



USE WITH:

Small group or whole class



GRADE LEVEL:

High school



CONTEXT:

In person

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Circles of Identity

An exercise to examine identity through personal reflection and storytelling.

Created by [National School Reform Faculty, Harmony Education Center](#)

Description:

The Circle of Identity tool helps students understand one another and themselves in meaningful ways. Use this tool when you would like to initiate engaging conversations about identity, diversity, beliefs, and/or values with your students.

Prep time needed:

15 minutes

Est. time to complete:

30 minutes

Steps:

1. Have each student draw a web of circles (example shown in this resource).
2. Ask students to write a word or phrase that describes an element of their identity in each of the circles.
3. Students will now form two concentric circles to prepare for peer-to-peer dialogues about identity based on the prompts on p. 3 of the [Circles of Identity resource](#). Students in the inner circle will be paired with students in the outer circle. Rotate the circles so that students will be paired with a new partner for each prompt provided.
4. Provide students with a question or prompt from p. 3 to discuss with their partner. Give students 1 minute of silent thinking time. Then give each student two minutes to answer with no interruption. Rotate and provide a new prompt. Continue until you make it through all four prompts.
5. Once the class has finished their peer-to-peer dialogues/storytelling, ask students to write down their thoughts and observations about the experience. What did

students learn about listening and speaking with others? What did students find they had in common with their classmates? What differences did they notice? Additional discussion questions can be found on the bottom of p. 2 in the "Debrief" section.

6. Lead a post-activity discussion to allow students to share their reflections and any emotions or realizations that might have surfaced.

Tips for Educators:

- It may be helpful to preview the activity at the start of the lesson, to reduce anxiety and prepare students. Consider sharing your own model. Ex: "Today, we will be doing an activity called Circles of Identity. We will better understand ourselves and each other by creating our own circles of identity. We will also answer questions about ourselves in conversation with partners."
- Because identity is a multi-faceted and potentially sensitive topic, it may be wise to be flexible with time in order to allow students enough time to complete circles that are important to them.
- Read and apply "Some Ideas to Consider" within this resource.

Inspired by:

1. Debbi Laidley (UCLA School Management Program), with Debbie Bambino, Debbie McIntyre, Stevi Quate, and Juli Quinn

Related Materials:

The Paseo or Circles of Identity
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bMcUyBMvcd7yfdRNJrNxNBP952PUMm8O/view>