



# Identity Unit

GRADES 6-8



### Unit Essential Question:

How have I analyzed and discovered awareness of my strengths, values, and identity along with the unique identities of others?

### Unit Overview

In this Identity Unit, students will gain a deeper understanding of their personal identity while developing the skills and empathy needed to accept and celebrate the REDI dimensions of all unique identities. Students will proactively help build a more connected and inclusive classroom by embracing and affirming diverse identities and cultures in their school community. Then, students will wrap up the unit by creating a poem celebrating their own identities.

### Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Alignment

Here are some steps you can take throughout this unit to implement REDI values and bring awareness to intersectionality in your classroom:

1. Reference the *Know the Signs* community agreement and circle norms and make it an evolving, living collective community agreement.
2. Empower students to bring their authentic selves to the classroom by allowing space for personal identity exploration.
3. Promote an inclusive and safer space that is antiracist and antibias, by encouraging students to uplift and support all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds.
4. Encourage students to be Upstanders and speak up against injustice and victimization.
5. Model celebrating the various aspects of your identity by promoting self-empathy and self-love.
6. Nurture connections between Trusted Adults and students from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

# What is REDI and how is it implemented throughout the curriculum?

Sandy Hook Promise strives to develop materials and resources that reflect the values of race, equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI). Throughout this curriculum, you will find that our goal is to create a safer community and a just future for students by teaching them to value inclusivity, speak up against injustice and victimization, and get help for those who need it.

Additionally, in line with our central belief that children have a right to be safe wherever they are, we commit to ensuring our footprint neither creates nor advances inequitable outcomes as demonstrated by the work we do with and for students and the adult networks around them.



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## Curriculum Overview Guide and Student Workbook



To learn more about the full curriculum components and the various resources associated with the Start With Hello curriculum, visit this [guide](#). Here, you will gain access to the curriculum's essential questions, thematic unit rationale, and additional engagement activities. The Unit is also accompanied by a [Student Workbook](#).



# Explore Your Identity Wheel – Introductory Lesson

## AN IDENTITY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Examine various parts of their identities by completing an identity wheel.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competency

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.

#### Social Justice Standards

- **Identity 3:** Students will recognize that people's multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals.
- **Identity 4:** Students will express pride, confidence, and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.
- **Identity 5:** Students will recognize traits of the dominant culture, their home culture, and other cultures and understand how they negotiate their own identity in multiple spaces.
- **Justice 1:** Recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals rather than representatives of groups.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#)

#### Notes to Educator:

The Mindful Minutes and Student Connector activities must be completed in order to move on to the remainder of the lesson.



### Unit Essential Question

How have I analyzed and discovered awareness of my strengths, values, and identity along with the unique identities of others?

#### Grades:

6–8

### Estimated Time Needed

45–60 minutes

### Notes

## Mindful Minute

Throughout this unit, students will focus on **examining** identity and self-love. Today they will begin to reflect on their identity by filling out **Part 1** of the [Identity Wheel Worksheet](#). This will help them think about parts of their identity that are important to them and/or affect their perspective. Guide students in completing the handout by following the directions on the page. If they don't feel comfortable sharing or completing all portions of the wheel, allow them to leave it blank.

The diagram is a circular worksheet divided into ten segments. The central circle contains the text "Describe yourself in three words:" followed by three numbered lines for writing. The segments around the perimeter are: "Role in Family", "Favorite Music", "Favorite Subject", "Favorite Food", "Ethnicity", "Native Language", "Gender", "Sexual Orientation", "Groups I Belong to", and "Age". Each segment has a horizontal line for writing.

## Student Connector

Have students search for a partner who has at least two differences on their [Identity Wheel Worksheet](#). Once they find their partners, they will briefly summarize their Identity Wheels and \_\_\_\_\_ then ask each other 4–5 questions located under **Part 2** of the worksheet. This section of the worksheet is designed so that students can learn about someone else's identity and perspective as well as our own.



## Main Activity



### Circle Up

#### Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and Know the Signs Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Worksheet](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."
- Use a talking piece.
- Check-in with participants.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

#### Discussion

Invite partners to engage the class in a discussion about their Identity Wheels. Here are a few guiding questions:

- *Introduce your partner and share 1-2 things you learned about them.*
- *Describe the similarities and differences between you and your partner.*
- *Think about your identity wheel. Which parts of your identity do you feel are the most important?*
- *Are there parts of the wheel that you have never thought about before (or don't think about very often)?*
- *Are there parts that you feel are different from others in the class?*
- *Have you ever had conversations with others about race, ethnicity, or gender?*
- *How did these discussions shape your understanding of your own identity and the identities of others?*
- *How do you feel society responds to the categories listed on the Identity Wheel?*

### **Closing**

To close the Circle Up, ask students to give a shoutout to their classmate sitting to the right.

- *I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_ for sharing with us today.*
- *Way to go \_\_\_\_\_ I like your idea.*
- *Thank you for sharing your opinion\_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Give finger snaps or air high-fives or fist bumps in place of verbal appreciation or affirmation.*

### **Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge**

Reference the unit essential question and ask the group how they expanded their awareness of the identities of themselves and their classmates in today's lesson.

Thank students for participating in a vulnerable discussion about identity. Challenge students to reach out and "start with hello" every day this week to the partner they teamed up with for this activity.

### **Journal Time**

Give students time to **Think-Reflect-React** on the following prompts in the [workbook](#):

- *What surprised you about the person you partnered with today?*
- *What did you have in common with each other?*
- *What was different about each other?*

*Remind students about the protocols for a **Think-Reflect-React**:*

**Read:** *Think about how you perceive your partner's identity to be*

**Think:** *Consider your similarities and differences.*

**Reflect:** *Share or show your reflections.*

**React:** *Share or show your reflections.*

### **Family Engagement**

Encourage families to come up with their own Family Identity Wheel.



Reach out to the [SAVE Promise Club](https://www.sandyhookpromise.org) to inquire about collaborating on a school-wide Identity Wheel that showcases the multiculturalism and intersectionality of the school community.





# #ILoveMySelfie

## AN IDENTITY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Investigate and illustrate all the special qualities they love about themselves.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competency

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.

#### Social Justice Standard

- **Identity 1:** Students will develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#)

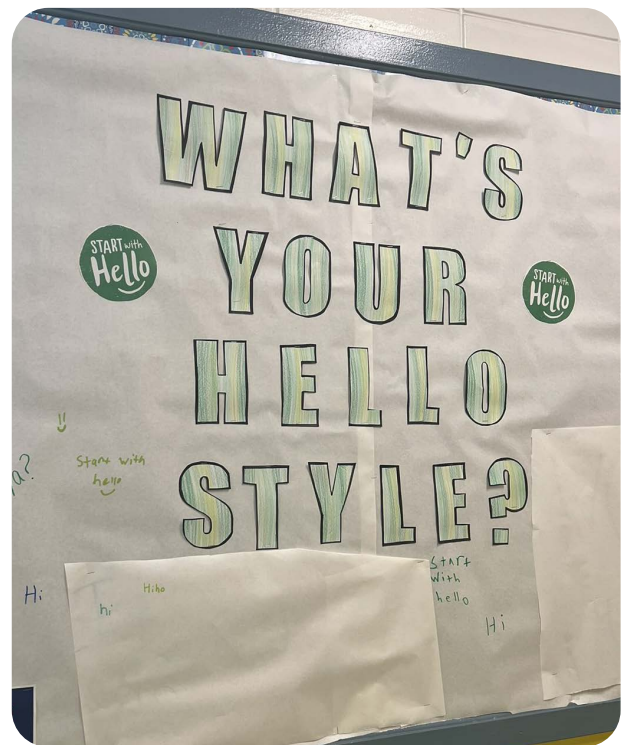
### Mindful Minute

*Gently inhale and exhale. A breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Be still for a moment. Use this moment of stillness as a rest. Remind yourself that it is important to rest for your well-being. A simple breathing and stillness moment is a way you can take rest breaks throughout the day.*

### Student Connector

Instruct students to think about a song that they like to listen to if they're feeling down or a bit sad. Does the song help them cheer up? Does the song have a special significance or meaning? (For example, when I play this song, I think about being at my favorite place or with some of my favorite people; I think of a nice memory when I hear this song, etc.).

Give students the following instructions:



### Unit Essential Question

How have I analyzed and discovered awareness of my strengths, values, and identity along with the unique identities of others?

#### Grades:

6-8

### Estimated Time Needed

30-45 minutes

#### Notes

- For the next two minutes, write your favorite songs/artists names on the whiteboard or a piece of anchor chart paper.
- After two minutes, read all the titles. What do you notice? Are there any duplicates or common themes?

If time permits, play a couple of songs students listed. Instruct students to produce a playlist of these songs for the class as an extra-credit assignment.



## Main Activity



### Circle Up

#### Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and Know the Signs Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Worksheet](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."
- Use a talking piece.
- Check-in with participants.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

#### Discussion

Engage the class in a discussion about identity. Here are a few guiding questions:

- *What qualities do you have that make you special?*
- *What are some things that you love most about yourself?*
- *What do you love about yourself that isn't easily seen by people?*

#### Closing

To close the Circle Up, ask students to share out one word that resonated with them from this conversation.

#### Make a #ILoveMyselfie

Instruct students to complete the [#ILoveMySelfie Worksheet](#) by completing the sentence stems located in the chat bubbles. Then, guide students in illustrating a picture of themselves or the things they love most about themselves on the smartphone.

*We just discussed the things we love most about ourselves, let's share these by drawing about them. Sometimes we may have moments where we may not always be in love with ourselves or the decisions that we make but it is important to give ourselves grace. Whenever we are feeling this way, let's reflect on this worksheet and the things that we love most about ourselves.*

Once all students have completed their #ILoveMySelfie worksheet, have them **Turn-N-Learn** with a partner. Provide students with two minutes to share what they love most about themselves and encourage their partners to actively listen. Then, switch and allow the other students to share.

## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Ask each student to share one word about how they're feeling about themselves after completing this activity. Remind students that their unique identities and strengths are valued in this space.

### Promise Challenge

It is very important that we take care of ourselves by dedicating some time to self-care. Dedicate one hour of your day to doing something that helps your mind and body feel healthy. Try listening to what your mind and body need to rest and relax.

## Explore More

If you would like to dive deeper into this lesson, ask students to present three things they learned about their partner during the **Turn-N-Learn**.

## Family Engagement

Tell students to share with their families what they love most about themselves and encourage them to ask families the same questions. This is a great opportunity for family members to find common ground and further develop their relationship.

### Connection

Share the #ILoveMySelfie activity with the SAVE Promise Club and suggest that club members construct an #ILoveMySelfie photo booth station at lunch, in the courtyard, or in the main lobby as students enter school. SAVE members can create a backdrop using butcher paper and encourage students and staff to share what they love about themselves. This is a great opportunity to boost self-esteem and promote self-love.



# Culture in Our Community

## AN IDENTITY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Identify cultural awareness in the classroom community by comparing and contrasting cultures and heritages.
- Explain cultural diversity and inclusivity by engaging in a dialogue.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
- **Social Awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

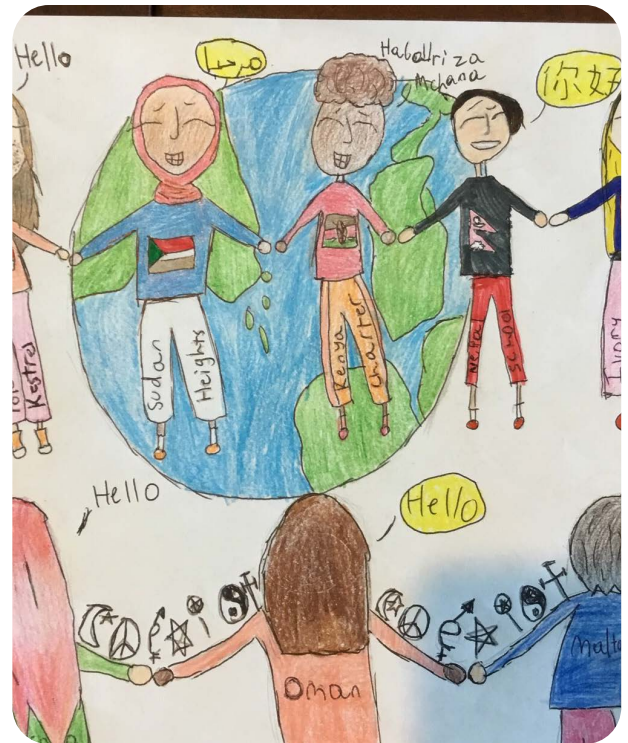
#### Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 7:** Develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
- **Diversity 9:** Respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#)



### Unit Essential Question

How have I analyzed and discovered awareness of my strengths, values, and identity along with the unique identities of others?

#### Grades:

6-8

#### Estimated Time Needed

35-40 minutes

#### Notes

## Mindful Minute

Visualize your breath as a line and draw it on a piece of paper or your [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#). Try changing your breathing pattern and notice how that affects your line.

## Student Connector

### Class Links of Inclusivity

Provide every student with a strip of paper. At one end they will write one way they are like others in the class and at the other end how they differ. Once everyone finishes, have each person attach their link to the chain. This can be done with glue to a stapler. The links symbolize how every person matters and contributes to the class. Hang this class chain in a place that is visible for everyone to see.



## Main Activity



## Circle Up

### Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and *Know the Signs* Community Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Worksheet](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."
- Use a talking piece.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Check-in with participants.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

### Discussion

Engage the class in a discussion about culture. Here are a few guiding questions:

- *Define culture.*
  - *Culture can be defined as ...*
- *What is special about your culture?*

- *What languages do you speak?*
- *What foods do you eat?*
- *What type of clothing do you wear?*
- *What traditions are important to your culture?*
- *How does appreciating the cultures in our community help us to be inclusive?*
- *How can we work towards recognizing the beauty of diversity in our cultures?*

## Closing

To close the Circle Up, ask students to share one word or phrase about how they're feeling after today's circle up discussion.

## Main Activity

Partner students up and assign the pairs to complete the [Culture in Our Community Worksheet](#). Students will fill in the Venn Diagram by putting their name over the circle on the left and their partner's name will go over the circle on the right. Then, they will have a discussion with their partners about their culture. Students will write about differences in their cultures by filling in the appropriate circle. In the center, students will write the similarities between both of their cultures.

Once all Venn Diagrams are completed, ask for volunteers to share about their partner with the class. Then, engage students in a brief discussion about the importance of appreciating diverse cultures in the community by using some of the following questions to help get the conversation started:

- *How does appreciating the cultures in our community help us to be inclusive?*
- *What would happen if people did not appreciate the diverse cultures in our community?*
- *How can we work towards recognizing the beauty of diversity in our cultures?*

## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Thank students for exploring how culture is part of their personal identity and how it helps create the unique identity of others. Inform students that culture is one piece of what makes our identity special and unique. Thank them for using the empathy needed to accept and celebrate the cultures of their peers.

## Promise Challenge

Write down all your special qualities, talents, and characteristics that make you unique. Spend 15 minutes reflecting on this every day this week.

## Explore More

## Cultural Show and Tell

Students will spend two minutes presenting their item that represents themselves and their cultural identities. Once students finish presenting their item, encourage others in the class to ask one positive question.

Examples of positive questions:

- What would you like us to remember about this item?
- How do you share this item with others?
- What's something important about this object that we don't notice right away?

## Family Engagement

Have students share what they learned today about the different cultures in their class with their families. Encourage family members to share stories about their cultural traditions, family origins, or upbringing.



## Create a Collaborative SAVE Promise Club INCLUSIVI-TREE

Coordinate with the [SAVE Promise Club](https://www.sandyhookpromise.org) to host a Multicultural Fair where students can educate and celebrate culture and heritage.



# Diversity: We Complete a Puzzle

## AN IDENTITY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Distinguish how each person's culture creates a diverse community.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competency

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
- **Social Awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

#### Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 7:** Develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
- **Diversity 9:** Respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#)
- Scissors
- Colored pencils or markers

#### Educators:

- String or yarn
- Bulletin board, butcher paper, or an area to display the classroom puzzle



### Unit Essential Question

How have I analyzed and discovered awareness of my strengths, values, and identity along with the unique identities of others?

#### Grades:

6-8

### Estimated Time Needed

25 minutes

### Notes

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## Mindful Minute

Remind students that mindful minute exercises are all about being aware of our feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Guide students to close their eyes, if they feel comfortable, and take a deep breath in. Hold it for three seconds and slowly breathe out. Then, have them touch each finger on one hand and think of one thing they are thankful for.

## Student Connector

### Student Web

Student connection webs help students visualize their connectedness and commonalities. All you need is a ball of yarn or twine and a group of students. To model the activity, the educator takes the ball of yarn and makes a statement such as “I can speak more than one language.” Students who identify with this statement raise their hands and the teacher holds onto the very end of the yarn and throws the ball to a student who raised their hand. The student with the ball of yarn proceeds to make a statement such as:

- “I eat most foods with hot sauce.”
- “In my free time, I’m riding my bike.”
- “I make really good chocolate chip cookies.”
- “I babysit my younger sister/brother/cousin at least once a week.”
- “I’m a huge Marvel fan.”
- “I love wearing slides to school.”
- “My favorite book is Harry Potter.”
- “I enjoy fishing.”
- “I eat ranch dressing on pizza.”

By the end of this activity, all students should be holding a piece of string or yarn. It will most likely look like a spider web. Summarize the activity by stating that we are all connected to one another in some way. We share commonalities and differences, but even when we believe we are so different from someone else, a connection exists. The more connections and commonalities we find with one another, the stronger and more secure our web becomes.



## Main Activity Role Play

Merriam Webster defines diversity as “the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc., in a group or organization.”

*As a class, we will share parts of our cultures by designing a puzzle piece and completing a classroom puzzle.*

Students will write their preferred names on their puzzle piece and decorate it with designs that represent their culture and identity. This is a great opportunity to get involved and create your own puzzle piece.

Once the puzzle piece is complete, students will cut them out. Then, find an area where students

can display and connect their puzzle pieces. Perhaps on the classroom door, a bulletin board, or on butcher paper. Have students come up and connect their puzzle pieces to each other. Encourage creativity when connecting puzzle pieces by allowing students to create different shapes with the classroom puzzle.

## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Thank students for constructing the classroom puzzle and analyzing how each of their strengths and identities come together to create a unique classroom.

This classroom would not be the same without each and every one of you. Without you all, the puzzle wouldn't be complete, our classroom wouldn't be complete. Every single person here brings something special and diverse to our space and this community.

### Promise Challenge

Challenge students to be kind to themselves today by spending at least an hour outdoors, resting, or reading a book.

### Explore More

As an extension of this lesson, hand out sticky notes to students and have them write a positive note to someone in the class explaining why they are special to the community. To ensure every member in the class gets a positive note, have students randomly draw names. Then, have them stick their note on their classmate's puzzle piece.

### Family Engagement

Share a digital copy or send home puzzle piece worksheet with families. Have family members work on creating their own family puzzles and encourage them to share them on social media.

### Connection

Encourage SAVE Promise Club members to get involved by collecting puzzle pieces from classrooms and creating one whole school puzzle. Place the large collective puzzle somewhere highly visible in the school.



# Graduation Speech

## AN IDENTITY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Write or record their own 8th grade graduation speech by reflecting on their own strengths and applying them to helping others.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
- **Social Awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

#### Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 7:** Develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
- **Diversity 9:** Respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#)

### Mindful Minute

Ask students to take a deep breath and stay in the present moment. Read the quote by Maya Angelou two or three times that is referenced in the *Start With Hello* presentation. Instruct students to simply be present and contemplate the quote for a minute. After a minute, ask students to take another inhale-exhale and move into a circle.



### Unit Essential Question

How have I analyzed and discovered awareness of my strengths, values, and identity along with the unique identities of others?

#### Grades:

6-8

### Estimated Time Needed

30-45 minutes

### Notes

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*“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*

## Student Connector



Circle Up

### Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and Know the Signs Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Worksheet](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use “I statements.”
- Use a talking piece.
- Check-in with participants.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

### Activity

Instruct students to use a scrap piece of paper to write down 1-3 words that describe how they make their family or friends feel or how they want to make their family and friends feel. Ask students to crumple up their paper like a snowball and throw it into the middle of the circle. Once all papers are in the center, tell students to grab one of the snowballs and get back into the circle. Go around the circle in order and ask each student to read the feelings words that are on the snowball. After all snowballs are read aloud, ask a few guiding circle discussion questions:

### Discussion

Engage the class in a discussion about the snowball activity. Here are a few guiding questions:

- *Which feelings were most shared?*
- *Approximately what percentages of the feelings were positive versus negative?*
- *How could our community, society be different if every member worked hard to make sure they made people feel those positive feelings words that were written on the snowballs?*
- *How can you apply Maya Angelou's quote mentioned in the Mindful Minute to your life at school? At home?*

## Closing

To close the Circle Up, ask students to give a shoutout to one of their classmates who made a comment that resonates with them.

- *I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_ for sharing with us today.*
- *Way to go \_\_\_\_\_ I like your idea.*
- *Thank you for sharing your opinion \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Give finger snaps or air high-fives or fist bumps in place of verbal appreciation or affirmation.*



## Main Activity

### The Graduation Speech: What will you contribute to society?

Students will write or record a graduation speech that speaks to what they will contribute to society once they walk off the stage and move into high school. They will use the [Graduation Speech Worksheet](#) to draw themselves at the podium on stage and jot down main words and phrases surrounding the podium that they'd like to highlight in their speech. If time permits, allow a few minutes for students to share their graduation speeches on a voluntary basis.

Provide the following prompt for students:

*Think about being on stage at your 8th grade graduation ceremony and being asked to deliver a speech. What would you want to tell your peers, classmates, teachers, and families in the audience?*

### Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Refer to the three steps of *Start With Hello*: See Someone Alone; Reach Out and Help; and “Start With Hello.” Remind students that they will make an impact on the way classmates feel just by being friendly and reaching out when a classmate may seem lonely, down, or excluded from an activity.

#### Promise Challenge

As a Promise Challenge, invite students to write down Maya Angelou’s quote and place it in a spot where they will see it often. For example, adhere it to a phone case, post it on a bathroom mirror, or tape it to a locker.

### Explore More

Students can feel inspired by listening to commencement speeches. NPR compiled a list of the “best graduation speeches ever” with a host of politicians, activists, and actors who have delivered speeches across the country.

### Family Engagement

Encourage families to download the [Start With Hello Family Monthly Activity Guide](#) for ideas on how to highlight the special qualities of their identities.

## Connection

Invite members of the [SAVE Promise Club](https://www.sandyhookpromise.org) to your class to hear and provide feedback on the graduation speeches.



# This is Me: Synthesis Lesson

## AN IDENTITY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Analyze a poem on identity.
- Construct their own poems on identity.
- Discover more about their classmates by reading a poem about their identity.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
- **Social Awareness:** The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

#### Social Justice Standards

- **Identity 1:** Develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society.
- **Identity 2:** Develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups.
- **Identity 3:** Recognize that people's multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals.
- **Identity 4:** Express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.

### Materials and Resources

- [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#)

### Mindful Minute

Have students open the *Start With Hello* themed mindfulness coloring pages and allow them time to color them in or draw



### Unit Essential Question

How have I analyzed and discovered awareness of my strengths, values, and identity along with the unique identities of others?

#### Grades:

6-8

### Estimated Time Needed

45-60 minutes

#### Notes

their own. Ask students to leave all thoughts and worries outside the class and focus on coloring or drawing for 5–10 minutes.

## Student Connector

This activity will require the educator to create a name pull jar or bucket with each student's name. Ask students to think about one of their unique qualities or special characteristics that they don't typically share with classmates.

- Each student pulls a classmate's name, partners up, and shares that unique quality or special characteristic with their partner. Start sharing with this sentence starter:
- You can see me for who I am when \_\_\_\_\_.
- Put names back in jar/bucket.
- Now, ask students to think about a quality, characteristic, or linguistic asset that is important to them and their culture.
- Each student pulls a different classmate's name, partners up, and shares that quality/characteristic/linguistic asset with their partner.
- You can see me for who I am when you know that\_\_\_\_\_.



## Main Activity



### Circle Up

#### Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and Know the Signs Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Worksheet](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."
- Use a talking piece.
- Check-in with participants.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

#### Reflection



The class will read a poem titled “Identity” by Julio Noboa. Noboa grew up in the Bronx and is of Puerto Rican descent. He wrote this poem when he was in the 7th grade.

Start off by having each person read a line from the poem located in the [Start With Hello Identity Workbook](#). As the class is reading, ask them to draw what they hear and feel in the margins of the Identity: Poem Analysis Worksheet. Feel free to read it a second or third time so that students can have time to focus on their drawing.

### Discussion

Engage the class in a discussion about the poem. Here are a few guiding questions:

- *What were some common themes throughout the poem?*
- *What is the poet trying to get across?*
- *What is Noboa saying about his identity?*
- *What would you include about your identity?*

### Closing

To close the Circle Up, ask students to provide one word that they will take away from this discussion.

### Construct a This is Me Poem

Students will now be writing their own identity poems. They will use the [This Is Me Brainstorming Worksheet](#) to help them get some ideas down. Once they are done brainstorming, guide students in writing their very own poem. This is a great opportunity to add in student choice and allow them to choose what type of poem they want to write.

- **Free verse:** This is the writer’s choice and can include as many lines or stanzas as they want and it does not have to rhyme.
  - Students can use this outline as a guide:
    - I’m...*** Describe your physical features, qualities, or ethnicities.
    - I’m from...*** Describe your neighborhood, community, culture, or heritage.
    - I like...*** Describe your hobbies and interests.
    - I believe...*** Describe what you strongly believe in.
    - I aspire to...*** Describe your goals and aspirations.
  - This is me!***
- **Acrostic:** This style requires the writer to spell out a word using the first letter of each line and it does not have to rhyme.
  - Some examples of words or phrases that can be spelled are:
    - This Is Me
    - Identity
    - Their name

- **Haiku:** This style is a total of three lines. The first and third line contain five syllables and the second line contains seven syllables.

Once all poems are completed, have students **Turn-N-Learn** with a partner. Each student will read or allow their partner to read the poem they wrote about themselves. Then, if time permits, provide students with time to **Think-Reflect-React** to the journal prompt below in their [workbooks](#):

### Journal Time

What did you learn about your partner today from reading their poem?

## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Thank students for being vulnerable in sharing these pieces of their identity with their peers. It is not an easy task. By celebrating our differences, embracing and appreciating our identities and the diverse identities around us, we are leading by example. We are also spreading the seeds of compassion and empathy, standing up for injustices around us, and making a positive impact on the world.

### Promise Challenge

Put self-care first! Dedicate one hour to doing something for yourself such as journaling, taking a bath, or reading a book.

## Explore More

If time allows you to extend this lesson, this would be a great opportunity to set up a coffee shop vibe in the classroom. Allow volunteers to present their poems in a relaxed environment. This can be done by bringing pillows into the classroom, dimming the lights, and allowing the audience the freedom to sit however they please. Perhaps consider bringing in another class to join as the audience.

## Family Engagement

Ask students to share their poems, if they feel comfortable, with their families. Encourage them to write their own family identity poems. Here are some ideas of the type of poems they can create together:

- A freestyle poem titled “This is Us” describing family members, their values, and their community.
- If they have a shared last name, families can write an acrostic poem spelling out that name.
- Each family member can come up with a haiku describing their role in the family.



Host a poetry slam with the class poems and charge a small fee for admission. Donate the funds to your school's [SAVE Promise Club – Sandy Hook Promise](#).





# Sandy Hook **PROMISE**

