

ALIENATION ACTIVITY

Objective

This activity was designed to allow students to experience the alienation often felt by people with disabilities.

Materials

- None

Activity

1. Select a particular physical trait such as: light hair or brown eyes or freckles, etc., something that a person is born with and cannot help.
2. Without explaining to the students your purpose, allow those with the chosen trait to have special privileges throughout the day.

Examples: chewing gum in class, lining up for lunch first, going out to recess first, free time in class to talk to other “chosen” people, special treats, etc.

3. Have all of the other students participate in non-preferential treatment activities.

Examples: no talking allowed, no gum chewing, copy a list of spelling words 10 times, staying in from recess for a few minutes, last to lunch, etc.

Discussion

At the end of the school day or chosen time frame, ask the students how they felt about what went on during the day.

Explain to them what “alienation” is (exclusion from some group; being an outsider).

Talk to them about the alienation often felt by different minorities: people with disabilities, people of different races, different sexes, different religions, etc.

Ask them if they have a better understanding of how it feels to be excluded from things for a trait that you cannot help.

Explain the meaning of “empathy” (understanding the feelings, thoughts, and motives of someone else).

