
World Olympics

Preparing Students for a
Multicultural and Multireligious World

A CURRICULUM DEVELOPED BY TANENBAUM FOR GRADES K-6



Imagine: a more peaceful world that respects difference.
We are committed to making that vision a reality.

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Unit IV – Learning About Being an Athlete

Olympic Diversity

This unit introduces children to the diversity of athletes and builds skills that prevent stereotyping.

Lesson One – Put Me in Coach, I’m Ready to Play!

Children explore assumptions we make about people based on appearance.

Lesson Two – Who is an Athlete?

Children further explore their stereotypes about athletes.

Lesson Three – Open Mind Portraits

Children read about the Jamaican Bobsled Team and explore ideas of who is good at sports.

Put Me in Coach, I'm Ready to Play!

Unit 4, Lesson 1

Objectives: This lesson will help the children reflect on and avoid stereotyping based on physical appearance.

Overview: Children will role play the characters of students and coaches, while the rest of the class will take notes on what they observe. The “coaches” must pick teams, but they are only able to see the physical characteristics of the students. The class will reflect on which students were picked and why, learning about stereotyping based on appearance.

Skills: Preventing Prejudice, Awareness of Stereotypes

Grades: 3-6

Recommended Resources: *Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Tape
- Rolecards (included)

PROCEDURE

Introduction: Tell the children that they will be participating in a role play activity. Two children will play the role of coaches, eight children will play students trying out for school teams, and the rest of the class will be careful observers. Tell the observers they should pay attention and take notes on the interactions between the coaches and students.

Choosing Teams

Step One: Choose eight children to play the roles of students. Choose two additional students to play the coaches. As soon as the coaches are chosen, send them out of the room or to a place where they cannot see or hear what is going on.

Step Two: The remaining children will be observers. Facilitate a brief discussion about what an observer does. Distribute papers and pencils and instruct the observers to take notes on what they observe.

Step Three: The coaches should be out of the room for this part of the activity. Give each of the eight students who will be role playing their front placard and its corresponding back placard. Have them tape the front page to their shirt and the back page to the backs of their shirts. Explain that on the front cards, the physical characteristics of the characters are listed and on the back some non-physical characteristics are listed.

Step Four: Have the eight role players stand with their backs against a wall so that the paper on their backs is hidden. Invite the coaches back into the room.

Tell one of the coaches that they coach the academic quiz team, a team who travels to different schools to compete in a game that is based on many academic subjects (Math, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts).

Tell the other coach that they coach the athletics squad, a team who plays many different sports and competes in many different physical events.

Explain to the coaches (and to all of the children) that the children wearing the papers are playing a role. They are no longer themselves, but they are the person on their placards (so girls can play boys, short people can play tall people, and vice versa).

Step Five: Have the coaches take turns picking people to be on their teams without asking any questions. Once all eight role players are on a team, ask the coaches:

Why did you pick the people you did?

Step Six: Now have the coaches ask questions of the players to decide whether they are happy with the teams they chose. After all the coaches have had a chance to ask questions of the players, ask the coaches:

Now that you have had a chance to talk to the students, are you happy with the teams you chose?

Why or why not? What kind of information did you use to make your choices?

Step Seven: Have the eight role players reveal the placard on their backs to the entire group. Facilitate a discussion:

Ask the participants: *How do you think your character would feel about how he/she was chosen? Would he/she be happy with the team he/she ended up on? If you could have told the coaches anything before they chose you, what would you have told them?*

Ask the observers: *What did you see? (Have some children read their observations.) Did people look happy? Sad? When did they look this way? How long did it take for the coaches to make their decisions? Ask the whole group: What could a coach do to not make judgments based on physical characteristics? What is a stereotype? Did stereotypes play a part in how people were chosen or not chosen? How? How could we have chosen teams more fairly?*

Continue the discussion with the whole class regarding assumptions we often make about people based on appearance. Ask students: *What are some characteristics of people that you cannot necessarily see on the outside? What problems could arise if a coach believes stereotypes about which groups of people are good/bad at what s/he coaches? How could this affect individuals that try out for the team? How could this affect the team? What about if you believe these stereotypes? What problems could that cause? How could this cause problems between students (you and your friends)? Could this affect what people believe they can do? How could this be a problem?*

Marisol

(girl)

(FRONT)

Tall

Big-boned/larger stature than other classmates

Black hair

Brown eyes

Light brown skin

Wearing a skirt

Marisol

(girl)

(BACK)

Likes animals

Very good at all subjects

Loves soccer and knows all the latest soccer stats. Plays on a youth team organized by her church

Excellent singer & dancer

Janis

(girl)

(FRONT)

Short

Muscular

Blonde hair

Blue eyes

Light skin

Wearing gymnastics team uniform

Janis

(girl)

(BACK)

Very quiet

Hates gymnastics, but her parents
make her stay on the team

Fast thinker

Reads science fiction books for one
hour before bed every night

Rasheed

(boy)

(FRONT)

Tall

Wears braces

Black curly hair

Brown eyes

Dark skin

Wearing a cap backwards

Rasheed

(boy)

(BACK)

Thinks sports are boring

Loves TV game shows and his dream is to be on Jeopardy

Would rather not play organized sports after school but prefers skateboarding

Loves alternative rock music

Paul

(boy)

(FRONT)

Short

Thin

Brown hair

Blue eyes

Wearing a Star of David around his
neck

Light skin

Paul

(boy)

(BACK)

Very good at creative writing and spoken word/poetry

Runs track

Goes straight home from school to take care of his brother and sister

Listens primarily to hip-hop music & reggaeton

Eduardo

(boy)

(FRONT)

Tall

Muscular

Black hair

Light brown skin

Wears a gold cross around his neck
and brand-new name brand
sneakers

Eduardo

(boy)

(BACK)

Best grades in the class

Won the national science
competition

Good at basketball

Favorite pastimes: reading and
volunteer tutoring

Grace

(girl)

(FRONT)

Short

Muscular

Black hair

Light skin

She is differently-abled and is in a
wheelchair

Grace

(girl)

(BACK)

Baseball champion

Personal hero: Derek Jeter

Moved to the U.S three years ago
and is still learning English

President of her class

Darius

(boy)

(FRONT)

Tall

Large build

Black hair

Dark brown skin

Wearing a button down shirt &
blazer

Darius

(boy)

(BACK)

Quarterback of the school's football team

Knows every NHL (National Hockey League) statistic

Good at math

A good team player

Aminah

(girl)

(FRONT)

Tall

Thin and muscular

Black hair

Brown skin

Wearing a headscarf

Wears glasses

Aminah

(girl)

(BACK)

Top volleyball player at her school

Loves to play basketball - Dad
taught her to play when she was
only five

Good grades

Excellent chess player