



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

I SEE YOU. EVERYONE MATTERS.

"We can learn to see each other and see ourselves in each other and recognize that human beings are more alike than unlike."

— Maya Angelou

OVERVIEW

Members of the classroom or meeting stand and respectfully acknowledge each person in the group.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- During a staff, grade-level team, or department meeting
- During a college class
- During a high school advisory period
- At the beginning or ending of a class or meeting
- To build group cohesion, a safe and welcoming classroom, or a positive school climate

TIME REQUIRED

- <5 minutes

LEVEL

- High School
- College
- Adult

MATERIALS

- N/A

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students or staff will:

- Strengthen social awareness by recognizing and mentally acknowledging peers and the value of each person in a given school setting (classroom, meeting room, learning circle, etc.)
- Foster self awareness by recognizing their role within a larger group

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students and Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Think of a time when you were in a class or meeting and felt seen by a person or a group of people.
 - What did that feel like? Did it change your level of confidence and/or participation? Why or why not?
- What is your reason for doing this practice? How is it relevant to students' and staff members' lives? Would they agree with you?
- Does this practice privilege your values over theirs in any way?
 - For example, do you believe that everyone should be acknowledged, whereas some students and/or staff may disagree because they believe that elders or people in power positions deserve greater respect?
 - If your beliefs differ, making direct eye contact to signal respect may not be acceptable in all cultures. Is there space for discussing alternative ways to acknowledge others?

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

- Invite everyone to stand and take a moment to respectfully honor one another's presence. (This practice is a nice way to start a class or meeting.)

- Depending on the size and distribution of individuals in the room, you may choose to invite small groups to recognize each other, and/or you may invite everyone in the room to acknowledge members of the whole group.

THE PRACTICE

- Tell the group:
 - *Once we are in a [learning] circle, this practice called "I See You; Everyone Matters" may be used to deepen our sense of connection.*
 - *This is a simple practice of looking into the faces, and when possible, the eyes of everyone in the room, around the circle.*
 - *If we are willing, we offer one another a smile, but at a minimum, we respectfully offer our gentle attending gaze.*
 - *In this way we bring to life our intention of being with others respectfully, of giving everyone our attention, of actually taking each person's humanity in, as we embark on a learning journey together.*
- Begin by taking one minute in silent awareness of each other.
- Then repeat this phrase together "I see you. Everyone matters," or "We see you. Everyone matters."

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What worked or didn't work for you in leading this practice? How did students and/or staff members respond to the practice? Would you change anything for next time?
- Did you notice a shift in how the group interacted as a result of this practice? For example, were more people contributing afterwards, or did the practice unearth a need for ongoing work to build a safe learning environment?
- What adjustments were made to the practice based on student and/or staff input? How did it go? (We encourage you to share your experience with other users in the comments section.)
- Did students and/or staff members discuss how this practice might be relevant, helpful, or unhelpful to them? If so, how?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

[Research](#) suggests we can reduce age and race biases by building moment-to-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings through mindfulness and contemplative practices.

In fact, a [study](#) of both college students and adults representing different religions and ethnicities found that mindfulness can also help us navigate our anxiety about people who appear different from us, which may also lessen the negative attitudes that could be sparked by that anxiety.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Every human being has the need to feel seen and heard, and sometimes all it takes is a simple acknowledgement of another's presence to fulfill this need. Cultivating this feeling of being seen is critical to fostering a sense of belonging and connection among students and staff, which in turn builds a positive school climate.

In addition, mindfulness can make us more cognizant of the mental shortcuts we take when judging or ignoring others. It can also help us to be more deliberate about the intentions we're setting when we start a class, participate in small group work, or engage in an important conversation with a peer.

SOURCE

Adapted from [Rhonda Magee's](#) work:

- Magee, R. (2015). The way of ColorInsight: Understanding race and law effectively through mindfulness-based ColorInsight practices, *The Georgetown Law Journal of Modern Critical Race Perspectives*. Retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2638511>
- Magee, R. (2019) [The Inner Work of Racial Justice](#). New York: TarcherPerigree.