

# **Understanding and Responding to Bias and Microaggressions through Advisory Activities**



# Welcoming Inclusive Activity



## **Our goals:**

- 1. Student leadership and student voice in our school.**
- 2. Better understand the strengths and challenges of our school.**
- 3. Review our VUMS 2025 Addison County Youth data, especially the strengths and concerns identified by students.**
- 4. Understand why these challenges exist and explore what we can do about them at a Community Dialogue Night.**
- 5. Take action together through student leadership.**

# **Data from the Addison County Youth Survey we chose to focus on.**

**Students feel racism is a big concern for youth in their school  
and/or community.**

**43%**

**Students feel sexism is a big concern for youth in their  
community.**

**38.1%**

# Lemon Exercise on Stereotyping-Rationale

This activity provides an opportunity for people to understand how stereotypes and generalizations are formed and how they influence thinking. We will reflect on the tendency to group things and people into categories, without regard for individual differences.

The ability to categorize objects is a useful skill in cognitive development; however, when the process is used to categorize people, it can lead to the development of stereotypes and assumptions that prevent people from seeing one another as individuals.



What are examples of *things* we might categorize into groups?

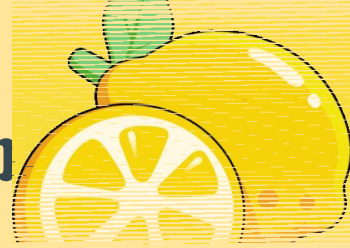
The image features three lemons against a plain white background. At the top center is a whole, bright yellow lemon with a textured rind. Below it, on the left, is a lemon cut in half, showing its internal segments and the white pith. On the right is another lemon slice, cut horizontally, revealing the same internal structure. The text is centered over the lemons.

**Make a list of characteristics  
that all lemons share**

## Small Groups:

1. Study your lemon, and “get to know it.”
2. Write a brief personalized story about your lemon.
3. Give your lemon a name, age, place of birth, family group, etc.

## Whole Group



- ★ **Introduce your lemon**
- ★ **Share your lemon's life story**
- ★ **Collect all the lemons**

The image features three lemons against a plain white background. At the top center is a whole, bright yellow lemon with a textured rind. Below it, on the left, is a lemon cut in half, showing its internal segments and the white pith. On the right is another lemon slice, also showing the internal structure. The text "Can you find your lemon?" is overlaid in a bold, dark blue font across the center of the image.

**Can you find your lemon?**

# Discussion Questions

1. How did you know if you got the right lemon?
2. What are some negative aspects of categorizing people? When can categorizing people become harmful/dangerous?
3. Have you ever had certain ideas about someone that changed once you got to know the person?
4. Has anyone had certain ideas about you that changed once the person got to know you?
5. What helps us to see someone as an individual?
6. Why do you think stereotypes can be harmful?

**Many biased statements come in the form of microaggressions.**

*What are microaggressions and why is it important we understand?*

How Microaggressions Are Like Mosquito Bites

# Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of microaggressions you heard in the video?
2. How and why are microaggressions harmful?

## ***Definition***

*Microaggressions are everyday, often subtle, verbal or nonverbal slights, insults, or put-downs that target someone based on their race, gender, sexuality, or identity.*

# Interrupting Bias: The PALS Approach

PALS is a methodology to use when you hear someone say something that may be problematic or hurtful to a specific group of people or yourself. The major objective of this approach is to introduce a new perspective in a way that others can hear. PALS can be used as part of an intergroup dialogue or as a skill applied in your daily life.

# P

## Pause

### Pause/Halt/Stop/Slow the Conversation.

Things you can say:

- "Wait a Second."
- "Excuse me."
- "Um, hold on a second..."

Interrupt the flow of the conversation to let the speaker know that you are interested in learning more about something they just said. Use your own instinct and language to pause the conversation when you hear something that you think might need to be addressed further.

# A

## Acknowledge/Ask

### Acknowledge what the person is saying.

This sends the message that you are trying to make meaning out of what the person said, even if it is at odds with your own ideas. It shows respect and dignity in collaboration/dialogue. Also acknowledge how different messages reflect differences in groups social power/position and history. Practice affirmative inquiry which asks all participants to share in the learning experience.

- "What I hear you saying is..."  
Or: "I appreciate your thinking on this..."

### Ask for clarification.

Get curious, make sure you understand what the person said.

- "That sounds important, can you say more?"

### Let them know what you think you heard them say.

Maybe you misunderstood the person. Keep your voice calm. Sometimes that is all you need to do.

- "I think you said that gender defines who makes a good leader."

# L

## Listen

### Listen to what the person said.

Treat them with dignity.  
What really matters to the person?

Generous listening conveys genuine curiosity, openness, and suspension of your own inner voice. Try to truly understand where the other person is coming from and listen harder when you disagree. Try to imagine the other person's perspective.

# S

## Speak Your Truth/Share Stories

### Speak your truth.

Be clear. Describe your objection.

### Share your learning. Speak calmly.

There is something powerful in storytelling. While sharing factual data may be helpful, we know

that people are moved to open up and take other perspectives when they hear stories. You may share your own story, or share the story about someone you know.

- "I used to think that way too, but I have learned this is a stereotype and a person can be a good leader regardless of gender."

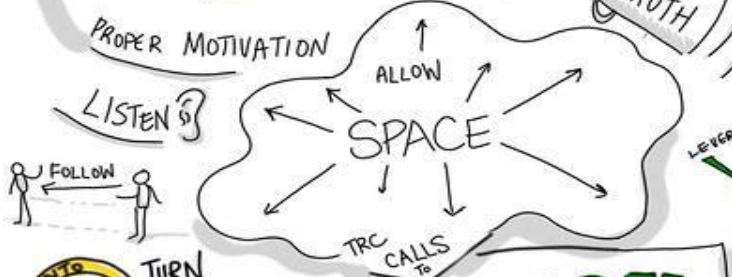
- **Pause:** "Um, hold on a second..."
- **Ask:** "What makes you say that?"
- **Listen :** Listen to the person's perspective.
- **Say your truth:** "I see it differently..." or "I think that's a stereotype"



## **Anonymous Voices in the Room**

Please write down a microaggression you have heard or said, without using names. We will read these aloud, anonymously.

# BECOMING AN ALLY



# LOCATION



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

# RECONCILIATION ACTION

**SELF EXAMINATION**

- LIVE WITH A PARENT?
- NO SUICIDE IN FAMILY?
- PARENT HAD A JOB?
- PARENT HAD DEGREE?
- FOSTER CARE IN FAMILY?

# RECOGNIZE YOUR PRIVILEGE

# RECOGNIZING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

DON'T FEEL GUILTY  
DO SOMETHING TO HELP

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



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