

Leadership Activity: Celebrating Our Unique Identities

One way to affirm that students don't need to fit in the dominant paradigm to belong is by organizing a student-identity showcase. This event promotes inclusivity and encourages students to celebrate their unique identities, interests, and experiences while developing empathy and appreciation for their peers.

However, this activity is not a cure-all or one-time gesture and should not be framed as such. If students express throughout the year that they feel unseen or unheard, listen, validate, and avoid using the showcase as proof that the school is inclusive. It's a valuable first step—not a final one—and should be paired with ongoing opportunities for daily identity affirmation and relationship building.

Objective: Celebrate student identity and promote community understanding through a voluntary showcase event.

Materials:

- Copies of this reproducible for facilitators and participants
- Poster board
- Markers, paint, and other art supplies
- Access to multimedia tools (projector, speakers, and microphones)
- Display space (gymnasium, multipurpose room, or classrooms)
- Reflection handouts or journals

Duration: Four weeks total (two weeks of planning and preparation, one event day, and one week for post-event reflection and follow-up)

Follow these steps.

1. **Assemble a planning team:** Include educators, counselors, administrators, and student leaders to ensure diverse perspectives and logistic support.
2. **Set a date and secure resources:** Choose a date and location for the event. Gather necessary materials and allocate preparation time during advisory periods or after school.
3. **Inform the student body:** Use fliers, social media, daily announcements, and newsletters to build interest and excitement. Make participation voluntary and affirming.
4. **Support student self-reflection:** Invite participants to reflect on aspects of their identity—languages, hobbies, challenges, dreams, traditions, or family stories. Encourage multiple modes of expression, such as artwork, video, poetry, music, or storytelling.
5. **Guide preparation:** Provide students with time, encouragement, and adult support during the preparation phase. Be mindful of emotional safety—participation should never feel performative or pressured.
6. **Host the event:** Celebrate students' presentations with the full school community. Allow time for informal conversations, guided question-and-answer sessions, and appreciation for each student's contribution.

7. **Facilitate reflection:** After the event, debrief with participating students in small groups or classroom settings. Ask the following questions.
 - “What did you learn about yourself or someone else?”
 - “What surprised you?”
 - “How might this impact the way we treat one another?”
8. **Establish a belonging task force:** Invite interested students and staff to form a group that meets regularly to organize future inclusivity events and advocate for student voice in school culture. This task force may work alongside or in coordination with your student voice panel, but its focus is on identity, affirmation, and community celebration. Read about creating the belonging task force on page 94.