

# Culturescope Resources: Intercultural Communication

## Preparing a Cross Cultural Study Between Schools

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### Objectives

Students will develop knowledge and understanding about;

- \* cultures shared by members of society
- \* Interactions of persons, societies, cultures and environments across time.

Students will develop skills to:

- \* Communicate information, ideas and issues in appropriate forms to different audiences and in a variety of contexts

### Outcomes

- \* Identifies and describes relationships within and between social and cultural groups.
- \* Describes cultural diversity and commonality within societies and cultures.

### Key concepts addressed:

- Communication
- Identity
- Stereotypes
- Customs
- Socialisation
- Cultural Relativism
- Cooperation
- Cultural Heritage
- Multiculturalism
- Cultural Diversity
- Cultural transmission
- Ethnicity
- Family
- Kinship
- Class and Status
- Community
- Micro World
- Macro World

The most obvious starting point when preparing a cross-cultural study is to find another school/schools willing to participate. Surprisingly a neighbouring school will do the job. You don't have to travel for hundreds of kilometres, because neighbouring schools will be so different. An example of this would be Menai High and Picnic Point, which are separated by a short bus trip, yet the schools are totally different, even in their aesthetic make-up. If we leave Menai High in the other direction, we'll get to Lucas Heights Community School which is a K-12 school. Schools with close proximities

do work, as a recent visit between Picnic Point and Chester Hill to Menai High was nothing other than a great success.

## **Getting started**

So you've found another school ready to participate, but where do I start? This can go two ways, and the day is only limited by your imagination. You can, as I have done in the past, get students to construct mind maps, posters or some other creative way of presenting their thoughts on what they expect the other school/ people to be like. This involves a great deal of communication between the two teachers, but it is worth it in the end, and we'll get back to the posters later. Your other option is to just lob up at the school with very little prep work, and this works just as well.

## **On the day**

So you've just arrived at the school, what do I do now? Well again it's up to preparation by the teachers involved. GAMES, GAMES, GAMES... are really the only way to go. The best way to start is with an ice breaking game such as, "find somebody who". Just simply find four or five categories, i.e. family, recreation, religion etc and ask three to four questions on each. Find somebody who is an atheist? The students then have to find somebody from the other school who fits the categories, yet they cannot choose the same person to answer two of the questions. This game is perfect as an ice breaker, its quick, engaging and means everyone meets each other in a short period of time. Another really good game is a game called speed dating. This works much better with two schools that have really small numbers and are not restricted by time. Two circles are formed, an inner and outer circle, the inner circle never moves. Students then face each other and have a set period of time to talk to each other. When the time is up the outer circle move onto the next person and the same thing occurs until everyone has spoken to each other. Both ice breaker games have their advantages and disadvantages, as I mentioned before, you are only limited by your imagination.

Once that activity has been completed I like to break the students up into two smaller groups. Students are then paired up, and get to talk to each other on a one to one basis, with the expectation that they have to introduce their partner in the first person as though they were introducing themselves. Again you can allow students to take notes, use prepared notes (from the discussion), or as I like to do, make them put their notes away just before we start to introduce our new friends. This again is a very time consuming game, but its benefits are unmatched, as it allows one on one contact with another person that the student may not have ever been able to talk to let alone on such a deep and personal level. It is also beneficial for practicing some primary research methodologies, because what students don't realise is they are actually making observations, and conducting informal interviews and surveys throughout the day.

Another important component of the day and one that should not be overlooked is lunch. Food lies at the heart of almost every culture. A communal meal is a great way to reinforce what we have just learnt. In the exchanges that I have been involved in some included food and other didn't. I have learnt from my mistakes, and would now make a communal meal the focus point of the day. Again this is limited only by your imagination. It can either be a good old Aussie BBQ, a restaurant (Cabramatta High arrange for some visiting Schools to go to Yum Cha), or you can just get students to bring something to share (preferably cultural). The last point works well if the schools are very different in terms of the student's ethnic backgrounds. The only negative from the last exchange I was involved in was the students did not have a communal meal, and when we looked around the play ground the bonds were not as strong as they could have been with the introduction of a communal meal.

Once lunch is over it is always worthwhile to include a tour of the school, which can be either formal or informal. Even similar schools (location, age etc) will be different, and it can be focused on back at school as a follow up activity. The follow up activities can help with students practicing a useful primary methodology. Observation will be a very useful tool for students PIPs the following

year.

## **Finishing the day**

The day is coming to an end and now its time for the students to break up into school groups. Out come the pre- prepared posters. Students are expected to reflect on their day and are to quickly write down how their perceptions of the school/ people have changed. This is then presented in groups to the entire audience. A very valuable exercise as both sides of the exchange get to witness how the other viewed them and what the major changes have been. What will/ should happen is the stereotypes (from the original posters) will be replaced by more personal explanations of the people involved. The best part of the day will be the transition from impersonal to personal perceptions of the other school down to the actual naming of people when explaining these new perceptions. The obvious conclusion will be that the student's differences are outweighed by the similarities.

Again a cross-cultural school exchange is a most valuable activity. It covers large parts of the year eleven syllabus, as well as valuable first hand experience of incorporating primary research methodologies. Most importantly it reinforces/ helps students to achieve social and cultural literacy as well as opening up a vast range of PIP topics for year 12. The day will only be limited by the planning teacher's imagination and student's openness and willingness to participate.