

Sahara Kipfer

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### Celebrate Diversity Workshop

“Variety is the spice of life” is a common phrase that is often uttered in the English language. I used to believe that this phrase was not promoted within some communities, especially my hometown. After attending the diversity workshop I thought back to my experiences in school and realized that I had misinterpreted the definition of diversity. Previously, my meaning of the word pertained only to race and color. However, I learned that there are numerous identity groups that a person can belong to. Some of these identity groups concern religion, race, sexual orientation, where you were born, whether you are an athlete, and the list could go on. Now I am able to see that diversity is more prevalent, even in communities that are mostly of one race.

In my opinion, the workshop was a success. This can be attributed to the active participation that was required from everyone and the fact that the workshop was very well structured. We began the workshop with an ice breaker activity that allowed for interaction among all the students. A worksheet was handed to everyone, in which we were suppose to fill it out according to people who identified with the question. For instance, one question asked who had lived in another country. Surprisingly I discovered that someone in the room, whom I did not know until then, had lived in Saudi Arabia. Through this activity I was able to see that diversity was not only related to skin color. It is important for people to view the term “diversity” in this manner. This will allow for people to value and even accept those who hold different interests and beliefs.

Another activity that followed suit was one that allowed for everyone to name several different identity groups. We then discussed how we might categorize ourselves into one of the mentioned classifications. This allowed for me to understand myself better and to see those who held similar interests as well. Even though different opinions were expressed throughout the workshop I learned to respect those differences and not discriminate, even if I did not agree with the person. No two people are exactly alike and it imperative for everyone to be aware of this and to understand its significance.

One of the last exercises dealt with stopping prejudicial comments and jokes. We first talked about ways to confront the issue of prejudice. When holding a conversation with a friend or family member a prejudicial comment/and or joke may come up, sometimes unintentionally. If this occurs, you should first listen and then ask open-ended questions that bring out the person's story of how they learned or obtained the prejudicial remark. This should be done in a positive manner, as to maintain a healthy relationship with the person. The tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, and physical distance are all important variables to be aware of when confronting another individual. Additionally, when talking to a person about a concerned matter it should normally be done in private, that way they will not feel attacked in a group setting. After we discussed all of this, we put it into practice, which was helpful in knowing how to handle this type of situation.

As a future educator, I know I will have to face the challenge of diversity. Children will come into my classroom with preconceptions about diversity and it will be up to me how I address the issue. During the beginning of the school year I would like to have my students fill out a "Getting to Know Others" worksheet and maybe incorporate

some of the activities that were utilized during the workshop. I hope that students will leave my classroom knowing that diversity is what makes us each unique. However, if problems are to arise throughout a school year, I know that I am equipped with the skills to confront the student(s) and, with anticipation, change their outlook in a positive way.