

Fitting In/Conformity

Divide group into two groups. Assign one group the task of drawing a "cool" kid. (one student can draw and the other kids in the group can help add details.) The other group draws a "not so cool" kid. After the groups finish drawing, hang the pictures up and list characteristics of both the cool and not cool kid. Then talk about discussion questions.

1. Do you consider yourself cool or uncool?
2. What's the coolest thing you've ever done? The un-coolest?
3. Why are items on the cool list accepted by the crowd and not the uncool list?
4. What's wrong with both lists?
5. Do we want to be cool?
6. Why would we want to be cool?
7. Is conformity good or bad? Always?
8. What pressures do you feel to fit in?

You can ask additional questions. Talk about uniqueness, pressures to fit in/be cool, qualities about them that may not be considered "cool" by the majority but that are good qualities.

Purpose

To discuss the pressure to fit in when in Middle School, especially when not of the dominant culture. To determine if they feel that pressure. To show that people that don't fit the stereotypical image of a "cool" kid are still cool and that differences are good.

Goals

For kids to see they don't have to be like the "cool" image to be liked or fit in. To get kids to share with the group the problems students have fitting in and to acknowledge that it is a normal feeling. To build the kids up for having qualities that are maybe not on the cool list but that are respectable, good qualities.

The rationale behind this activity is that almost all students at the middle school level feel intense pressure to fit in, especially if there is an obvious distinction such as belonging to a minority culture. This activity is designed to talk about what qualities and characteristics are accepted and admired and whether or not these are actually good traits to have. It is designed to build kids up by praising qualities they would not deem cool but that are admirable. This activity is also designed to show an appreciation for their cultural uniqueness. I think it will work because most of them experience this pressure to fit in and can describe a "cool" person and a not cool person. It can be fun to work together to draw the figures and esteem-building to praise the kids' unique "cool" qualities.