

2.5 Are we tolerant?

General introduction

It can happen in any school – a hateful act by a student suddenly poisons the school atmosphere. Conflicts occur through prejudice. They are motivated and based on various reasons.

With the increase of immigration in Russia, schools face conflicts based on nationalistic grounds. The statistics say that every tenth conflict between schoolmates at present emerges specifically on nationalistic grounds. Strong nationalistic sentiments have been found among students between the seventh and tenth grades. (⇒ www.interethnic.org/EngNews/061207_6.html).

Experts consider that many conflicts on nationalistic grounds could have been avoided if the school had trained students in tolerance.

"There are many ways of resolving conflicts at schools. The most important step is – to teach tolerance to children for conflict resolution. Conflict resolution skills provide students with the capability to solve problems, negotiate and compromise. It is the teacher's role to give children experience and help them develop skills to handle conflict in appropriate ways". (from "Teach Tolerance For Conflict Resolution in Secondary Schools with Teenagers" by L.Lomjaria)

Teaching tolerance is about teaching friendship among teenagers and learning how to deal with different commonplace ethnical issues which one can easily ignore.

Through teaching peace and tolerance, the teacher tackles historical prejudice and the task of reconstruction in societies and communities. Such learning needs open-minded, active learners who will develop cooperative learning, critical

thinking and problem-solving skills while using multicultural materials and conflict resolution skills.

Teachers need to engage students in a dialogue about a variety of topics while not forgetting the aspects of a multicultural and multi-lingual setting they live (lived) in.

The activities chosen by the teachers should be based on interaction, cooperative learning, some memorization and drill.

Students can be involved in various activities: role-plays, dramatization, poster-making session, discussions, writing short compositions, etc.

Definition of tolerance

"Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace."

Education for tolerance should be considered an urgent imperative; that is why it is necessary to promote systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance - major roots of violence and exclusion. Education policies and programmes should contribute to the development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals as well as among ethnic, social, cultural, religious and linguistic groups and nations. (from ⇒ www.tolerance.ru/declar-eng.html)

Target group

Student teachers and teachers (about 20-25 participants)

Aims

- acquainting teachers with various ways of teaching tolerance;
- helping create one's own understanding of the notion;
- preparing the workshop for parents;
- sharing the knowledge about how to develop mutual trust and friendship in classmates.

Sessions in Practice

Session 1: Teaching Methods and Students' Activities "ARE WE TOLERANT?"

Workshop for students (7th–9th grades)

Teaching Methods and Students' Activities which can be recommended as forms of tolerance training are various. Schools which are implementing "Tolerance Training" programmes suggest different activities in which students and parents can be involved.

They are the following:

- Workshop for students "Are we tolerant?"
- Workshop for students "Tolerance is a way to peace"
- OPEN DOORS school day – for parents
- Psychological research "Children's aggression"
- Workshop for students "People's folklore games, traditions" (see toolbox Contacts with parents "Four seasons")
- "Class hour" We are different, we are alike"
- Students' projects on tolerance
- School conflict resolution team

Aims to acquaint students with the term "tolerance" and to help create one's own understanding of the notion:

- to create a comfortable and friendly atmosphere in a class and school
- to develop mutual trust and friendship in classmates
- to develop skills to handle conflicts

Step 1: "We are alike"

Participants sit in a circle. The teacher invites someone who has something in common with him (eyes, hair-do, height, clothes etc.). The student invites someone who has something in common with her. It goes on until all students come to the centre of the circle.

Step 2: "What is tolerance?"

Layout: posters with the definitions of the word "tolerance".

Participants are divided into groups of 3-4 students. Every group should work out its idea of tolerance after the "brainstorming". Then the teacher shows the posters with the definitions so that the groups can discuss and exchange their ideas about tolerance.

Step 3: "Emblem of tolerance"

Layout: paper, colour pencils, adhesive tape, scissors.

Participants make an emblem of tolerance. For 5-7 minutes they walk round the class and show pictures to each other. They find someone whose emblem looks similar. They make up a group of those whose emblems have much in common. The newly-created group prepares a presentation of the emblem.

Step 4: "The basket"

Layout: a basket with small things (toys, candies, etc). The number of the things should be more than the number of participants.

Students take turns and take out one thing from the basket. They have to find some connection between the thing and the notion "tolerance", e.g. I have a ball. It looks like a globe. Toleration is important for all people in the world".

Step 5: "Tolerant v. Intolerant"

Aim: to acquaint participants with psychologists' concepts about tolerant/intolerant personalities. The teacher gives a talk about the differences between tolerant and intolerant people.

Step 6: "The Magic Store" (20 min.)

Aim: to let students judge what qualities of a tolerant person they lack.

Implementation

Teacher: Imagine that there is a magic store where they sell unusual things like patience, sense of humour, trust, curiosity, etc. Students play roles of customers who buy qualities which they lack.

Step 7: "Tolerant Personality"

Aims:

- to acquaint students with characteristics of a tolerant person
- to help students judge how tolerant they are.

Questionnaire "How tolerant are you?" (15 min.)

Filling in the form. In column A put a "+" against the 3 qualities you possess. And put 0 against the ones which you have not. In column B put "+" against the qualities which a tolerant person should possess. The participants compare their tables and make a "portrait of a tolerant person".

Questionnaire "How tolerant are you?"

	A	B
fondness	0	+
lenience	0	0
patience	+	+
sense of humour	+	0
consideration	0	0
altruism	+	+
tolerance of differences	0	0
benevolence	0	+
curiosity	0	+
self-control	0	0

Step 8: "Five kind words"

Every participant is asked to draw his/her hand and write his/her name on it. Then (s)he passes the picture to the left. The classmate writes something good about the owner of the "hand", e.g. "You are sincere", "you are talented" etc.

Step 9: "What does my thing know about me?"

A participant takes a thing that belongs to him and speaks as if he were that thing, e.g. "I am Lena's pin. I have known her for many years. Lena has many friends because she is easy-going and friendly...."