

Activity: Name Game

Objectives: Students will be able to –

- Identify the names of their fellow classmates
- Understand how names are connected to religious, cultural, national, and other forms of identity
- Recognize the personal significance names have to their bearers
- Understand and value different family arrangements

Suggested Time: 15-25 minutes

Instructions:

1. Introduction (5 min) –

Have students sit in a circle so that they are facing each other. Allow for a gap in the circle at the front of the room so that students can see the board or a projector.

Sit in the circle with students and tell students that they are going to learn each other's names. Explain that our names all carry meanings that are important both to us and the people who named us. Names originate from a variety of sources. As you provide this explanation, either hand out a list of origins for names, write out the list on the board, or project it on a screen. Here are some origins that can be included on the list:

- Geography
- Family history
- Media
- Sacred texts
- Religion
- Meaningful letters or combinations of letters
- Astrology
- Numerology
- Symbolism
- Literature

Allow students two to three minutes to read the list. Once they have finished, ask them if there are any terms they would like to have defined or clarified.

Ask students if they know of other kinds of meaning that go into names. Allow students to write additional types of meaning on their handouts if you provided them, or write them on the board as students provide examples.

Community-Building Resources

Ask students why it is important to know the meaning behind individuals' names. Get two or three answers.

2. Name Sharing (5-10 mins) –

Tell students that the class will now go around the circle and everyone will share both their names and the meanings their names carry. Tell students that you would like them each to answer the following questions:

1. What name do you prefer to go by?
2. What are your preferred pronouns (e.g., he/his, she/her, they/them)?
3. Is there a story behind your name?
4. Does your name hold any special significance to you?

Write these questions on the board or project them on a screen for the whole class to see. Ask students if they would like you to clarify any of the questions they are to answer?

If desired, allow students five minutes to silently reflect on these questions and write down their answers before sharing to the group.

Once the class is ready, model an introduction by answering the four questions for yourself. Then proceed around the circle until everyone has introduced themselves and answered all four questions. You may proceed in order of seating around the table, or provide a soft object such as a ball that students can toss to a random person in the circle. Make sure that everyone has spoken before moving on.

3. Discussion (5-10 mins) –

Tell students that something as basic as another person's name can tell us something about their identity. Learning about other people's names lets us know how much we have to learn about each other and our backgrounds.

Call on students to identify one thing they learned about someone else in the class.

Ask students if they learned anything new about themselves by doing this activity.