

## Same Kind of Different as Me

*“When we look into our selves and discover what is radiant and dull, ugly and beautiful, clear and confusing, harsh and gentle, it isn’t just ourselves we’re discovering; we’re unfolding the mysteries of the universe.” ~Irwin Kula*

### Overview

Students will learn new things about one another and recognize that they all have differing opinions, experiences, backgrounds, cultures, etc. By sharing about themselves, students will discover what makes them unique while exploring what they have in common with classmates, leading to a stronger sense of classroom community and respect.

### Grades

6-8

### Activity Type

Whole Class

Partner

Individual

### Materials

- Masking tape
- Numbered signs (1-10)
- Pair and Share Cards, examples attached
- Large sheets of construction paper or art paper
- Overhead projector
- Art supplies
- Magazines, newspapers, brochures/advertisements, and/or other printed material than can be cut up

### Duration

- 10-45 minutes
- The various activities within this lesson can be broken up over several class periods or done in succession.

### Teacher Preparation

Before students enter class, create a long line on the floor using masking tape and place signs with the numbers 1-10 sequentially along the line. (The line must be long enough and the space large enough that all students will have room to move about the line. Teachers with smaller classrooms may want to conduct this activity in larger spaces such as the hall, cafeteria, gym, or auditorium.)

## Procedure

### Where Do You Stand?

1. As a warm-up, ask students to discuss:
  - What would life be like if we were all the same?
2. Next, write the word **diversity** on the board and ask students to share what they think the word means. Create a definition inclusive of the feedback provided from students. Discuss with students how a diverse classroom is a classroom full of people who often hold differing or unlike opinions, values, backgrounds, cultures, races, etc. Explain to students that such diversity makes a classroom community more interesting and rich, and that it is something to be celebrated. To illustrate the differences students inhabit in a safe way, tell students they will participate in an activity called "Where Do You Stand."
3. Draw the class's attention to the numbered line. Tell students that you will say a word or phrase and that they are to move along the line according to their opinion of the subject, 1 being strongly disagree or dislike, 10 being strongly agree or love. Remind students of class expectations and to move safely about the room. Also, encourage students to be brave enough to take their own stand on issues and not to simply follow their friends' movements. Tell students that they must not talk during the exercise. Begin to read off subjects that you want the class to explore (take around 8 minutes to do so); it is recommended that you start off with simple items, like foods, and then move to more substantive subjects. After each subject or phrase is called and students move, give students a moment to notice where everyone else in the class stands. Examples of subjects to call out include:

Pizza	Brussel sprouts
Chocolate	Playing sports
Country music	Hip/Hop
Videogames	Cartoons
Shopping	Math
Police officers	Teachers
Democrats	Republicans

#### Example statements:

The best type of music is country music.

In past years, I have struggled with math.

I am generally a happy, positive person.

My family means a lot to me.

I worry about the people I care about.

I believe you should stand up to your friends if they are teasing someone.

4. Once you have called all of the topics or statements you choose to use, ask students to guess what they think the point of the exercise was. Ideally, students will point out that at times there were perhaps similarities among them, but that there was also never complete agreement among them. Students may also note that some reactions surprised them or that people who are seemingly "alike" (guys, girls, white students, black students, etc.) didn't necessarily respond alike.

5. Draw students' attention back to the word **diversity** and ask them to connect it to the experience they just had. Tell students that you want them to keep this exercise in their minds, particularly as the class delves into more controversial material and discussions throughout the year. Point out that they are a diverse group of people, with different experiences, opinions, and attitudes, and that this is something to be celebrated. Ask them to imagine how boring class would be if every single one of them was exactly the same. Also, point out to students that since they don't necessarily agree on music or food, when even more serious topics are discussed, they should expect to again have a diversity of opinions once more. Facilitate the understanding that such diversity should be welcomed and respected.

**Teacher Note:** At any point throughout the year when students are experiencing extreme disagreement or discomfort with a controversial topic, remind them of this activity and that it is acceptable and expected that differences will be present. This activity can even be used for developing a "catch word" to diffuse a conversation that gets too heated. (For example: "Broccoli! Remember, we don't even agree on broccoli, so it's OK to disagree about this. Let's just take a breath and listen to each other.")

#### **Pair and Share**

6. Next, tell students they are going to learn more about the diverse opinions, backgrounds, cultures, etc. that are represented within their classroom community. Give each student a "Pair and Share" card. Teachers should determine how to pair students off. (Other than simply assigning partners, teachers can also draw symbols on the back of the cards and instruct students to find the student with the same symbol.) Tell students that once in their pairs, they will choose 4 of the questions provided to share with their partners. Students should take turns answering each question of their choosing (ensure students understand they do not have to each answer the same questions.) Tell students how much time they will have for sharing (approximately 8-10 minutes is recommended) and let them know they can ask follow-up questions of one another, as long as they are mindful of the time. Also, remind students of their Community Expectations and ask them: "How can we show our partner that we are listening to them, that we respect them, and that we value what they have to say?"
7. Once students understand the activity and what is expected of them, allow them to break into partners and begin their discussions. The attached "Pair and Share" cards contain the following questions, which teachers should alter and change as they see fit:
- What is something that most people do not know about you?
  - Describe a happy memory. This might involve family, friends, a holiday, a school event, etc. Share the details of the memory and explain what made it so happy.
  - Describe something you have done or accomplished that you are proud of.
  - What are you most afraid of?
  - What is your favorite way to spend a Saturday?
  - What makes you sad or worried?
  - Who in your family means a lot to you and why?
  - Who is your hero and why?
  - What is your greatest dream?
  - What is a misconception people may have about you?
  - What is the hardest thing you have dealt with in your life thus far? What made this so difficult?
  - What in this world means the most to you and why?

8. **Optional:** Once all students have finished sharing, have each person introduce their partner to the class by saying “Meet my friend...”, filling in their partner’s name and summarizing what they learned about him/her. Teachers should let students know if they will be doing that when initially giving instructions to ensure students share only what they would be comfortable having the entire class know.
9. After all students have shared in their partners (and introduced their partner if conducting Step 6), discuss:
  - What types of things did you learn about one another?
  - What are some things you found you have in common with your classmates? In what ways are we diverse?
  - Why is it important to get to know one another? Why is it important to respect our differences? How might this help us to better form a community and work together this year?

### **Fill Your Head**

10. As a culminating activity, tell students they are going to complete an art activity called “Fill Your Head,” and that this activity will not only allow them to share more about themselves, but it will also allow them to learn more about how they are similar and different than their classmates. Tell students that you will be calling them to the overhead projector one by one, where you will trace the outline of their head onto art paper. Tell students they will work to fill the shape of their head with words, phrases, pictures, etc. that represent who they are in some way (things they like/dislike, people and things that are important to them, places they have visited or hope to visit, pictures of activities they enjoy, goals and dreams, cultural traits, traditions, etc.) Teachers can tie in their curricular content by asking students to include what they are interested or looking forward to studying within the course. Students can use old magazines for cutting letters, words, phrases, pictures, etc. out of then collage this with their own art work. Teachers can also instruct students to write a brief paragraph description to accompany their head.
11. Call each student up to stand in front of the overhead projector so that the profile of their head is projected on the wall. Tape a piece of paper where the silhouette falls, and trace the outline of the student’s head onto the paper. While students are waiting for their head to be traced, they should go ahead and begin collecting items for their collage, as described above.
12. Once students have finished “filling their head,” hang their work up so that students may view one another’s work.
13. Have students reflect on the day’s activities by discussing:
  - What did we do today? Why do you think we did it?
  - What types of things did you learn about one another throughout today’s activities?
  - Did you notice any similarities between your head and those your classmates created? What things do you all have in common? What things stood out as unique or original?
  - Other than your own, which of the heads do you relate to and why?
  - Why is it important to get to know one another?
  - Why is it important to respect our differences?
  - How might learning about one another help us be more successful in this class?

**Additional Activities**

- Have students complete the Consortium's "Who Am I?" project, which facilitates student exploration, understanding, appreciation of, and respect for identity and culture.

## Pair and Share Cards

(Teachers should edit and adapt cards and questions as they see fit.)

**Once you are seated with your partner, shake hands and again share your names with one another. Take turns discussing your answers to 4 of the following questions (you may choose which 4 to answer):**

- What is something that most people do not know about you?
- Describe a happy memory. This might involve family, friends, a holiday, a school event, etc. Share the details of the memory and explain what made it so happy.
- Describe something you have done or accomplished that you are proud of.
- What are you most afraid of?
- What is your favorite way to spend a Saturday?
- What makes you sad or worried?
- Who in your family means a lot to you and why?
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- What is your greatest dream?
- What is a misconception people may have about you?
- What is the hardest thing you have dealt with in your life thus far? What made this so difficult?
- What in this world means the most to you and why?

You may ask follow-up questions of your partner.

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