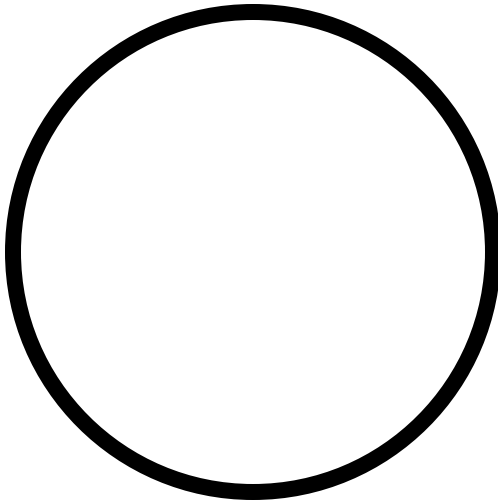
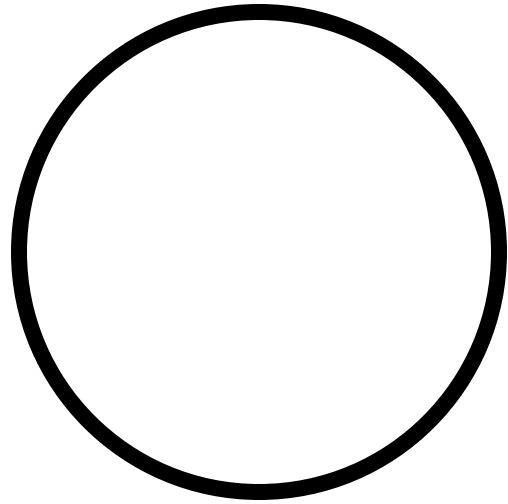
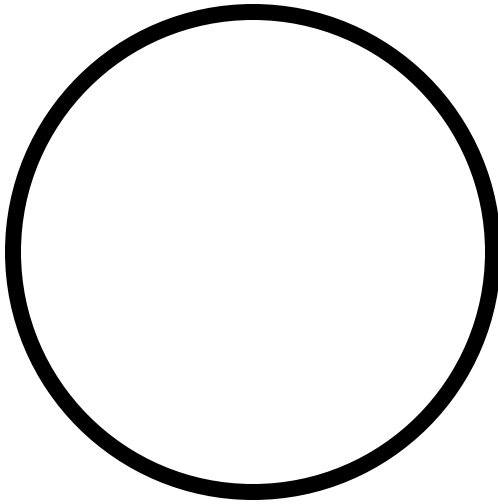
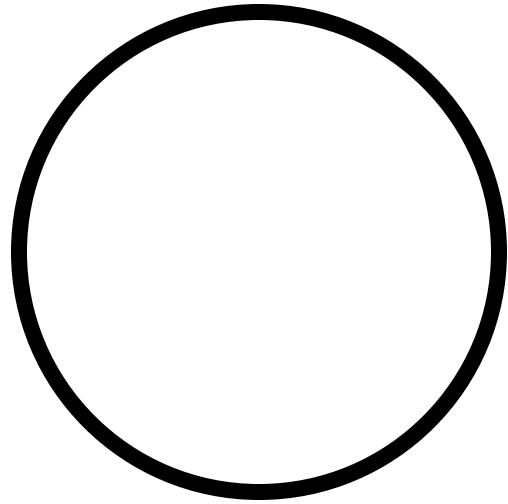
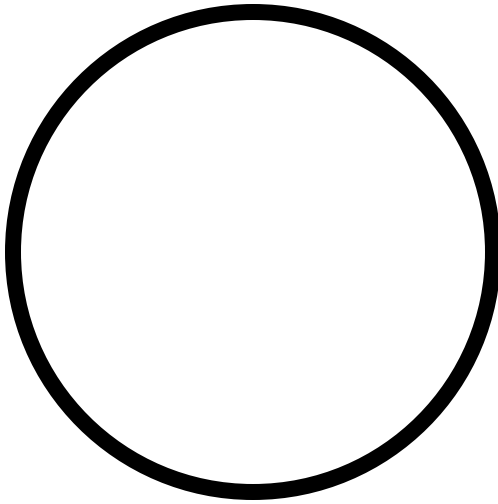
- Give each person a set of cut-out symbols with the following directions: *Use these symbols to illustrate “your life.” You may use them in any manner you choose.*
- Use the handout, **Discussion Questions for Are We Different?** to generate dialogue. These questions may be used for large-group discussion or small groups or a combination of both.

Discussion Questions for Are We Different?

1. Why did you arrange the symbols in the order you did?
2. What do you think your reasoning says about you as a person?
3. Does this reasoning reflect anything about the culture in which you were raised or your present environment?
4. If you were to do this activity in your classroom, what do you think you would learn? What would your students learn?
5. Think about what you have experienced today. What impact does this experience have on your practice as a teacher?

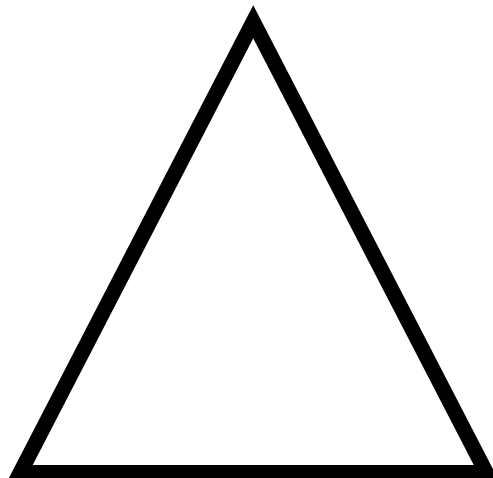
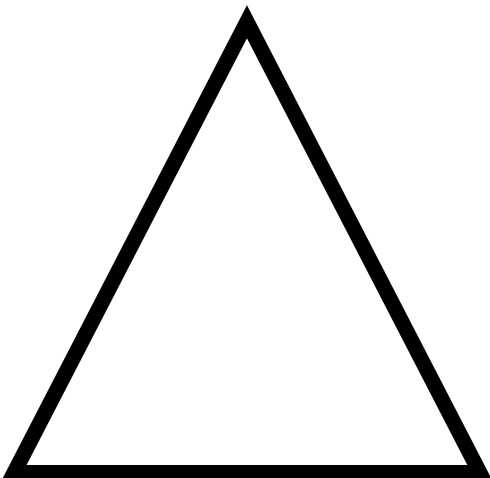
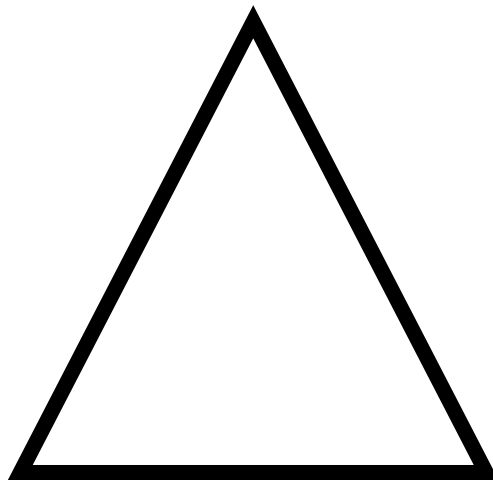
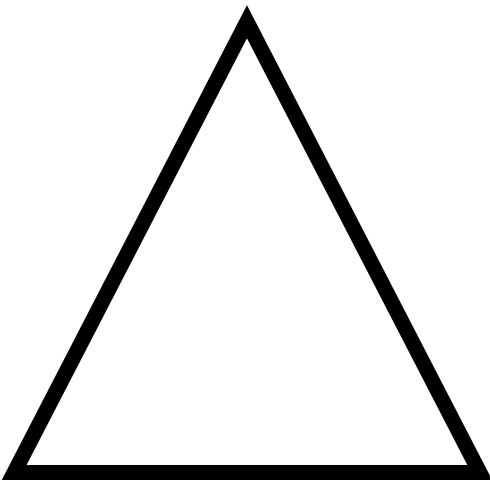
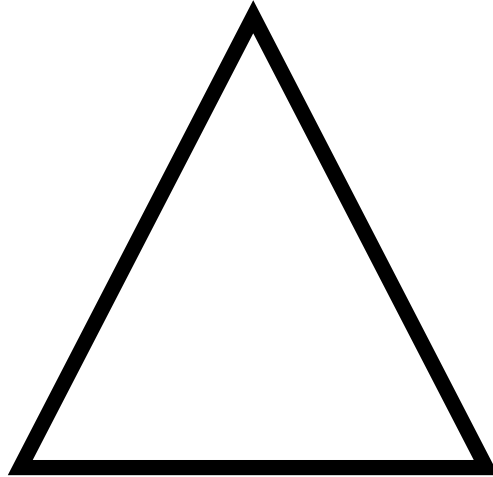
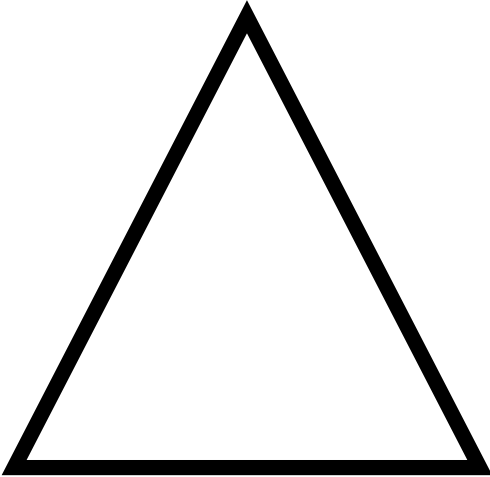
Symbol Sheet 1

Cut apart the symbols on this page. Combine one symbol from each of the six sheets to form a set. Each page should be run a different color.



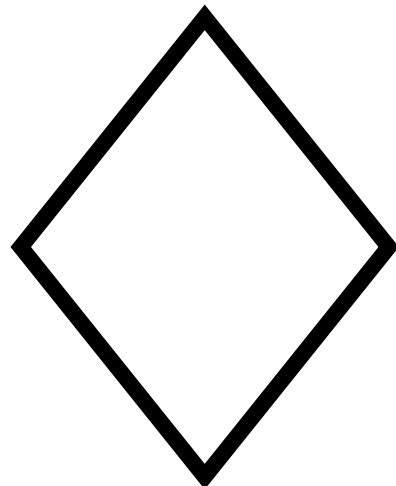
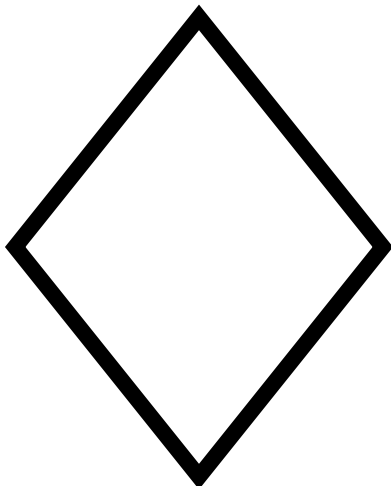
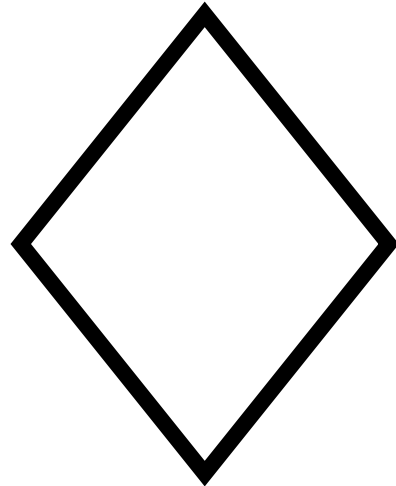
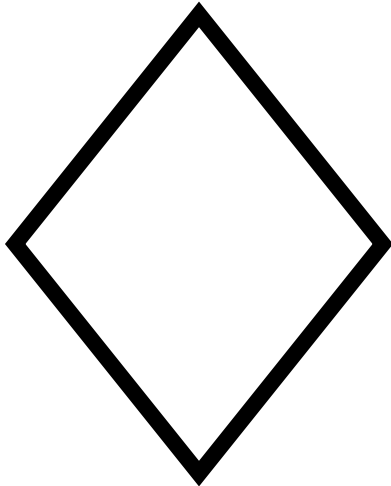
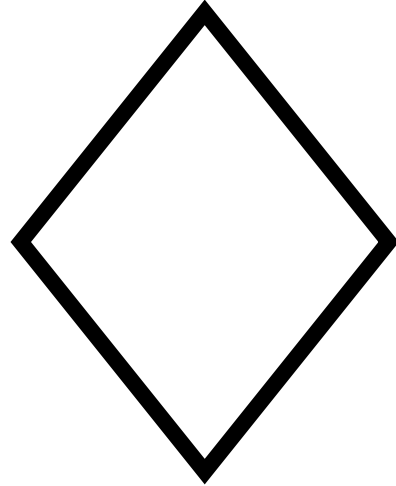
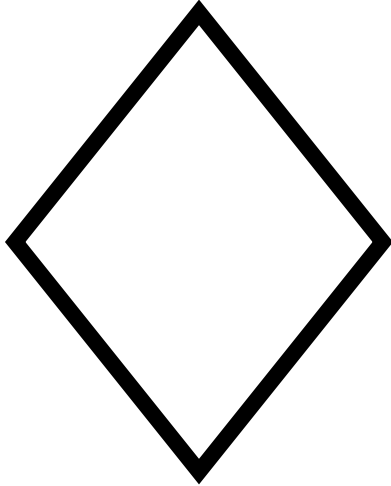
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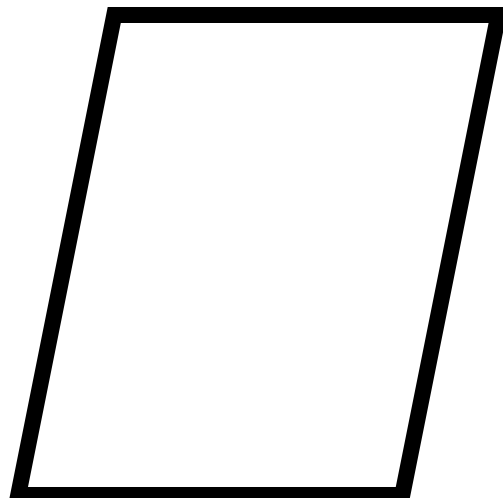
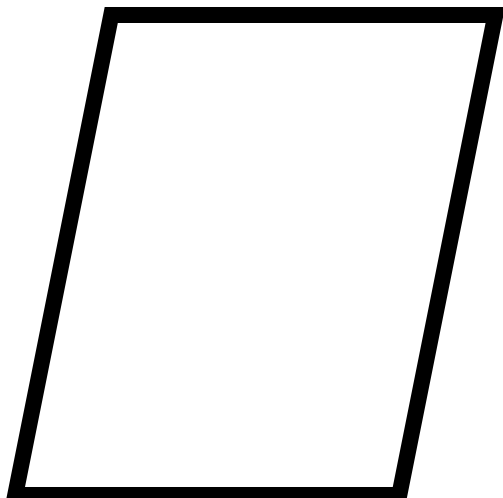
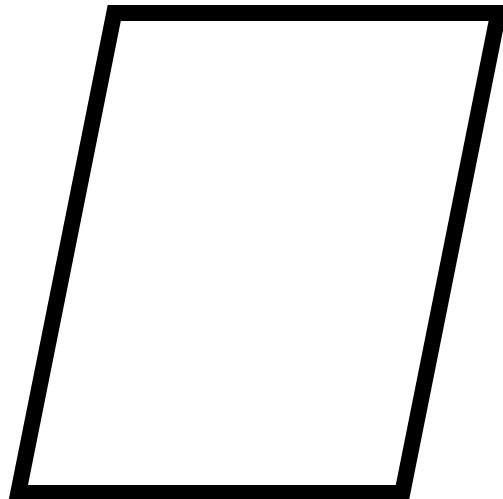
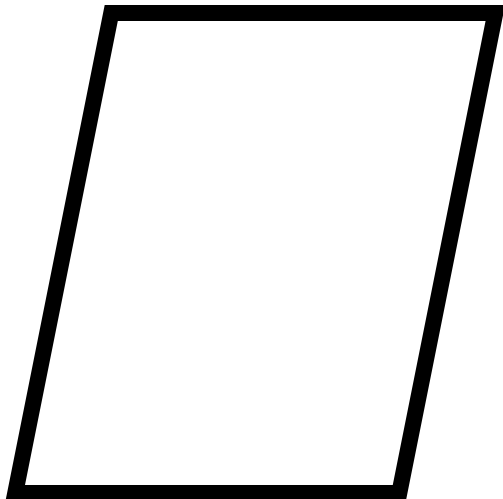
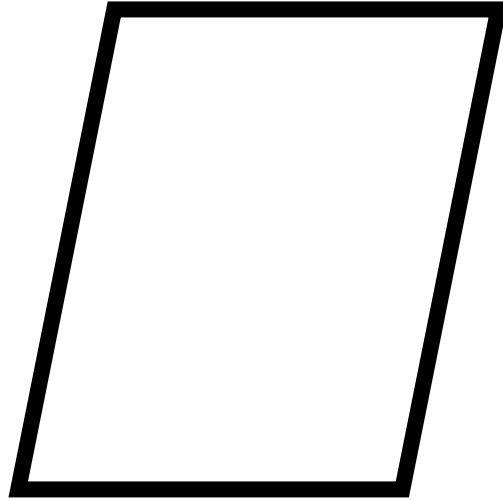
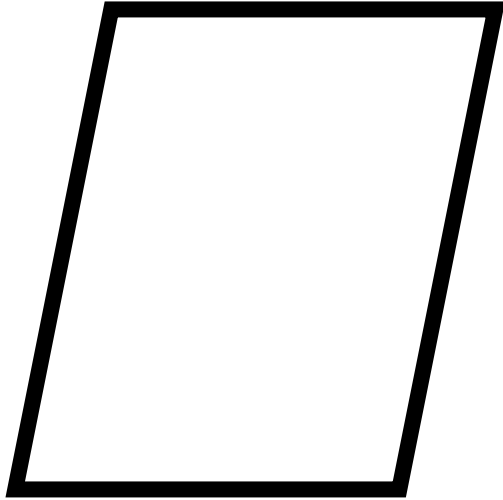
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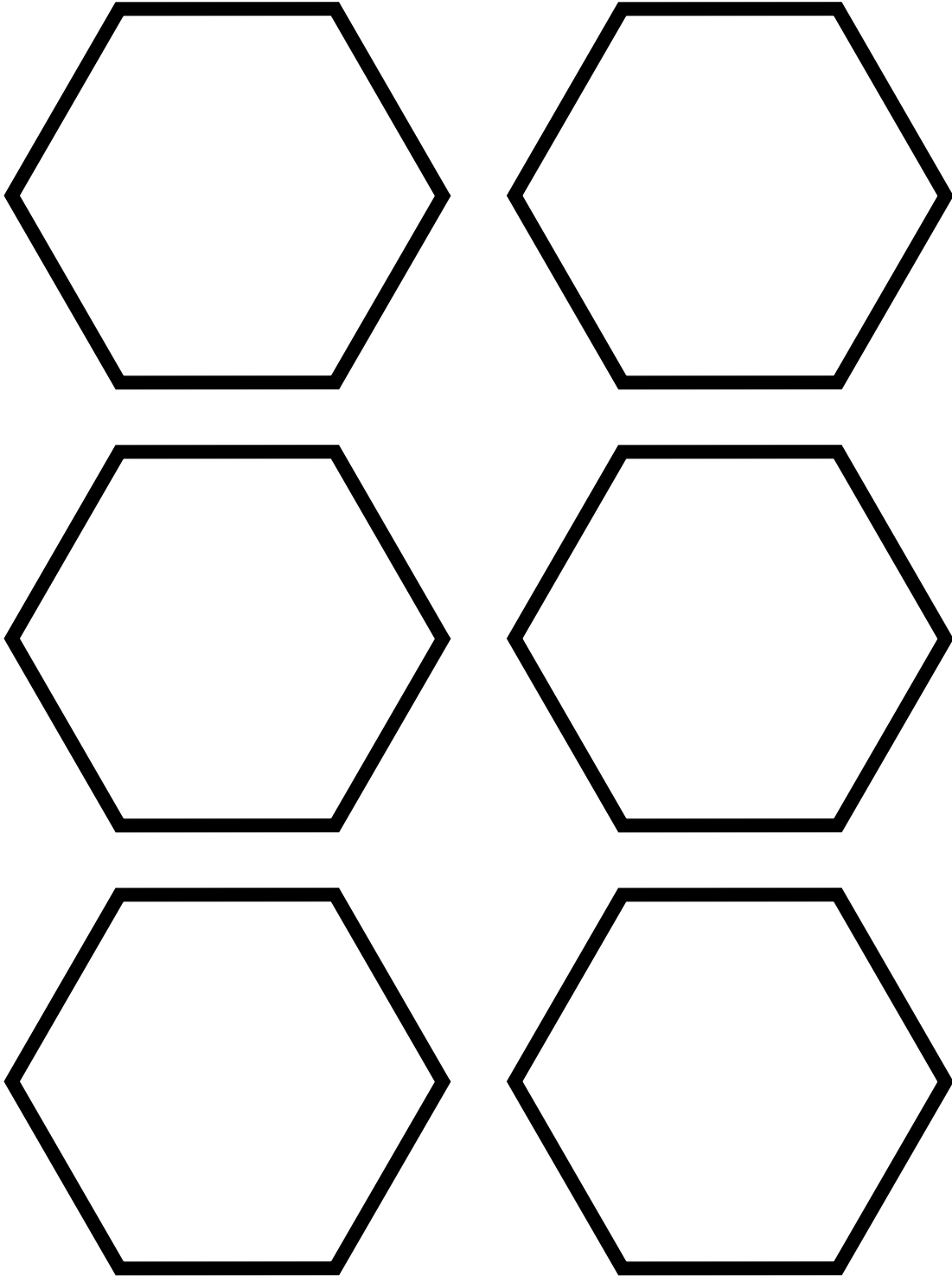
Symbol Sheet 4

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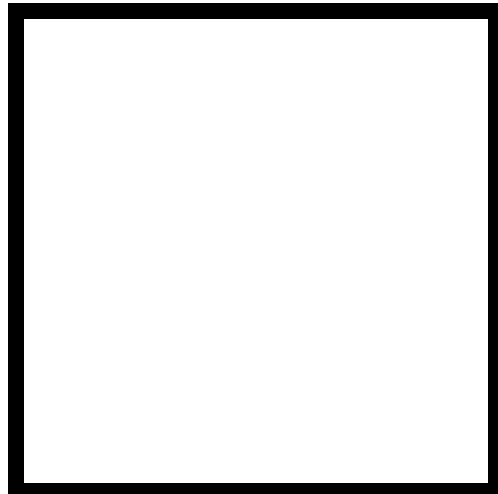
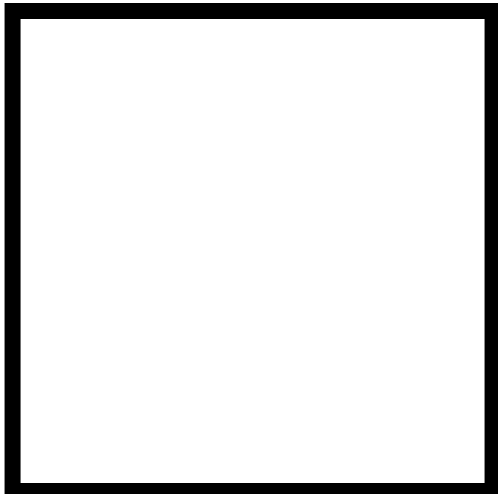
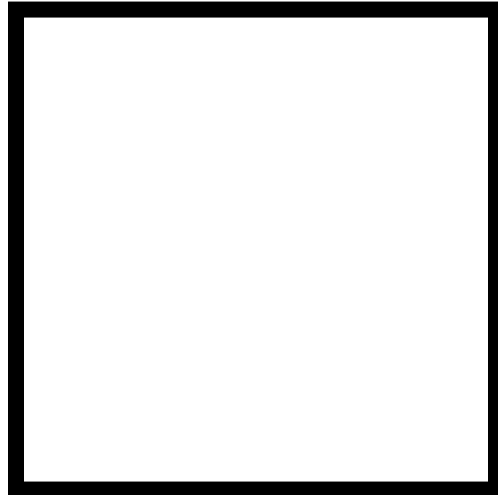
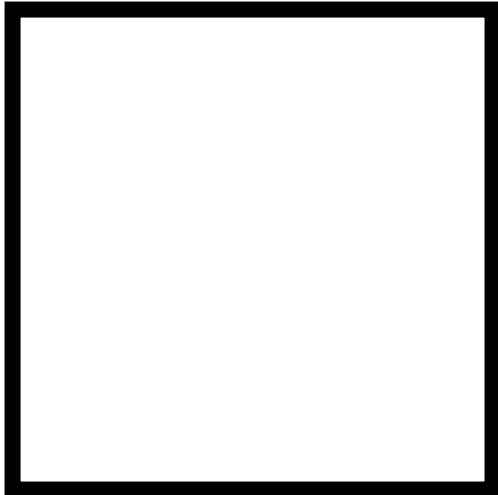
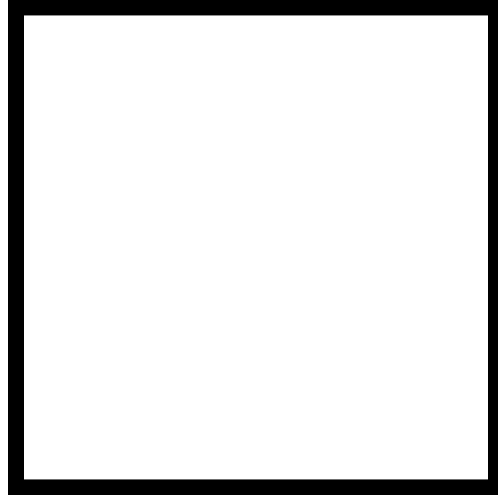
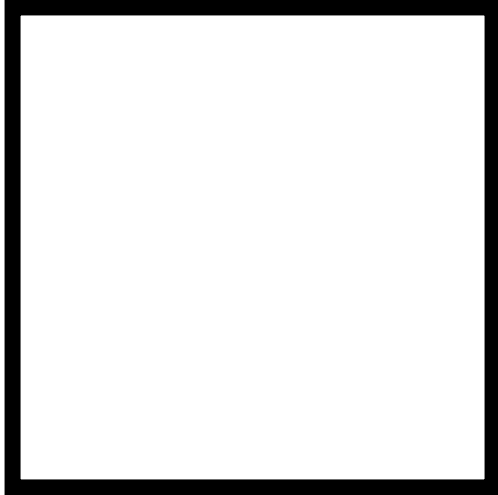
Symbol Sheet 5

Cut apart the symbols on this page. Combine one symbol from each of the six sheets to form a set. Each page should be run a different color.



Symbol Sheet 6

Cut apart the symbols on this page. Combine one symbol from each of the six sheets to form a set. Each page should be run a different color.



A Place in the Sun

Participants and Purposes:

This activity can be done with other educators or with students. It will create an increased cultural awareness and an understanding of the destructive atmosphere that cultural minority or nonmainstream students sometimes encounter. It is a good tool for opening discussion about cultural diversity and the impact of cultural diversity on students.

Materials:

- Print a copy of the quotes on the **Quotation Sheet** on small sheets of paper. Each group of three or four will need one quote. You may duplicate cards if the group is large.
- Print a copy of the entire poem **A Way to Belong** for each participant.
- NCR paper (or sheets for recording ideas). The NCR paper is nice because there's a permanent record left behind of the ideas and interpretations that people bring to the image.

Suggested Time:

35–45 minutes

Directions/Notes:

SPECIAL NOTATION: This activity is based on a strategy the reading teachers will be familiar with. It's a technique to generate involvement with a text. You will have to remind the participants several times that there is no right answer. They are being asked to respond; no answer is incorrect. The key is to have them tie into the poem, through their assigned lines, and therefore create a stronger link to the message of the poem. Be sure to remember to praise their answers as innovative, interesting, and powerful.1. Give the participants **A Place in the Sun Direction Sheet**.

Each group is going to receive a cutting from a poem. If you happen to be familiar with the poem, please pretend you have no knowledge. This only works if all of us are at a disadvantage!

*Each person in the group is to **read the lines aloud** to the other members in his/her group. Listen closely to one another. Listen for the meanings we gain through audio clues.*

When each of you has read the lines, begin a conversation about the section.

Describe the author.

What was the author trying to say to the reader?

What is the context for this poem?

What do these lines “mean”?

There is no right or wrong answer. This is an investigation. What can you discover about this poem with the information that you have?

2. Give the participants at least three to seven minutes to come to their answers. Circle the room and remind the participants that each person needs to read the lines aloud and provide encouragement to the group members. It is difficult for participants when there is not a clear answer.
3. Have a spokesperson from each group read the lines aloud to the group and then talk about the group’s conclusions about the lines.
4. When all the groups are finished presenting their ideas, talk about the differences and similarities in their conclusions.
5. Tell them that all the lines are from the same poem, that without the context we have such conflicting ideas. Remind them of what great interpretations they gave without knowing anything about the poem. You are impressed and so forth.
6. Finally, tell them where the poem came from and who wrote the poem. This poem is such a powerful piece it needs little introduction besides that.
7. Then pass out copies of the poem and have them read along on their papers as you read it aloud. Practice the reading — it looks like an easy poem to read; however, the wording is also complex in places.
8. Lead them into a discussion about how this poem lays the foundation for considering cultural diversity.

A Place in the Sun Direction Sheet

Each group is going to receive a cutting from a poem. If you happen to be familiar with the poem, please pretend you have no knowledge. This only works if all of us are at a disadvantage!

Each person in the group is to read the lines aloud to the other members in his/her group. Listen closely to one another. Listen for the meanings we gain through audio clues.

When each of you has read the lines, begin a conversation about the section.

Describe the author.

What was the author trying to say to the reader?

What is the context for this poem?

What do these lines “mean”?

There is no right or wrong answer. This is an investigation. What can you discover about this poem with the information that you have?

Quotation Sheet

... Musically accented, even when spoken angrily
Masa-chan when spoken tenderly
she forgot its meaning and the challenge it issued:...

...Go forth with a straight heart
it beckoned her from the kitchen window carrying aromas of natto and
fried fish
drifting above the neighbors who wrinkled their noses at the strange
smell

with a deep fluid voice never tripping over English words
baby fine blond hair never needing a perm
long-lashed round eyes never needing make-up

she watched her mother's mouth move, baffling white noise flying forth
a stream of sounds before dinner meant 'set the table'
loud terse syllables and a stern look meant 'don't cross my path'

songs of her mother's childhood were never sung
her mother's wishes and sorrow never revealed
the tale of Momotaro, the Peach Boy, never told

When she was twenty the child, now a woman, lost her land
..., an ocean, a generation away
...she sees an intruder

as easy as rain the mother slipped away one day
and the woman turned speechless writing her mother's eulogy

a whale's song to vibrate ocean peaks and trenches
to soar upward through blue liquid and endless velvet vacuum of space
to cross the boundary dividing inexpressible souls

A Way to Belong

by Joan Shigemoto

When she was five, the child lost her name
Masako. Musically accented, even when spoken angrily
Masa-chan when spoken tenderly
she forgot its meaning and the challenge it issued: Go forth with a
straight heart
it beckoned her from the kitchen window carrying aromas of natto
and fried fish
drifting above the neighbors who wrinkled their noses at the strange
smell
don't call me that, she told her mother
the child preferred her English name after an American movie star
with a deep fluid voice never tripping over English words
baby fine blond hair never needing a perm
long-lashed round eyes never needing make-up

When she was ten, the child lost her mother tongue
to the child a rose was cool neat pretty nice
but all the words she knew fell short of the thirty two ways
her mother could express it in her language so attuned to physical
beauty
she watched her mother's mouth move, baffling white noise
flying forth
a stream of sounds before dinner meant 'set the table'
loud terse syllables and a stern look meant 'don't cross my path'
mother and child unable to speak in a way that could be understood
by the other
songs of her mother's childhood were never sung
her mother's wishes and sorrow never revealed
the tale of Momotaro, the Peach Boy, never told
in school the child heard stories about Cinderella, Goldilocks,
Snow White

When she was twenty, the child, now a woman, lost her land
she traveled to her mother's home, an ocean, a generation away
where she found the village quaint and her relatives exotic
wasn't it amazing, they said, that she spoke English unaccented and
wrote it unaided
after days of endless rice, she wanted mashed potatoes
once home she went to a restaurant for the fried chicken she craved
there a boy in red and white cap said kindly 'you speak English well'
memories of the journey with her mother fade on the shelf of albums
to other far away places.
at times she gazes at the picture of herself in her mother's land
she sees an intruder

When she was thirty, the woman lost her mother
as easy as rain the mother slipped away one day
and the woman turned speechless writing her mother's eulogy
she could not tell her mother's story because
she did not know the ancestral wisdom and personal discoveries
behind Okasan's crinkly silent eyes
what she needed was a cry, loud and strong
a whale's song to vibrate ocean peaks and trenches
to soar upward through blue liquid and endless velvet vacuum
of space
to cross the boundary dividing inexpressible souls
to nestle in the shell of her mother's ear
so that she might know a way to belong.
But it was too late.

Masako

Joan Shigemoto is a Pacific Educator in Residence (PEIR) from Hawaii at PREL. Poem Published in Pacific Education Update, July 1997, Honolulu, HI.

Do the Words Tell the Whole Story?

Participants and Purposes:

Here's an activity that you can try out yourself, with your students, and with your teaching partners. The goal of this activity is to open your lens to viewing student work so that you can better detect student learning and next steps. Things are not always what they seem.

Materials:

A copy of the following handouts: **Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers (#s 1 and 2)** and **Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers Explanation (#s 1 and 2)**.

Suggested Time:

One-and-one-half to two hours

Directions/Notes:

1. Divide the participants into groups of three to four.
2. Copy the **Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers Handout (#s 1 and 2)** and **Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers Explanation Handout (#s 1 and 2)**.
3. Give every group the first handouts (the ones without the explanations). Ask them to score the student responses using the rubric on the page.
4. Once they have finished scoring, ask for volunteers to share their rationale for the grades.
5. Then pass out the **Explanation** for the first student response. Ask them to read and discuss what they have discovered. Ask for volunteers to share with the whole group.
6. Ask the groups to review their "grading" of the second response. Ask if anyone thinks s/he would like to change her/his answer.
7. Pass out the **Explanation** for the second response.
8. Ask each participant to respond to the following reflective questions:

What have you learned about your assessment practice by looking at these two prompts?

What do you need to do to make positive changes in your assessment practice?

Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers Handout #1

Task:

In the space below, discuss how human activity and industries can damage the environment.

Response:

The man use weather to was things and for dring. Also fabrics make to many good things.

What knowledge do you think the student communicates in this answer?

Scoring Guide:

High

- 4 -

The student has answered each element of the prompt in a clear and concise manner.

- 3 -

The student answers some aspects of the prompt, but does not address all parts.

- 2 -

The student's answer fails to address any of the elements in the prompt.

Low

- 1 -

Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers Handout #2

Task:

What do shadows have to do with the earth's motion?

Response:

Shadow don't have to do anything. The eart just mubs.

What knowledge do you think the student communicates in this answer?

Scoring Guide:

High

- 4 -

The student has answered each element of the prompt in a clear and concise manner.

- 3 -

The student answers some aspects of the prompt, but does not address all parts.

- 2 -

The student's answer fails to address any of the elements in the prompt.

Low

- 1 -

Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers Explanation Handout #1

Task:

In the space below discuss how human activity and industries can damage the environment.

Response:

The man use weather to was things and for dring. Also fabrics make to many good things.

Intended Meaning:

Humans use water to wash things and for drinking. Also, factories make too many things with wood.

Discussion:

The student uses a Spanish syntactical structure. Spelling mistakes (**weather** instead of **water**; **was** instead of **wash**) and improper use of verb tenses (**dring**) instead of **drinking** make it difficult to understand the intended meaning of the first sentence. The student misuses the word **fabric** because **fabrica** in Spanish means **factory** and uses **to** instead of **too**. In addition, because the soft **w** sound does not exist in Spanish, the student uses **good** to mean **wood**. As a result, the interpretation of the second sentence makes no sense at first glance, even though the intended meaning is correct.

Open-Ended Science Questions and Answers Explanation Handout #2

Task:

What do shadows have to do with the earth's motion?

Response:

Shadow don't have to do anyting. The eart just mubs.

Intended Meaning:

Shadows don't need to do anything. It is the earth that moves.

Discussion:

Spelling mistakes aside (**eart** for **earth** and **mubs** for **moves**), the student has probably answered the prompt incorrectly because the student misinterpreted the prompt. The student is probably unfamiliar with the expression, **have to do**, which in Spanish literally means **must do (tiene que hacer)** and understands the prompt as **What do shadows must** (or need to) do with the earth's motion?**Telling a Story**

Participants and Purposes:

Here's an activity that you can try out yourself, with your students, and with your teaching partners. As teachers we tend to assume that our students process information and transmit knowledge in the same way that we, ourselves, do. This activity shows that there is more than one way to tell a story.

Materials:

A copy of the following handouts: **My Grandfather, My Grandfather Background Information, When a Dream Comes True, When a Dream Comes True Background Information, Six Trait Model, Six Trait Model in Brief**, and two copies of the **Evaluation**.

Suggested Time:

One-and-one-half to two hours

Directions/Notes:

1. Divide the participants into groups of 3–4.
2. Copy the **My Grandfather, When a Dream Comes True**, and **Evaluation** handouts for the participants.
3. Distribute **My Grandfather** and **Six Trait Model** handouts. If the group has not used the Six Trait Model, take the time to explain the model using the handouts on the Six Trait Model.
4. Once they have read the essay and finished the evaluation sheet, ask for volunteers to share their rationale for their scores.
5. Use chart paper to record responses to the following question. Display the results when they are completed.

If you were having a teacher/student conference with this student, what would you tell her/him to do in order to improve on the next draft?

6. Pass out **My Grandfather Background Information**. Ask the participants to read the sheet. Then ask the group:

Now that you know more about the student and the cultural context, what do you think about the suggestions for improvement that have been given to the student?

Are there ways that you could approach this conversation that would be of greater benefit to the student, now that you have a better understanding of the student's context?

7. Pass out **When a Dream Comes True, Evaluation**, and **When a Dream Comes True Background Information** at the same time. Ask the participants to read the essay and the background information as a group and, as a group, decide on an approach to take in helping this student to perform better on written assessments in English.
8. Ask volunteers to share their strategies. Ask them the following question:

*Thinking back to **My Grandfather** and the process we used to find methods to help that student perform better, how does having more information up front help you as an educator?*

What can you do to make more of this information available to you as you design and grade assessments?

Six Trait Model

Six Traits

Ideas

— the heart of the message

Organization

— the internal structure of the piece

Voice

— the tone and flavor of the author's message

Word Choice

— the vocabulary a writer chooses to convey meaning

Sentence Fluency

— the rhythm and flow of the language

Conventions

— mechanical correctness

Six Trait Value Explanation

Each of the six traits is scored on a scale of one to five, where five is high. These are not intended to correspond to A, B, C, D, and F grades. Teachers are encouraged not to use the traits in a lockstep fashion; rather, they should use the traits that make sense in any given instructional instance, weight them differently depending on the situation, and ask students to add language that makes sense to them.

Six Trait Model in Brief *

Ideas — the heart of the message — Ideas are the heart of the message, the content of piece, the main theme, together with all the details that enrich and develop that theme. The ideas are strong when the message is clear, not garbled. The writer chooses details that are interesting, important, and informative — often the kinds of details the reader would not normally anticipate or predict. Successful writers do not tell readers things they already know (e.g., “it was a sunny day, and the sky was blue...”). They notice what others overlook, seek out the extraordinary, the unusual, the bits and pieces of life that others might not see.

Organization — the internal structure of the piece — Organization is the internal structure of a piece of writing, the thread of central meaning. It doesn't matter what the pattern is, so long as it fits the central idea well. Organizational structure can be based on comparison-contrast, deductive logic, point-by-point analysis, development of a central theme, chronological history of an event, or any of a dozen other identifiable patterns. When the organization is strong, the piece begins meaningfully and creates in the writer a sense of anticipation that is ultimately, systematically fulfilled. Events proceed logically; information is given to the reader in the right doses at the right times so that the reader never loses interest and never the “big picture” — the overriding sense of what the writer is driving at. Connections are strong, which is another way of saying that bridges from one idea to the next hold up. The piece closes with a sense of resolution, tying up loose ends, bringing things to closure, answering important questions while still leaving the reader something to think about.

Voice — the tone and flavor of the author's message — The voice is the writer coming through the words, the sense that a real person is speaking to us and cares about the message. It is the heart and soul of the writing, the magic, the wit, the feeling, the life and breath. When the writer is engaged personally with the topic, s/he imparts a personal tone and flavor to the piece that is unmistakably his/hers alone. It is that individual something — different from the mark of all other writers — that we call voice.

Word Choice — the vocabulary a writer chooses to convey meaning — Word choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that communicates not just in a functional way, but in a way that moves and enlightens the reader. In good descriptive writing, strong word choice paints clear pictures in the reader's mind. In good expository writing,

* From *The Six Traits*, 1997, Vicki Spandel and Ruth Culham, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

strong word choice clarifies and expands ideas. In persuasive writing, careful word choice moves the reader to a new vision of things. Strong word choice is characterized not so much by an exceptional vocabulary that impresses the reader, but more by the skill to use everyday words well.

Sentence Fluency — the rhythm and flow of the language — Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear — not just to the eye. How does it sound when read aloud? That’s the test. Fluent writing has cadence, power, rhythm and movement. It is free of awkward word patterns that slow the reader’s progress. Sentences vary in length and style, and are so well crafted that reading aloud is a pleasure.

Conventions — mechanical correctness — Conventions are the mechanical correctness of the piece — spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing (indenting in the appropriate spots), use of capitals, and punctuation. Writing that is strong in conventions has usually been proofread and edited with care. Handwriting and neatness are not part of this trait. The key is this: How much work would a copy editor need to do to prepare the piece for publication?

My Grandfather

Assignment:

Write an essay about an elder who has been important in your life.

I never realized my grandfather was such a hard worker until recently. He is currently 70 years old and was born October 10, 1926. One some nights when I go to see him I usually like to sit and listen to what he has to say. At times I regret not learning how to speak Navajo. He knows how to speak Navajo and Spanish fluently. He says modern English is not our true language so therefore he does not speak it. Often times he doesn't like it when we, as grandchildren, speak only English. He is a very serious person. He's not the type to make jokes and laugh about them. His determination all started when he became a Christian. At first he grew up the traditional way of living but that never did any good for him. Meaning he was a young man who ran wild and free. He was an alcoholic for sometime which made him crazy. He had friends who were Spaniards. He worked with them as a Construction Worker. But that all changed, after his marriage with Nannabah who is my grandmother he became Christianized into "Friends Church." He practiced to become a preacher after that. He then started traveling to other churches of his kind and met new people. People who are now his friends.

Evaluation

In the space provided create a plot line for the story that this student has created.

Score the paper you've read using the rubric below

6 Trait Model Rubric						
Traits	Score					Comments
	1	2	3	4	5	
Ideas						
Organization						
Voice						
Word Choice						
Sentence Fluency						
Conventions						
Most important aspect of writing to address in the next draft....						
This was great!						

My Grandfather Background Information

- The tradition of Navajo storytelling is much less linear and more circular; the listener understands the theme or message after digesting the whole of the story. It is a deliberate, holistic approach that forces the listener to attend to all of the story in order to find meaning.
- The construction workers who live on the reservation have to travel great distances and may also live apart from families for long periods of time in order to keep a job.
- The theme of this story is similar to the young man's troubled homecoming used by Native American writers such as N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louis Erdrich and Sherman Alexie.
- The first draft of this paper was much longer and more developed.

When a Dream Comes True Essay

Assignment:

Write a story about an important event in your life.

It was a sunny day. There were birds flying around the school. A small, simple, but peaceful school that is located in a very little town in Oaxaca exactly in the southwest part of Mexico. I was sitting on an old bench watching the birds flying, when my teacher came to me and smiling said, "Luis, you had been chosen to represent our school in the next testing competitions in Santa Ana (name of the town where the competitions would take place).

"My God," I exclaimed surprised. "How it came?" I asked.

"Because your score in the last test was above average I mean it was better than any one's score," He added. "one more thing the test will be in three weeks from now. I'm telling you this to give you chance to study because we need to win so keep in mind that you must win," the teacher said.

Finally the date came. I was so nervous because in the competition there were students from thirteen different schools to try to have the first place. After listening the instructions from the teacher, I started to answer the instructions from the teacher, I started to answer the math part first.

My mouth was dry, and I started to sweat, my heart pumped faster my blood. It was a terrible starting. At the end of the test I was so tired and bored in addition each student was nervous waiting for the results. Finally the results were ready after two hours of waiting.

"Please stand in a line, I'm going to give you the results," said the principal.

When a Dream Comes True Background Information

This writer is an English language learner (ELL) student who has been raised in a very mainstream home. The student has been encouraged to fit into the “White” society.

The writer uses expressions and structures that are very common to Spanish-speaking students:

- **siting in, terrible starting** – Spanish speakers have ongoing difficulties distinguishing appropriate word choice (i.e., when to use **on/in** in English, **starting** or **beginning**)
- **smiling said** and **how it came?** and **my heart pumped faster my blood** – the order of words in these phrases is more common to Spanish than English
- **had been chosen** – there is a confusion in the tenses, again common in ELL
- **listening the instruction** – ELL students commonly have a problem with articles and required prepositions in English; the Spanish word for hear (oir) doesn’t require a preposition, and listen/hear (escuchar) doesn’t always require a presupposition
- **posible, imposible** – confusing a Spanish spelling with the English spelling
- **the higher** – the Spanish language does not use the same syntactical structure to create superlatives and comparative (i.e., **higher=mas alto; highest=lo mas alto**)

A Slice in Time: Narrating Differences

Participants and Purposes:

Here's an activity that you can try out yourself, with your students, and with your teaching partners. Its aim is to “see with new eyes” into the diversity that exists in individuals — and the richness that this diversity creates in a learning environment. It's also about revealing the variety of ways that we narrate our own stories. This activity works well in combination with *Defining Our Differences*.

Materials:

- A picture, painting, drawing or transparency that features a person or setting that will serve as a springboard into the imagination. Possible pictures might be *The Flower Barrier* by Diego Rivera, *Hot Seat* by Joseph Amrhein, *Rainy Night Downtown* by Georgia Mills Jessup, or *Girl on a Small Wall* by Suzanne Valadon, or you can also use a magazine illustration, a student drawing or pictures from a library book. If you plan to use this activity with a larger group, you will want to turn the picture into a transparency to give everyone a clear view of its colors and details.
- NCR paper (or sheets for recording ideas). The NCR paper is nice because there's a permanent record left behind of the ideas and interpretations that people bring to the image.
- A copy of the following handouts for each participant: **Slice of Time** and **Narrative Analysis**.

Suggested Time:

One slot of one-and-a-half hours

Directions/Notes:

1. Use an introduction like the one below (**Slice of Time Transparency**) to help participants frame a story of “this moment.” Ask the participants to frame their individual stories in words on chart paper. (If a writing requirement will limit responses, invite partners to record for others. If the group contains individuals who habitually translate stories into pictures, asking them to frame a symbolic representation may also be a viable option.)

Imagine that this painting is a moment in time in your life — a scene from your own history. How was this person or place



DID YOU KNOW?

Jerome Bruner theorizes that each of us interprets life through the frame created by our personal narrative. If the knowledge or skill that we encounter fits with our personal scope of experience, then this information is simply stored with other pieces of similar information. If, however, this information is alien to our knowledge base, then we must make a decision: do we want to keep this information or discard it?

Many times we simply choose to discard it because we aren't comfortable with it or see a need for this new information. In some cases, we choose to integrate that new knowledge into our existing frame of knowledge. When we integrate this new material into our frame, it is called affect regulation. Affect regulation aligns to Piaget's process of disequilibrium. As teachers, we want to create situations where the disequilibrium that we create causes students to **want to learn** and therefore change their personal narrative frame through affect regulation.

Through an awareness of the array of the personal narratives of our students and ourselves, we will be able to design assessments that reveal the students' actual learning (Bruner, 1994).

involved in your life? What happened between this person and you or to you at this location? Has this instance changed your life? Has your life stayed the same?

Write about this scene as if you were telling a story to other people, not just thinking about it.

2. Ask each person to perform an analysis of the narrative style of the story he or she created by checking the appropriate boxes on the **Narrative Analysis** handout.
3. Ask each person to write a reflective response about what has been discovered about her/his personal narrative through the use of **Narrative Analysis** handout.
4. Divide into groups of four and ask each of the group members:
 - to share his/her narrative — the story they have created that makes the scene come to life
 - to discuss their findings from the **Narrative Analysis** handout

5. Ask all of the participants to post their stories and their **Narrative Analyses** on the walls in the room. When all of the stories are posted, ask the participants to walk around the room and read each posting. If you have a large group, you may want to have groups choose selected stories to place on the wall.
6. Ask the group to discuss the differences and similarities that they see. Are any of these differences or similarities accentuated by information from the **Narrative Analyses**? Involve the group in discussing and reflecting on the observations they have made about each other and the story each person created. Though you may use your own questions, some suggested questions and possible answers to those questions follow.

Question 1 — *What do you understand about story telling as a result of this activity?*

Examples of the kinds of insights that often come with this activity:

- We all tell stories in different ways.
- Even those of us who are from the same or similar cultures have different “story structures.”
- We are often unaware that people think differently than we do.

Question 2 — *How might the differences and insights revealed in this activity apply to your teaching practices?*

- We tend to design curriculum, instruction, and assessment that correlate to our personal understandings or “the best” accepted view of our students. We should consider the relationship of our students’ personal narrative in the design of classroom practice.
- We need to create an environment that ties into a variety of methods or approaches in order to reach all of our students.

Question 3 — *What are some implications for assessment?*

- We need to recognize the direct impact on assessment that different viewpoints have on our students’ success or lack of success on assessment tasks.
- We need to use the information we have about the student’s personal narrative to assist us in facilitating effective communication with both students and parents.

7. Ask each person to write reflectively about their experience in the process. A possible prompt might be: *What have you learned from this experience and how will it affect your classroom practice?*

A Slice of Time

Imagine that this painting is a moment in time in your life — a scene from your own history. How was this person involved in your life? What happened between this person and you? Has your contact with this person changed your life? Has your life stayed the same?

Write about this scene as if you were telling a story to other people, not just thinking about it.

Narrative Analysis

- I stressed emotional aspects.
- I used strong verbs.
- I focused on description.
- I focused on the people and their relationships.
- I focused on the setting.
- I focused on the action.
- I focused on the conflict resolution.
- I focused on the dialogue.
- I used short phrases or sentences.
- I used long, involved sentences.
- I gave “just the facts.”
- I added small details that were not directly related to the “main plot.”
- I created a background to the story that makes the scene part of a bigger picture.
- I found the picture uninteresting.
- I found the picture to be very interesting.
- I used examples from history.
- I added insight about the painter.

Discovering Our Differences

Participants and Purposes:

Here's an activity that you can try out yourself, with your students, and with your colleagues. This activity is designed to provide a mechanism for participants to perform a self and community analysis of cultural dimensions. They will find unexpected commonalities and differences.

Materials:

- Five pieces of string or ribbon that are approximately 10 feet in length.
- Ten large paper arrows.
- The following words copied on large strips of paper: Individualism, Collectivism, Low Context Communication, High Context Communication, Low Power, High Power, Low Uncertainty Avoidance, Strong Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Femininity.
- Two colors of cards about the size of small index cards or two colors of large sticky dots in different colors. Each participant will need FIVE of each color. Using very different colors is best. For example, blue and orange are easily distinguishable from a distance where red and orange would not be.
- Colored markers.
- The following handout for each participant: **Dimensions of Cultural Attributes**.

Suggested Time:

60-90 minutes

Directions/Notes:

1. Before beginning the next activity, use a large wall to create a spectrum for the **Dimensions of Cultural Attributes** handouts that follow. You will do this by using the string/ribbon with arrow on each end as the spectrum line and the large words that designate the extremes (these are the words to be copied onto large strips). The **Dimensions** sheets illustrate each of the spectrums.
2. Designate a discussion area for each of the five **Dimensions of Cultural Attributes**. Assign a group of three or four to each area.

If you have very large groups, you may want to create 10 discussion areas (two groups addressing each of the **Dimensions**).

3. Ask each group to discuss their understanding of the assigned Dimension based on the information they have and personal experience. Use the following question to promote discussion.

*What is your reaction to this **Dimension**?*

4. Allow each group approximately five to ten minutes of discussion time and then allow them to move onto the next dimension. Repeat this process until all of the dimensions have been covered by each group.
5. Distribute five cards or colored dots of each of two colors to each person. Ask them to write their name or initials on each card. One color will represent their personal views and feelings; the other color will represent their school's view or approach.
6. Ask participants to place the first color of card or dot on the location in each dimension where they feel they fit personally. Ask them to place the second color of card or dot on each dimension where they feel that school entity fits as a whole.
7. In the large group, ask:
 - How do these cultural dimensions impact your personal design of assessment and the design of assessment in your educational environment?
 - How does your view of your place on the spectrum and your view of the school's place on the spectrum facilitate or inhibit assessment practice in your institution?
8. Ask each person to write reflectively about their experience in the process. A possible reflective question might be
 - What have you learned from this experience and how will it affect your classroom practice?

Dimensions of Cultural Attributes

Dimension 1 — Individualism/Collectivism

Research shows that there are many dimensions to our personal culture.

Individualism < ----- > **Collectivism**

Individuals are impacted by the extent to which cultures emphasize independence and personal choice versus interdependence, social responsibility, and group well-being (Hofstede, 1983).

In a personal or social setting

Members from cultures where individual identity is emphasized may place more emphasis on self-actualization, focus on the needs of the one over the needs of the many, and emphasize individual achievement.

Members from cultures where group identity is emphasized may give great consideration to group identity and belonging to the group, value harmony of the group over the needs of any individual, and develop shared responsibility for all tasks.

In a school setting

The school culture expects students to speak up in class, be competitive, and make decisions based on personal needs and goals.

The school culture expects all students to be the same and not draw attention to the individual, be motivated by group recognition, and make decisions that benefit the group.

(Compiled by Shernaz B. Garcia, Department of Special Education, University of Texas at Austin (1998) for the Organizing for Diversity Project, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, Texas from the following sources: Brislin, R. (1993). *Culture's Influence on Behavior*. Ft. Worth, TX: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich; Gudykunst, W. B. & Kim, Y. Y. (1997). *Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill; Gudykunst, W., Ting-Toomey, S., Chua, E. (1988). *Culture and Interpersonal Communication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Pedersen, P. B. & Ivey, A. (1993). *Culture-Centered Counseling and Interviewing Skills: A Practical Guide* (pp. 53-81). Westport, CT: Praeger.)

Dimensions of Cultural Attributes

Dimension 2 — Communication Context

Research shows that there are many dimensions to our personal culture.

Context for Communication

Low < -----> **High**

Communication, whether it be verbal or written, is a key component to evaluating the learning that has taken place. Different cultural groups place varied emphasis on specific communication styles.

In a personal or social setting

Members from cultures where low-context communication is preferred may emphasize the value of assertiveness and the need to give straightforward responses that are emotionally neutral. They value explicit language and gain most information through the actual code used to communicate.

Members from cultures where high context communication is preferred may use more ambiguous communication in order to maintain harmony and conformity. They often employ a wide range of emotionally laden responses.

In a school setting

The school culture encourages children to articulate their needs and understanding succinctly.

The school culture encourages conformity and harmony rather than communication of needs and understanding; therefore, communication is indirect and implicit.

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Dimensions of Cultural Attributes

Dimension 3 — Power Structure

Research shows that there are many dimensions to our personal culture.

Power

Low < ----- >High

The power structure within a culture is determined by many factors, but it is the acceptance of the power structure that allows power to be sustained. In a low power culture, individuals are less likely to accept the unequal distribution of power. In high power culture, individuals accept the power structure even though they may or may not have a role in the power structure.

In a personal or social setting

Members from a low power culture grant power to the group or individuals based on expertise or earned respect and encourage independence and active experimentation.

Members from a high power culture accept power based on social status and rank, and value obedience.

In a school setting

The school culture promotes student-centered approaches where the teacher facilitates learning by encouraging the students to question and discuss ideas with teachers and other students. The teacher and the school institution recognize the rights of students and parents.

The school culture encourages teacher-centered approaches in which students do not question or discuss their ideas. Students are subordinate to teachers.

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Dimensions of Cultural Attributes

Dimension 4 — Uncertainty Avoidance

Research shows that there are many dimensions to our personal culture.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Low < ----- > **High**

Culture often determines how ambiguity and uncertainty are avoided or controlled. Some cultures function well with ambiguity; others need finite structure.

In a personal or social setting

Members from cultures where there is low uncertainty avoidance may prefer open-ended discussion and individual interpretations, are comfortable with alternative solutions and approaches, encourage competition and expression of individual needs and desires, accept risk-taking as a viable option, and consider change to be acceptable.

Members from cultures where there is high uncertainty avoidance may value the status quo with its formal rules and absolutes, have little tolerance for deviant behavior, avoid competitive and conflict situations, and resist change.

In a school setting

The school culture encourages student construction and discovery of learning and parental influence or impact on learning.

The school culture encourages teachers to provide structured learning environments. Parents view themselves as laypersons and teachers as professionals.

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Dimensions of Cultural Attributes

Dimension 5 — Gender Role Identification

Research shows that there are many dimensions to our personal culture.

Masculinity* < ----- > **Femininity***

Culture has created stereotypical understandings of the roles of men and women. Masculinity has come to symbolize the orientation to pursue power and achievement over the empathetic aspects of life, while femininity has come to symbolize the pursuit of a quality of life over power and achievement.

In a personal or social setting

Members from cultures with a masculine orientation may place higher value on things, power, and assertiveness, emphasizing the difference in sex roles and placing achievement and work at the heart of attaining happiness.

Members from cultures with a feminine orientation may place a higher value on people and quality of life and exhibit a strong concern for social harmony and human relationships in attaining happiness.

In a school setting

The school culture encourages the best students to set the norm. They tend not to deviate from the roles assigned to them and feel that achievement is more important than any other aspect of education.

The school culture encourages students to value cooperative efforts and service and perform activities that call for students to follow different role patterns. Social isolation causes greater distress for students than school failure.

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*It is common for individuals when they first see these classifications to assume that this dimension is simply an application of gender issues. It is much more than that; it is the difference in the creating of an environment that focuses primarily on achievement versus one that focuses primarily on human relationships.

In Need of Repair

Participants and Purposes:

Here's an activity that you can try out yourself, with your students, and with your teaching partners. Now that you have had some exposure to issues of language, culture, and diversity, it is time to apply that knowledge to possible assessment questions. This activity will provide an opportunity for you to develop skills in looking at test items and evaluating their impact on your students.

Materials:

- A copy of each of the **scenario** handouts for each participant
- Three copies of the **analysis** handout for each participant

Suggested Time:

One to one-and-one-half hours

Directions/Notes:

1. Divide the large group into smaller groups of three or four.
2. Give each group one of the scenario handouts that follow. Ask each group to read the assignment and use the worksheet attached to analyze it.
3. Once the groups have finished their analysis, ask them to report to the whole group on their findings.
4. For a final discussion with the large group, ask:
What can you do to prevent bias and distortion in your assessments?

Hints:

Aquarium Scenario: Many of these students did not know what an aquarium was and therefore could not write about it.

Trash Scenario: Students may not live where there are trash receptacles and garbage pickup. Additionally, this assignment assumes that these students have access to a variety of modern conveniences, which may not be true.

Math Scenario: For this series, there are assumptions 1) that all of these students have a family member who can help them do these

assignments; 2) that the students live in a house with a garage, or have seen one; 3) that the students live in a home with a dining room table, and that they eat breakfast together or at all; 4) that it is safe for children to walk in the neighborhood; and 5) that the child lives where there are city blocks.

Analysis Handout

What skills are being assessed with this scenario?

How might the teacher know if a student is exhibiting the skills that are being assessed?

What elements in the scenario assignment might create bias and distortion for the students?

What changes could you make in the scenario assignment that would allow you to assess the same skills, but diminish the bias and distortion?

Scenario 1 — Aquariums

Ms. Talson, a teacher in rural Arizona, has prepared her third-grade students for a statewide assessment in writing. She has a Spanish bilingual class in which about half of her students speak Spanish as their first language. They are English language learners (ELLs) at various stages of fluency. For the assessment, each student is expected to write a narrative story in English in response to a prompt. They will have three days to complete all stages of the writing process including pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Ms. Talson has worked hard to prepare her students. She has a strong writing program in which her students write daily (often in both languages) on a wide variety of topics. Because teachers are not supposed to assist their students with the assessment, she has practiced both using prompts with her students and asking them to work without her assistance. She feels that her students are ready.

On the first day of the assessment, Ms. Talson walks around her classroom and observes that many of her students seem frustrated and confused. At the end of the pre-writing period, some students have very little on their papers. She takes a look at the prompt. It reads, “Imagine that you live in a large aquarium. What kind of animal are you? Who lives there with you? Write a story about what happens one day in your aquarium.”

Scenario 2 — Trash Day

Mr. García gives the following assignment to his class. He instructs his students to go home that evening and classify the garbage that has been thrown into their trash containers. He asks them specifically to sort the contents into the following categories:

paper

metal

food waste

plastic

glass

other

They are to count the number of items in each category and describe the types of items in each category.

The next morning when his students come into his classroom, he asks them about their assignment. He is very surprised to find that many of his students did not complete the assignment or did only part of it.

Scenario 3 — Math Test

Mrs. Kimpera has just attended a workshop on the importance of involving a student's family in schoolwork. The presenter provided statistical data that revealed that when students are given work that involves family members, their classroom achievement is higher.

For this purpose she creates the following assignment and asks the students to do this assignment with at least one family member. The purpose for this assignment is to ascertain if all of the students have mastered measurement skills.

1. Estimate the area and perimeter of your family's garage. You may choose your own standard of measurement.
2. Using a 12-inch ruler, determine the area of your dining room table. How many square inches of space does each member in your family have for breakfast each morning?
3. Choose three blocks close to your home. Using a form of measurement that you devise, determine the median length of the three blocks.

When she asks her students for their papers the next morning, she finds that less than half the class has completed the assignment.

Ideas for Developing Deeper Understanding of Students' Culture and Strengths Through Community Efforts

Participants and Purposes:

Here's an activity that you can try out yourself, with your students, and with your teaching partners. It will provide a means for exploring educational issues of importance with community members. This activity is meant to create trusting relationships between educators and community members. As educators, how do we know the common values in our community? How do we know what our students need both in real life and in education?

NOTATION: This activity can be used to explore a specific issue or a more general one; however, the questions are currently written for a general approach. The questions can be rewritten to reflect a special purpose.



CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Don't assume that sending home a note urging "greater school involvement" will be interpreted as a welcoming invitation. Parents and community members are often uncomfortable with educators. You will need to establish personal rapport to make this event a success. This includes contacting community leaders to garner their support for the event.
- Involve community members and parents in the planning.
- Don't assume that those who do not speak are not interested or have limited language skills. It may be that speaking out before a group is culturally inappropriate, or it's someone else's role to speak for the group.
- Remember, listening is often more important than speaking.
- Offer time for within-culture discussion and decisionmaking before asking for reports or sharing of ideas.
- Suggest several ways of responding and contributing ideas. Groups might visualize their core values using metaphors, drawings, webs, lists, or a summary statement.

Materials:

- Chart paper, markers.
- Visual display tools: transparencies, construction paper, and so forth.
- A sample of webbing on a large sheet to share with the participants. It does not have to be on the topic.
- A piece of chart paper for each of the questions below. Pre-write the question on the chart paper before the meeting.

What does it mean to be well educated?

How do children learn?

Who is responsible for learning?

What does quality student work look like?

Suggested Time:

Ideally, this activity would be spread over several weeks of multiple meetings; however, it can be done in two to two-and-a-half hours. It is possible to repeat sections of this activity as the group comes to new understandings.

Directions/Notes:

NOTATION: Monitor the room closely so that you can decide when to move along to the next event. It is important to give participants enough time to thoroughly discuss each concept.

1. Invite parents, family and community members to come together with teachers to jointly support their children's learning. The best method of doing this varies from community to community. If this is the first time you have done this, talk to other groups who have done this successfully and use their approach.
2. If possible, ask someone from within the community to open the meeting with thoughts for the group's success and to demonstrate publicly the important value placed on the contributions of family and community to school success.
3. Divide the participants into groups of four or five.
4. Hand each group the following list of questions. Ask them to discuss the questions as a group and web their ideas on the chart paper provided. Community members may not be familiar with the concept of mapping. Give them an example to help them understand the concept.

What does it mean to be well educated?

How do children learn?

Who is responsible for learning?

What does high quality student work look like?

5. Ask participants to post their mappings on the wall. Ask all of the participants to walk through the “gallery” and discuss what they see.
6. Ask the large group to discuss commonalties that they find in the mappings. Record the high points of this discussion on chart paper.
7. Ask each of the earlier formed groups to discuss important values in their culture or belief system that are not included in these high points.
8. Ask for voluntary discussion of the ideas they have discussed in their smaller groups. Ask a participant to record the main points on a chart sheet.

9. Continuing to use the same groups, ask participants to discuss the selected questions from the following questions or use other questions that you generate. After allowing time for small group discussion, ask the participants if anyone would like to share with the whole group. Give each group the following set of questions.

How do we determine what’s worth knowing? Which values echo those of your own culture?

Who should determine answers to that question?



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL GROUP INTERACTION

- Did someone stop talking in the midst of the conversation? What caused this?
- Did people pick up a topic and then drop it dead? What was happening?
- You’re sure something didn’t work, why?
- Did things get very quiet unexpectedly? What was happening at the time? Can you identify something that was being done or said at the time that triggered the reaction?

Which make you pause and think about what they might mean in the classroom?

Whose role is it to provide knowledge? Which might conflict with your own expectations of students?

Looking at the lists that have been generated, what are some implications for teaching? For assessment?