



"Claim It!"

Differences & Similarities: Creating a Climate of Inclusion

Introduction

"Claim It!" provides a simple lesson plan for exploring diversity in the classroom. This activity helps reveal the many differences a classroom of students has, despite a homogeneous surface. It will also provide learning—and fun, too. This lesson is meant to be one tool among many in the ongoing mission of building strong and welcoming school communities.

This exercise is meant for grade levels 9-12. It can be adapted for younger and older students.

You are encouraged to be creative with this lesson plan. Make it your own. Adapt it to your setting and context. It can be used in a single classroom, a student organization or club, or with a larger school assembly.

Let us know how you used this lesson plan and how your students evaluated the lesson. Thank you!

Contact us at schools@racebridges.net.



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TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Diversity: There are many ways to define diversity. For this activity, it's important to consider all the characteristics—external and internal—that make us individuals. When thinking about diversity, most people think about external characteristics, such as race and gender. The “invisible” characteristics, however, such as intellectual ability, social class, language(s) spoken at home, sexual orientation, etc., equally contribute to the diversity of our classrooms.

Grade Level: Grades 9-12.

Purpose

- To help students recognize and then openly address the diversity in the classroom.
- To help students think consciously about how they need to speak and act in a diverse classroom so that all members feel included, including themselves.

Outcome

By the end of this lesson, each student will:

- physically demonstrate and observe the similarities and differences among the students in the classroom
- openly discuss diversity in the classroom
- create a personal commitment statement addressing how she or he will treat others with respect

Materials Needed

- Teacher Instructions, including directions for the activity “Claim It!”
- Handout for Students with Discussion Questions and Guidelines for Personal Commitment Statements

Lesson Plan

Outline of Activities

1. Introduction (3 minutes)
2. Pre-Game Discussion: Creating a “Space for All” (3 minutes)
3. Explaining the Rules of “Claim It!” (2 minutes)
4. Playing “Claim It!” (15-20 minutes, depending on number of questions used)
5. Debriefing “Claim It!” (10 minutes)
6. Writing a Personal Commitment Statement (5 minutes)
7. Optional: Writing a Classroom Commitment Statement (10-15 minutes)

1. Introduction

The following activity “Claim It!” encourages us to claim all of the many parts of our identities while also observing and respecting the many parts of the identities of others. During this activity, we’ll be moving around a lot, so please be responsible for your own bodies and your own safety, but be sure to look out for those around you, too. And while this activity requires a lot of movement, it also requires that we are silent so that we can observe what’s going on and how we feel. Don’t worry, though, there will be time for lots of discussion afterwards! In order to have that discussion, let’s figure out what groups we’ll be in now.

Place students in groups of 3-4 students. Do not allow students to choose their own groups. Remind students to remember their group numbers.



2. Pre-Game Discussion: Creating a “Space for All”

During this game, I am going to name a category and ask students to move depending on whether or not they claim this category, so we will move and reveal parts of ourselves. After the game, we will discuss what we learned and how the game made us feel. Before we play this game, though, we need to set up a few ground rules to make sure everyone feels safe both moving around the room and revealing information about himself or herself.

What are some of the ground rules for making sure people feel safe both physically and emotionally?

Take answers from the students and write them on the board so you can point to them later if someone strays from the rules. If your students are reluctant, have them discuss this in pairs for one minute and then have them share the ground rules aloud. Look for answers like: “watch where you are going,” “don’t touch other people while moving,” “don’t make comments about what people have claimed as part of their identity,” “follow the rules,” “be quiet during the game,” “be open to other people’s differences,” “confidentiality,” “don’t gossip about what people shared here,” “listen to others’ ideas during the post-game discussion,” etc.

Can you all agree to these rules? Just so things go smoothly, I might remind us of these rules if we start to forget them.

3. Explaining the Rules of “Claim It!”

During this game, we will stand together on one side of the room. I will read a statement and ask you to “claim it” by crossing to the other side of the room if it is true for you. For example, I might say, “If you are a woman, claim it.” All the women of the room would cross to the other side of the room and then turn around and face those who are still left in the original group. Silently observe who has claimed this identity, who has not, and how this makes you feel. I will then ask people to rejoin the group.

During this game, you get to decide how to define the term I raise; if you think you belong to a certain group, then claim it; if not, don’t. Don’t worry about how I or anyone else might identify that group. If





you belong to a certain group but don't want to claim it publicly, then don't. This is an entirely voluntary exercise, during which you get to decide what a term means to you and whether or not you want to claim it. If you choose not to claim a group to which you belong, notice how that makes you feel. That being said, you might want to take some risks today so that we as a community can get to know one another better and continue to create a classroom that is welcoming to all.

4. Playing the Game "Claim It!"

Have students get up and move all the desks to the edges of the room and out of the way. Students should join together on one side of the room. Remind students to participate respectfully and silently in this game and to observe their feelings during each of the steps. Remind them that they will get to discuss their reactions after the game is over.

For each of the following groups, say **"If you are/belong to . . . , Claim It."** Allow students to cross to the other side of the room. Then say, **"Notice who is standing with you. Notice who is not. [Pause] Notice how this makes you feel. [Pause] Come back together again."**

Example

"If you are a student, claim it! [Pause while people move.] Notice who is standing with you. Notice who is not. [Pause] Notice how this makes you feel. [Pause] Come back together again."

Claim It! Groups

1. You are a woman.
2. You are a student.
3. You have a driver's license.
4. You are African American, black, or of African descent.
5. You are a member of a sport or club at school.
6. You have one or more siblings.
7. You are Asian, East Asian, South Asian/Indian, or Pacific Islander.
8. You are a man.
9. You speak a language other than English at home.
10. You are Latino/Latina, Chicano/Chicana, or mestizo/mestiza or identify in another way with a Spanish-speaking or Latin or South American culture.
11. You can speak another language.
12. You already know what you are doing this weekend.
13. You are European American or white.
14. You have a veteran in your immediate family.
15. You live with only one parent.
16. Someone in your family, or a close friend, is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
17. Your favorite subject is English.
18. You worry or have worried about how your family will pay the bills.



19. You are of Arabian descent.
20. Neither of your parents has a college degree.
21. You have serious and ongoing health problems.
22. Someone close to you has died.
23. You are Native American, American Indian, or a First Nations person.
24. Someone in your family has been addicted to alcohol or drugs.
25. You were raised in a Christian denomination.
26. You are multi-racial or bi-racial.
27. You have gone to a school dance.
28. You have been to a concert in the past year.
29. You are of Jewish heritage.
30. You have a visible or hidden physical disability or impairment.
31. You were raised in a Muslim household.
32. Someone in your family has ever been arrested.
33. You do well in math class.



5. Debriefing the Game

Students should get into their groups, which you identified earlier. Hand out the worksheet with the debriefing questions and then go over them briefly. Ask students to answer the questions in their group and to identify a Reporter who will share some of the group's response with the classroom. Take time to hear from the groups.

6. Writing a Personal Commitment Statement

Go over the instructions for this. You might want to offer some examples of what students might choose to do in response to this activity; for example, check their thinking whenever they start lumping people into one category or promise to stop telling jokes that put other groups down.



Have students complete the Personal Commitment Statement worksheet on their own. You may want to have students share these with members of their groups or with the larger classroom or you may want to post these statement in the classroom so that you and your students can refer to them in the future. Some kind of public sharing of the students' statements is encouraged in order to make the commitment real for the students.

7. Optional: Writing a Classroom Commitment Statement

After sharing the students' commitment statements, consider taking some of what they said and asking for some new ideas from students about how your classroom community needs to act in order to make all feel welcome. You may need to craft the final statement or you can have some students take all the ideas and hone them into a statement. Put your new Classroom Commitment in large lettering on poster board or newsprint and display prominently in your classroom!

Notes to Teachers:

Any part of this activity could be expanded and extended, but all of the following parts are necessary to include in order for the lesson to work. If this lesson is too long for the class periods at your school, consider introducing the lesson and creating a “Space for All” the day before you play the game “Claim It!” and/or assigning the personal commitment statement as homework.

The **bolded** text can be read out aloud and followed word for word; however, you may want to read over the material a few times so that you are comfortable putting these ideas into your own words, in the way in which you normally talk to your students.

Feel free to tailor the list for “Claim It!” to your classroom community and to your time frame. Consider which questions might be too mature or too sensitive for your students to address in the limited context of the classroom.

Just because someone doesn’t “claim” a particular group during the game doesn’t mean there aren’t any members of that group present. You may want to say at that point, “Notice that no one here has claimed this identity. Notice how that makes you feel.”

Note: Different versions of the “Claim It!” game exist. This version has been tailored for high school students and to provide time for preparation and reflection.





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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

DEBRIEFING "CLAIM IT!"

Identify which member of your group will be the Reporter. The Reporter will take notes during the discussion and share some of what your group says with the larger classroom. Go in a circle when answering the following questions so that each group member gets a chance to share his or her answers.

Questions

1. How did you feel when you had to "claim" a group and walk to the other side of the room?
2. How did you feel when you were in the group that didn't move?
3. What surprised you about what you have in common with others? About how you differ from others?
4. Were you hesitant to "claim" any group (you don't have to say which one)? Why?
5. Were there any groups that you wished you could claim? That you were glad you didn't have to claim? Why?
6. What did you learn about others in class from doing this activity? About yourself?
7. Should we change anything about how we interact with each other based on seeing the diversity in the classroom?

WRITING A PERSONAL COMMITMENT STATEMENT

Now that you know how similar **and** how different you and your classmates are, how might you change your thinking or your behavior?

Take time to think through and write down one thing you learned today and one thing you would like to change now that you and your classmates have courageously claimed who you are!

Today I learned

Now that I know this, I pledge to . . .