

OUR CONTEMPORARY MOMENT

PRE-VISIT LESSON PLAN: FITTING IN VS. BELONGING

Grades: 7-12

Duration: 30 minutes

Essential Question: What is the difference between fitting in and belonging?

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to define the differences between “fitting in” and “belonging.”
- Students will be able to describe at least one reason why conversations about belonging are relevant to social justice learning.

Materials

Image (either projected or color copies for students to view)

2 pieces of large flip chart paper (or something similar to write on)

2 sets of markers

Resources

Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times, part 2 Exhibition Brochure (<http://www.dirosaart.org/benotstill2>)

socialjusticetoolbox.com (Search: Belonging¹)

dosomething.org (Search: Inclusion)

About the Artwork/Artist: Victor Cartagena (b. 1965, San Salvador, El Salvador) is a multidisciplinary visual artist. He emigrated to California in 1985 due to the violent civil war in El Salvador and has been living and making work in San Francisco since that time. His artwork addresses his experience as an immigrant, memories of violence in his home country, and the death penalty. *Expulsion/ Implosion* (2018) is comprised of several complex sculptural elements, including just under 500 protest-like signs, affixed to sticks that lean against the walls in dense clusters, featuring the faces of anonymous immigrants from El Salvador and two sets of digitally projected eyes of immigrant Bay Area college students amplifying the omnipresence of immigrant lives. With the juxtaposition of these images, Cartagena is reminding the viewer of the omnipresence of immigration in our daily lives.

Talk about *Expulsion/ Implosion* (10 min.) With the whole class, look at *Expulsion/ Implosion*. Before students make initial comments, ask them to silently LOOK for about 30 seconds. ASK: What are some things that they thought about as they looked silently? Use the student comments to engage in a discussion, neutrally paraphrasing and linking comments. Pepper in some of the above information where it fits. You might also ask some of the questions that are on the next page. When timing feels right, let students know that you are going to switch to an activity that will further explore the idea of belonging.

¹ Bolger, M. (N.D.). Fitting in VS. Belonging. Retrieved from <http://www.socialjusticetoolbox.com/activity/fitting-in-vs-belonging/> 2MacCash, D.

LESSON PLAN

Activity

1. Split the class into two groups. Give each group one large piece of flip-chart paper and a marker.
2. One group will need to define belonging and one group will define fitting in. Explain that each group should spend about 5 minutes defining their term. Beyond defining the terms, they should write anything else they believe is relevant: what it feels like to belong or fit in, who is doing it, how do you know you're doing it, when you have done it, etc.
3. Give groups time to complete the task and then bring them back together.
4. Ask each group to present to the larger group.
5. See if anyone has anything to add or revise.

Debriefing

Facilitate a group discussion about the activity, letting students do most of the talking.

1. What are some of the major themes we see across the terms fitting in and belonging?
2. Does anyone have any emotional or visceral reaction when thinking of the difference between these two terms?
3. Why do you think it is important to consider the differences between fitting in and belonging?
4. What do fitting in and belonging have to do with social justice?

Discussion Points

- When we talk about inclusive spaces, the goal is often to create a space where more people have the opportunity to feel like they belong there.
- Fitting in takes a lot of energy from the individual. Belonging may take special effort from the community, but a lot less energy from the individual.
- It is the responsibility of people who create the norms of a group or environment to consider who feels they belong and who is simply fitting in.
- Social justice education often helps us bring to light the work that some people are doing to “fit in” to our communities, as well as helps us acknowledge ways that we can make more people feel they have the opportunity to belong.

Change it Up

Do this activity reflectively by asking participants to use a blank sheet of paper and to personally define the differences between fitting in and belonging. They could then debrief with a small group or partner.

Extension

Advocate for inclusion by choosing an activity from the website www.dosomething.org (search: inclusion). If the list of activities on the Do Something site don't inspire, work with a group to create your own.

