



DISCRIMINATION

‘Young people should be enabled to appreciate the richness of a diversity of cultures and be supported in practical ways to recognise and to challenge prejudice and discrimination where they exist.’

Department of Education and Science
Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools, (2002), p.34

IDEAS TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS



In 2004, the Equality Act incorporated two elements of European legislation adopted in 2000: the Framework Employment Directive and the Race Directive. The Act now prohibits discrimination on nine grounds. Two independent bodies mediate – the Equality Tribunal and the Equality Authority – should a person feel that they have been discriminated against. The Equality Authority is primarily a source of advice and information and the Equality Tribunal facilitates people to take legal action. Both agencies deal with discrimination within employment and non-employment areas. Recent governmental discussions have centred on the amalgamation of a number of rights-focused bodies.

The Grounds of Discrimination

In Ireland, it is against the law to discriminate against a person, either directly or indirectly, on one or more of the following nine grounds:

- Gender
- Marital status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the Travelling Community.

A WALKING DEBATE ON THE GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION

You may like to choose one of the nine grounds as a theme or a focus.

- Explore the concept of equality and inequality with the children through a ‘walking debate’.
 - Ideally a ‘walking debate’ will be carried out in a hall or in a classroom with the furniture moved back. Having an open space eliminates classroom management issues.
 - On opposite walls, two signs are displayed: ‘Agree’ and ‘Disagree’. All children start in the middle of the room and when they hear a statement they move towards the sign that reflects their opinion.

– Children can choose how close they move towards the sign, depending on the strength of their feelings of agreement or disagreement with the statement. The middle of the room signifies the space ‘Not sure’.

(If an open space is not available, children could create individual Agree/Disagree/Not Sure signs and hold them up when a statement is read out.)

Before beginning these activities, strong ground rules need to be set so that emotions or negative feelings do not carry on beyond the activity. Ensure that the activity is carried out in a ‘safe’ environment. Each activity should be followed up with a debrief and discussion.

– Call out the statements, and after children have heard them and moved to the appropriate space in the room, invite children to back up their choice with opinion. Naturally, children may wish to change their mind depending on the opinions they will hear from their peers, in which case they should move to the corresponding space in the room.

Suggested statements:

Gender

- Boys are better than girls at all sports.
- Girls are better at minding younger siblings than boys are.
- Children prefer male teachers.
- It is the mother’s role to do the household washing and cooking.
- Male chefs are better than female chefs.

Age

- Children under twelve should ‘be seen and not heard’.
- Singers over forty are too old to be famous.
- Young people should show respect to senior citizens.
- People over fifty-five should stop work and leave the jobs to younger people.
- Children under twelve have rights but not responsibilities.

Disability

- People with disabilities find it easy to get a job.
- The media celebrates Paralympics/Special Olympics medal-winners with the same enthusiasm as they

celebrate medal-winners of Summer and Winter Olympics.

- There should be positive discrimination for people with disabilities to make it easier for them to get jobs.

EXPLORE DISCRIMINATION USING ‘KNOW YOUR PLACE’

- Explain to the children that they live in a new hierarchical society based on numbers from one to ten. The people with ten are ‘the most important’, working all the way down to ‘the least important’ at number one. Children show respect to their peers with higher numbers and disrespect to peers with lower numbers.

Using discretion, the teacher sticks numbers ranging from one to ten on the children’s backs. The children are not permitted to tell each other their numbers, but must dramatise the situation, showing more respect to children with higher numbers and less respect to children with lower numbers.

After allowing the children to ‘interact’ with one another for a minute or two, randomly remove children with the numbers eight or higher from the game. After another minute or two, ask the children to line up according to the number that they think they have.

Follow up with a discussion about how the children felt about the way they were treated: how did the children feel who were ‘removed’ for no apparent reason; how the ‘status’ was assigned arbitrarily; whether those with lower status could challenge the injustice, and if so, how?

(This lesson, with further information, and other ideas for exploring this topic can be found in the NCCA Intercultural Guidelines (2004). Every school was sent a copy, but the pack can be downloaded free of charge online at <http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/Intercultural.pdf>. A simplified version of this activity may suit some classes.)

GIANT STEPS

In advance, prepare ‘identity’ cards using the information below. Each child should be given an identity; there will be a number of children with the same identity, so, should the teacher wish, identity cards could be colour coded.

Identities:

My name is John. I am 40 years old and I have a good job that pays well.

My name is Niamh. I am 25 years old and a receptionist. I am a wheelchair user.

My name is Catherine. I am 82 years old and live alone.

My name is Najia. I am 30 years old and a Muslim refugee from Afghanistan.

My name is Declan. I am 50 years old and am unemployed. I live in a disadvantaged area of Dublin.

My name is Siobhán. I am 21 and a student. I am profoundly deaf and use sign language.

My name is Michael. I am 19 years old. I am a Traveller and am self-employed.

My name is Brendan. I am 23 years old and am Black Irish. I am a mechanic.

– Ask the students to stand in a line at one end of the hall. Give each student one of the identity cards. Ask them to think about who they are and what their life is like. Explain that you are going to read out a set of statements about how people live. They should listen carefully to each statement and then act as follows:

- 1 If they can easily do what the statement says, then they should take a giant step forward.
- 2 If they can only do it with difficulty, they should take a small step forward.
- 3 If they cannot do it at all, they should stay exactly where they are, without moving.

– Slowly read out the list of statements, allowing plenty of time between them for the students to think about each one and to move accordingly. When you have finished, the students should be in different parts of the room, with some not having moved at all or very little and some who have moved very far. Children should take turns to read out their identity and be given an opportunity to talk about their feelings about being able to move or not.

IDEAS TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS

Statements

- 1 I have a great social life, doing lots of different things.
- 2 It's no problem for me to visit friends and relations whenever I want to.
- 3 I love shopping and it's easy for me to visit a good selection of shops.
- 4 My culture is respected by national bodies and structures.
- 5 I/or my children can easily attend a school which meets our needs.
- 6 I reckon I have as good a chance as anyone else of getting a job or promotion for which I am qualified.
- 7 I don't think the Guards would stop me on the street and question me for no obvious reason.
- 8 I can live an independent lifestyle.
- 9 I don't worry about getting ill. I know I can easily get whatever treatment I need.
- 10 I feel comfortable going into public places.
- 11 I am able, within reasonable financial limits, to live in the kind of home I would prefer.

Discussion: Who was able to take the most giant steps? Who could only take small steps? Who could not move at all? How did it feel to be able to move/unable to move/only able to move a few times? How did you feel when others were moving at a faster/slower pace than you? What were the main obstacles faced by those who could move very little? Why do you think there was such a difference between how far people could go? What does this tell you about equality in Ireland? What could the children do to change attitudes? What would they do were they in Government? Devise an Action Plan.

('Giant Steps' from the CDVEC pack 'Changing Perspectives' has been used with permission. Although this pack is a secondary school resource pack, there are a number of lessons suitable for a senior primary class. It is available for download from <http://www.nccri.ie/pdf/ChangingPerspectives.pdf>)

i 'Out of Site' is a new teaching resource available from Show Racism the Red Card. The pack is aimed at tackling racism towards Gypsy, Roma and Travellers and is available for download, free, from <http://www.srtrc.org/educational/teachers-area/home>

INFORMATION CENTRES

In the animated film *New Beginnings*, Sanjay and his father visit an information centre. In Ireland, the Citizens Information Board is a statutory body that provides people with information, advice and advocacy on a wide range of public and social services.

- Children could visit http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/services/citizens/citizens_centres.html and locate their nearest information centre.
- Create a drama where children 'drop in' to an information centre looking for information on moving abroad, finding a part-time job, applying to do a course (music, art, cookery etc)

PEOPLE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

Martin Luther King was born in January 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. He spent his life peacefully fighting for equal rights for black people in the United States of America. In 1963, King organised the biggest march ever in Washington; a quarter of a million people attended. He delivered his most famous speech: 'I have a dream'.

- Watch video footage of his speech (on YouTube or similar) as a springboard for children to write speeches outlining their own aspirations for equality. The children could write their ideas in clouds for classroom display.
- Research the lives of people who made a difference by standing up against discrimination. Children could choose to find out more about: Rosa Parks, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bob Geldof.

i **Further information**
 'For Diversity. Against Discrimination' campaign
www.stop-discrimination.info/glossary
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fdad/cms/stopdiscrimination/resources/glossary/?langid=en