

- Our lunch plans have changed!
- How social movements have impacted today.
- Facing our stereotypes.
- The importance of vision.
- When students need speech therapy.
- Recognizing our cultural differences.

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:

Mix It Up! 2

The Golden Rule 2

Stereotypes (continued) 2

Glasses & Contacts 3

Speech Therapy 3

Reaching Out 3

Resources & Information 4

Teaching the Value of Diversity

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Stereotypes

As you begin a new school year, many attitudes will walk into your classroom. Students will have their own set of stereotypes that they bring to the group.

To begin an effective stereotype lesson, create two columns. One column will be titled boys and the other girls. Ask students to describe what boys are good at. Answers might include: sports, lifting/strength, taking the trash out, riding a dirt bike, don't cry easily, etc. Ask students to describe what girls do best: cheerleading, washing dishes, shopping, crying easily, etc.

When finished, ask students if this is true of ALL boys or of ALL girls. Introduce the word

“stereotype” to students. After students have projected what it means, ask a student to read the definition from a



“It is much easier to teach tolerance to children than to reverse ill-placed ideals after they’ve grown.”
(eHow.com, 2009)

children’s dictionary (an overly simple picture or opinion of a person, group or thing).

Explain that a stereotype is a wide brush that we paint someone with when we do not know them. We make a decision based on how a person looks or acts. Ex. *Old people should not drive. Only men should serve in the military. Girls should not play football. Boys should not wash dishes.*

Divide the students into small groups. Ask each group to create one stereotypical statement. Allow each group to have 5-10 minutes. Answers may include: *Boys are more athletic than girls. Tall people should be basketball players. Girls should do laundry. Short people are not good swimmers.*

(continued on page 2)

Educating a Global Society

Psychologist Paula Greene says that children learn tolerance or intolerance in three key areas: home, school, and the media (Whole Family, 2009). The globalization of our society has impacted our schools as much more diversity exists than one hundred years ago. As students dis-

cover the difference between “fact” and “opinion,” point out “blanketing” a group or gender with “opinion” statements. *All girls are babies. Every boy should play sports.* Students need to be made aware of “cliques” which are grouped on distinction – clothing labels, neighborhood

stereotypes, or physical appearances. Making students aware of their developing stereotypes, prejudices and intolerances will help them monitor their attitudes and behavior (Whole Family, 2009).



“Students thrive in environments that are inclusive.”
(Teaching Tolerance, 2009)

“How can we work against the prevailing atmosphere and teach our children tolerance?”
(Whole Family, 2009)

How we feel about others impacts our thoughts and actions.



Mix It Up!

When students were surveyed from 2002-2005, more than half of students described their schools as “quick to put people into categories” (Teaching Tolerance, 2009). Forty percent of students admitted rejecting another group while 70% identified the cafeteria as the place where most social boundaries are drawn (Teaching Tolerance, 2009).

November 10, 2009 is *Mix It Up at Lunch Day*. Students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone by

sitting somewhere new at lunch with the goal of meeting new people and making new friends.

Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, released the 2007 survey results from *Mix It Up at Lunch Day* organizers:

- *97% reported positive student interactions.
- *95% reported that students interacted outside their normal social network.
- *92% reported heightened awareness of social boundaries/divisions within school.

*83% reported an increase in new friendships.

Organizers reported that 79% of students experienced heightened sensitivity towards social injustices while 78% were more comfortable interacting with different kinds of people (Teaching Tolerance, 2009).

If you would like to make *Mix It Up* a school-wide or district effort, please log onto <http://www.tolerance.org> for more information.

The Golden Rule

What would happen if everyone treated one another as they would like to be treated? What are the consequences when the golden rule is disregarded? By asking students to analyze historical events, they can discover those advocates who fought to stop injustices in our country. Social movements may occur when a single person, like Rosa Parks, stands up to

society’s oppression or injustice towards a group of people. Ask students to think about the questions below:

- *Who were key figures in the Women’s Rights movement?
- *Who were the leaders of the Civil Rights movement?
- *Of those persons who changed the future of our country, what made their voices resonate?

- *What made individuals seek change? How was that change realized?
- *How do historic events affect us today?
- *If you were an historical figure, who would you be and why?

Identify the social movements of today and discuss their probable historical significance.

Stereotypes (continued)

When the time is up, ask one group at a time to write their statement on a long piece of butcher paper. Ask a student from the group to read the statement out loud. Discuss the statement and why it may not be true. When finished with each group, dis-

cuss how making a sweeping statement can be unfair to someone.

If the weather allows, walk outside. Ask a volunteer to hold one side of the paper while you hold the other. Ask the remaining students to back up and make a run towards the paper as they “break through” barriers created by stereotypes.

**A variation to this lesson is to provide a balloon to each group. The statement is written on the balloon. After reading the statement to the class and discussing the stereotype, the group may pop the balloon - hot air statements need to lose air!

Glasses & Contacts



Children who squint or seem to have difficulty viewing the front of the classroom need to have their

eyes examined. When students have difficulty completing classroom assignments, ruling out vision or getting the help a student needs can quickly remedy educational obstacles. Please make the parent aware of the following:

I can't believe the difference. I can see!

**Most school nurses are equipped to administer a vision test. A second test is usually recommended by a professional but the school screening

is free.

**If your child's vision test is good at school but you feel there is a problem, take him to an eye doctor for a professional diagnosis.

**Glasses are expensive. If you can not afford glasses for your child, organizations are available to help. Ask your school

nurse or vision specialist for suggestions.

**Contact lenses are desired by students because vision problems are hidden. However, contact lenses are a big responsibility. Ask your vision specialist what age she recommends for a child to have contact lenses.

**Judge your child's readiness for contact lenses based on his level of responsibility. Some children can handle contact lenses at the age of 10 while others might not be ready until they're 12.

"The 'treatment' for speech

problems is practice."

(Kids Health, 2009)

Speech Therapy

If you teach a kindergarten or first grade child and believe they may need speech therapy, it is in the child's best interest to begin the process as soon as possible. Students who have problems with fluency or articulation are much more likely to embed these bad habits if not caught and corrected in the early stages.

Depending on what the speech therapist recommends, sessions may occur once a week or multiple times a week. Students may need treatment for several months or several years. Students in upper grade levels tend to be more embarrassed at having to leave the classroom for therapy, another reason for seeking help at a younger age.

If an older student must leave the classroom, make arrangements that respect the student's feelings. A student may meet the teacher in the hallway as opposed to the teacher coming inside the classroom. Consider timing with classroom events that will make the absence less obvious.

Reaching Out

As classrooms across America become more diverse, it's important for students to value cultural differences. "When you can get people to recognize that everyone has something to contribute, when you have people who recognize the value of diversity and you address a common goal or problem, you will see a better chance for success" (Parents' Source,

2009). Keep the following activities in mind:

**Ask students to explore their background by studying their heritage.

**Observe different cultures in your classroom by celebrating a distinguishing characteristic: dance, food, music or a craft.

**Discuss what our differences can do for one another. How can our individual strengths

benefit the group?

**Focus on finding the good in others. Practice stating how each individual contributed to a group project.

**The internet makes it possible to find students in other schools outside the United States. Form pen pal relationships between students.



Find a pen pal in another country!

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Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students and educators, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.



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