

FIVE WAYS TO BUILD INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

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Abstract: *Intercultural competence is the ability to interact and communicate with people from different cultures in a respectful and effective way. It is the bridge between diversity and inclusion and is key to creating welcoming learning environments. True intercultural competence cannot exist without recognizing diverse identities and making intentional steps to be inclusive to people of varying backgrounds.*

Key words: *Open-mindedness, cultural awareness, cultural differences, Interpersonal relationships, language barriers, ethnocentrism, communication styles, cultural values, cultural shock.*

Teaching about diversity is an important step in achieving intercultural competence in your classroom. When students understand the value of diversity, it:
Enhances tolerance and acceptance

Encourages the search for new information and perspectives

Improves decision-making and problem-solving skills

Leads to innovation and discovery

Read on to learn five ways to build intercultural competence and confidence in your classroom.

1. Have students reflect on their personal identities and cultures

Self-reflection is important for students in developing their own cultural identities.

For younger students, have them work on building a family tree by talking with older relatives. Hopefully, this assignment will give them a new perspective on their own heritage.

Older students can learn about their cultures and families through project-based learning and researching their personal history. Applying for an education grant through can give your students access to extensive historical evidence to explore. As they discover and reflect, encourage them to be accepting of and open to learning about their peers.

2. Think-pair-share in small groups

Give students time to think-pair-share in small groups to get to know the diverse backgrounds of their classmates. Hearing about the families and cultures of peers they

already know can help students gain new perspectives about the meaning of cultural diversity by putting it into the context of something that is familiar to them.

This task will not only foster authentic conversations among classmates but may improve overall classroom cohesion as students begin to learn more about one another and show acceptance toward their differences.

3. Rearrange your classroom layout

Consider rearranging your classroom layout periodically to help students build relationships with all of their classmates. This simple but effective task facilitates an inclusive learning environment.

Rearranging your classroom also helps to prevent cliques from forming based on similar backgrounds. Typically, students tend to form friendships with people who are already familiar to them, so this tactic helps to foster friendships among students of all backgrounds.

4. Incorporate team-building exercises into lesson plans

Team-building exercises are an excellent way to promote a classwide community. When students learn to put their trust in others, they also develop new ways to communicate and collaborate with all kinds of people. Consider finding activities in which the various academic strengths of students can be utilized.

Learning to work well on a team from a young age is an invaluable skill that will be necessary for students' future endeavors. When students feel accountable for the betterment of the class as a whole, then they are more likely to participate and feel comfortable with their peers.

5. Interact with students from different regions and countries

Reach out to classrooms in different regions or even countries than your own that might be working on a curriculum similar to your class's. Set up an online Skype lesson where students are able to see other students and collaborate with them while working on assignments.

Building cross-cultural relationships is also important at the individual level. Pair students up with other students from around the world and create international pen pal relationships that last the whole school year. Children are more likely to be tolerant and accepting of other cultures when they have firsthand experiences with those who come from backgrounds different than their own. In an increasingly globalized world, intercultural communication is vital for international business, diplomacy, education, and other fields. It enables individuals and organizations to navigate diverse cultural landscapes, adapt to new cultural contexts, and engage in cross-cultural interactions successfully.

Overall, the main role of intercultural communication is to foster understanding, respect, and effective communication across cultural boundaries, ultimately contributing to harmonious relations and cooperation in diverse societies.

In conclusion, the construct of intercultural communication serves as a foundational pillar for fostering understanding, respect, and effective interaction across diverse cultural boundaries. Through its multifaceted roles, intercultural communication plays a pivotal role in reducing misunderstandings, building relationships, enhancing cultural competence, promoting diversity and inclusion, and supporting globalization efforts.

By embracing the principles of intercultural communication, individuals and organizations can transcend cultural barriers, cultivate empathy, and forge meaningful connections with people from different backgrounds. In doing so, they contribute to the creation of inclusive environments where diversity is celebrated, and mutual understanding thrives.

As we navigate an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world, the significance of intercultural communication cannot be overstated. It stands as a testament to the power of dialogue, empathy, and cultural sensitivity in fostering harmony, cooperation, and shared prosperity across global communities. Through continuous commitment and practice, the bonds forged through intercultural communication serve to enrich our collective human experience, paving the way for a more interconnected and inclusive future.

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