

# FACE TO FACE ADVISORIES GIVES YOU A WHOLE NEW WAY TO TALK ABOUT CULTURE

**FOR YEARS**, middle-level educators have turned to the *Developmental Designs* approach for ready-made advisories for adolescents. In *Face to Face Advisories*, this community-building meeting format now addresses cultural issues.

> Each advisory breaks down barriers while addressing adolescents' developmental needs for competence, autonomy, relationship, and fun.

> Students will get to know each other across their differences, discover commonalities, appreciate the richness of diversity, and take action for equity in their school community.

> Interaction by interaction, these leaders of the future will develop perspective-taking skills and unite around fairness and equality.

## Try out this advisory about interdependence with students

### ADVISORY 13 ► CPR

**Advisory goal:** Understand that trust can exist between people who feel culturally different from one another

#### Greeting

**One-Minute Mingle Greeting:** Each person greets as many students by name as possible in one minute. Before starting, review how to politely complete a greeting. If necessary, remind everyone to maintain eye contact during a greeting.

Hello, Friends!  
Get ready to create your own visual organizer of a person you trust who comes from a culture different from yours.  
**Do Now:** Pick up a blank Venn diagram and think about the person you will describe.

#### Share

**Venn Diagram Share: Differences and Trust:** Students make Venn diagrams of people they trust who differ from them culturally. Display your Venn diagram from Advisory 11 as a model. Suggest areas of cultural difference to help students identify a person including differences in religion, urban/rural backgrounds, language, age, ability, and ethnicity/color. Students will share their diagrams with partners at the next meeting.

➡ As students work on their Venn diagrams, circulate and find out a little about the people they have chosen to describe. Remind them to do this exercise about someone they feel is very different from them culturally. Remind them of the Venn diagram you shared, and describe what you learned from stretching to find similarities.

#### Activity

**Knots (trust-building activity):** Students stand in a circle and link right hands with someone across from them. Then they link left hands with someone other than that person: the "knot" is complete. Students must untangle the knot without letting go of hands.

➡ Students can hold a strip of cloth in each hand and grab the cloth rather than hands (stretchy cloth makes the activity easier but less challenging). This reduces the closeness and touching required by the activity. Decide what degree of contact will work for your group. Boys and girls can form separate groups to play the game. This activity, like handshakes and high fives, can be a context for teaching about respectful touching.

#### Keep in Mind

We can grow aware of our mutual dependency by seeking out the similarities among us. For example, we can focus on people's abilities rather than their disabilities, and on each other's strengths rather than weaknesses.

I feel connected to people with developmental disabilities. Even though I don't have such a disability, we share the perception that it's great to be alive, and it's hard, too. (Teacher of people with developmental disabilities)

It is a daily challenge to look for points of connection with people who seem very different from us. We can look for skills and talents that may not be obvious, especially in students who push against the structures of school. We can learn from the stand that African history professor Asa Hilliard modeled: "I have never encountered any children in a group who are not geniuses. There is no mystery how to teach them. The first thing you do is treat them like human beings and the second thing you do is love them."

*“To close academic gaps, we must first communicate well enough to close the cultural ones.”*

Kevin, a new student from Ghana, had a chip on his shoulder. He spoke English fluently, but kept talking about how he was different, even though all the students in my class were children of color, and several others were also African immigrants. Another student, Jordan, consistently got into a lot of trouble in school. I decided to pair him with Kevin to help Kevin get oriented. They actually became friends. Jordan was able to communicate with Kevin, and Kevin respected him. Jordan was pleased with his responsibility—it made him feel important. When Jordan saw how hard it was for Kevin, he began to act differently. It was an important experience for me, too. I realized that because I felt empathy for Jordan, and saw what these two different boys had in common, I was able to provide a project that helped both boys. (Fourth-fifth grade teacher)

#### Ask yourself

*Thinking of a student who is hard to reach or consistently pushes back and breaks rules, what is a quality in him/her that you admire or enjoy?*

Stretch students to interact with everyone in the group.

Show students how they're already bridging differences.

Break down divisions and connect students through the power of play.

See possibility in all of your students.

Gain practical insights from other educators.

Focus your reflection on your relationship with your students and other ways culture affects your life.

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