

Engaging Students and Faculty with Diversity Circles

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Diversity Circles

Introduction:

Diversity Circles are experiences that can help create a safe, open, honest and respectful environment in which to discuss issues and concerns about diversity within organizations.

Overview:

- Room setup: Keep your room as it is, but make sure there is space to move chairs later in the exercise. Write out the Ground Rules on the whiteboard or have them projected on a screen.
- Time: 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Group size: 8 to 25 persons
- Materials needed:
 - Pens or markers
 - Index cards
 - Whiteboard and markers

Ground Rules for the Community:

- This is a safe space.
- Listen with respect.
- Confidentiality
- No cross-talk or interruptions.
- Use "I" statements.
- You have the right to pass on a comment.
- It is OK to show emotions.

Directions:

Part 1:

- Introduce the exercise by telling the participants that we are going to listen to each other about our experiences with diversity.
- Pass out an index card and pen/marker to each participant.
- Go over the Ground Rules for the Community.
- Ask each person think about diversity on their campus silently.
- Then say, *“On a scale of 1 to 10, I want you to rate how diverse your campus is. 1 poor or bad, and 10 is excellent. 5 is somewhere in the middle. Write your score on one side of your index card. Do NOT put your name on it.”* [Give participants time to reflect.]
- Next, have the participants turn their cards over to the other side. Say, *“Now, I want you to write down 3 or more reasons why you gave your answer. Why did you rate your campus this way? Write your reasons on the other side of your index card.”* [Allow a few minutes for the participants to write.]

Part 2:

- Invite everyone who scored their campus as a 6 to 10 to move their chair and create a tight circle.
- Then, ask everyone else who gave a score of 1 to 5 to move their chairs and create a larger circle around the first group.
- Say to the larger circle, *“If you are in the outer circle, your job is only to listen. You may not speak.”*
- Say to the inner circle, *“Now is your time to share why you rated your campus this way. Please feel free to say what number you gave and why.”* [Allow space for the inside circle to share freely.]
- After the inner circle has shared for around 15 minutes, have the groups switch. Those who gave a 1-5 score are now in the middle. Those with a 6-10 score are on the outside. [Allow space for the new inside circle to share freely.]

Part 3:

- Gather the participants back together in one large circle and ask the following reflection questions to the entire group:
 - What did you hear today?
 - What was eye-opening?
 - How could our campus improve?

