



IN SCHOOL SPIRIT

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SPIRIT. INCLUDED. INVOLVED. INSPIRED.

Approach to Diversity Dialogue

When having the conversation about diversity, differences, whether it is regarding race, class, gender or socioeconomic, the challenges are quite similar. The conversation is uncomfortable, personal, and poses many challenges. This does not change, however the approach speaks volumes.

A few steps that prove to set the tone for a more productive dialogue:

1. Discuss “safe zone”- How do participants define a “safe zone” especially to have such a conversations. This might include the following:
 - a. Feeling listened to
 - b. Feeling like there is no judgment
 - c. The ability to express themselves unfiltered
 - d. That what is said in the room stays in the room
2. Discuss what participants need from one another (directed towards those in the very room) to feel safe. This might include the following:
 - a. That you won’t give me strange looks
 - b. That you won’t quote what I said in the cafeteria
 - c. The you will respect what I say despite how you feel
3. Start of with the “positive”: If you are conducting a conversation on topics of gender/race, people generally love to start by discussing what’s so great about being who they are. Anyone can respond to this. Normally this sets the tone for interesting conversation. Writing the lists on the board to take inventory of what would be some interesting places to begin this discussion is helpful:
 - a. What’s great about being a female
 - b. What’s great about being male
 - c. What’s great about being....
4. Other activities: There are a variety of ways to do this but most people respond by the visual of seeing how many people display feeling a certain way. For example, if you pose a question, and the participants respond with standing up, stepping forward or raising their hand, people really get to connect with how many or how few think and feel like they do. Some ideas for activities:
 - a. Stand up/sit down

- b. Step forward/step back
 - c. In a circle where everyone is facing one another, this increases the level of comfort as well
- 5. Fish bowls: This gives participants the opportunity within their own groups to discuss specific topics while those who sit on the outside are able to listen and learn how the other group feels about certain topics. The fish bowl is set up with a specific group of people create a circle and sit in the middle and discuss the challenges/feelings about what it is like to be.... Typically for 5 minutes, participants start off with the struggles but it's an opportunity for the groups to share in dialogue with one another with others who are like them and can relate. Then, you change groups and do the same thing all over again. After the different groups have spoken, debriefing takes place and people discuss what their thoughts were about what was shared.