



## WHAT'S THE TINT OF YOUR GLASSES?

*"We do not see the world as it is; we see the world as we are."*

— Anais Nin

### OVERVIEW

Students learn how different perspectives result from different backgrounds, building acceptance and valuing differences.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- At the beginning of the school year to help build a trusting classroom climate and to cultivate positive student relationships
- When students express discomfort with those different from themselves
- Any time throughout the school year

#### TIME REQUIRED

- 45 minutes

#### LEVEL

- Upper Elementary
- Middle school
- High school

#### MATERIALS

- poster paper, colored pencils or pens for each group

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand that our different backgrounds give us different perspectives
- Demonstrate that having different viewpoints is okay
- Experience how different viewpoints help us to see the whole picture
- Develop their multicultural awareness, acceptance, and understanding

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to reflect on the different backgrounds of your students. How is your background similar to/different from their backgrounds? In what ways do you show students that you value these differences, recognizing that they provide a multitude of perspectives?

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Have the class meet in small groups of 4-5 students (3-4 students in upper elementary).
- Have each student draw a pair of eyeglasses on a sheet of paper.
- Ask students to draw small designs or symbols on their glasses in response to the questions you will read. Examples (feel free to create your own set of questions depending on the diverse makeup and needs of your students):
  - *What is your country of birth?*
  - *How many sisters and brothers do you have?*
  - *What language do your parents speak other than or in addition to English?*
  - *Have you ever lived on a farm or ranch? In a big city?*
- Have the group members compare glasses. Ask:
  - *Do any look the same?*
- Discuss how different experiences give people different perspectives and opinions. Example:
  - How a “city person” versus a “country person” might look at pigs in a pen (pigs are dirty/pigs are great).
- Ask each group to make a list of three other examples.
- Have each group report their list to the class.
- Ask:
  - *What can happen when people believe everyone sees things the same way?*
- Discuss perceptions, assumptions, conflict, or respect for differences.

- Ask students to reflect on the following questions:
  - What did you learn about how different people see the same thing?
  - In what ways did your group work well together during this activity?
  - How did your group show support for one another's differences?
  - How did you feel when someone had a different point of view?
  - How can you help others see your point of view?
  - What personal strengths did you use to communicate your point of view?

---

## CLOSURE

- Invite students to offer statements of appreciation and recognition of each other's gifts: "Thanks \_\_\_\_\_ for...." or "I appreciate your...."

---

## EXTENSIONS

- Integrate this practice into academic instruction. For example:
  - Ask students to look at a moment in history through different lenses.
  - Look at a situation from points of view from different generations or cultures.
  - Explore points of view on a social issue, e.g., Should high school students have curfews?

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice if students are more open to others' views after engaging in this practice? Do they actively wonder how someone with a different background might see a situation?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Numerous studies have shown that [perspective-taking](#)—or actively considering another person's point of view—is a powerful method for bridging divides between people of diverse backgrounds.

For example, perspective-taking has been found to cultivate positive attitudes towards not just one person in an "outgroup", but also towards other members of that person's group, and the group as a whole—with lasting effects.

Hence, a white student might benefit from understanding the perspective of an African-American student, or someone the white student considers consciously or unconsciously to be a member of an "outgroup." In addition, researchers have discovered that considering another's viewpoint increases one's willingness to help people in an outgroup and to take action on that group's behalf.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In today's society where divisions by race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, and many other identities cause so much heartache, schools have an important role to play in bridging those divides. In addition to the long-term benefits of actual societal transformation, in the more immediate term, providing opportunities for students to connect with and understand each other can help cultivate a classroom and school climate where students feel safe and that they belong.

## SOURCE

Tribes Learning Communities is a community building process—a culture and active learning pedagogy. For information about the entire curriculum, see [www.tribes.com](http://www.tribes.com).

Gibbs, Jeanne. (2007). *Discovering Gifts in Middle School: Learning in a Caring Culture Called Tribes*. Windsor, CA: CenterSource Systems. (Additional books are available for elementary and high school levels.)