

Middle School Lesson

Examining and Interrupting Hate

Rationale

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to develop a vocabulary and understanding of potentially unfair and hateful attitudes and behaviors in general, and to consider how events of the past have led to unfair stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and scapegoating of, among others, Muslim and Arab Americans. Students are also asked to consider ways that they can interrupt the escalation of hateful attitudes and behaviors.

[NOTE: Please see [“Talking with Students about Diversity and Bias”](#) for more information about responding to expressions of prejudice in the classroom.]

Objectives

- Students will explore the concepts of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating.
- Students will consider how the events of September 11th have led to stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating.
- Students will identify ways that they can interrupt the escalation of hate in their schools and communities and consider the value of taking such actions.

Age Range

Grades 6–8

Time

2–3 class periods

Requirements

- Chart paper, markers

Key Words

Discrimination
Prejudice
Scapegoating
Stereotype

Procedures

1. On a piece of chart paper, write the word “stereotype” and have students create a web for the term. Encourage students to share their understanding of “stereotype” and give examples as they respond. Upon completion of the web, have students develop a definition for the word.

Suggested definition: A **stereotype** is an oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences.

2. Ask students to consider how stereotypes are learned and what effect they have both on the person who believes them and the person or group who is being stereotyped. Have students discuss how even seemingly positive stereotypes like “Asian Americans are good at math” can still have negative results. For example, tracking Asian-American students into academic or extracurricular activities without taking into account individuals students’ interests or abilities or a teacher not providing appropriate assistance to an Asian-American students who may need extra help in math.
3. On another piece of chart paper, write the word “prejudice,” and have students create a web for this term. For example, “I don’t like you because you dress differently from me and my friends.” Again, encourage them to think about the meaning of the word as well as examples. Upon completion of the web, have students develop a definition for the word.

Suggested definition: **Prejudice** is a premature judgment or belief formed about a person, group or concept before gaining sufficient knowledge or by selectively disregarding facts.

4. Ask students to discuss how stereotypes and prejudice are related. Ask them if they think it is likely that a person who is prejudiced toward a group of people also believes certain stereotypes about them. Have students give examples to support their thinking.
5. On a new piece of chart paper, write the word “discrimination,” and have students create a web for this term. Prompt students by explaining that while stereotype and prejudice are attitudes, discrimination is an action. For example, many African Americans experience extra surveillance in variety of life situations, such as shopping and when driving. Have students share their understanding of the term and give examples of how groups have been or are still discriminated against. Upon completion of the web, have students develop a definition for the word.

Suggested definition: **Discrimination** is the denial of justice, resources and fair treatment of individuals and groups (often based on social identity), through employment, education, housing, banking, political rights, etc.

6. Have students consider how discrimination can be an outgrowth of stereotyping and prejudice.
7. If it is unlikely that students will have a working knowledge of the term scapegoating, begin by asking them if they or a group to which they belong has ever been unfairly blamed for something. After they have given examples, have students complete a web for the term scapegoating and then work together to develop a definition.

Suggested definition: **Scapegoating** is blaming an individual or group for something based on that person or group’s identity when the person or group is not responsible.

8. Ask students to think of past and present examples of scapegoating (e.g., gay men blamed for the AIDS epidemic, Jews blamed for events taking place in Germany prior to World War II, and again in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world, after the terrorist attacks, newly arriving immigrants blamed for economic problems in the United States). Have students consider how scapegoating can interfere with getting to the real cause of a problem as well as hurting those who are accused.

9. On the board, write the following statements:

- All teenagers shoplift.
- I don’t like teenagers.
- I wouldn’t hire a teenager to work for me.
- Teenagers caused my business to fail.

10. Have students identify which of the terms that they defined best matches each of the statements, e.g., “all teenagers shoplift” is a stereotype; “I don’t like teenagers” is prejudice, and so forth.

11. As a whole group, have students think of a similar example that shows both their understanding of the terms and how they are interrelated. Write this example on the board.

12. Divide students into small groups and give each group a piece of chart paper and marker. Have students select a recorder for the group. Instruct the recorder to draw a large pyramid on the paper and divide it into four sections. Starting at the bottom, label the sections as follows: STEREOTYPE, PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION, SCAPEGOATING (see Figure 1).

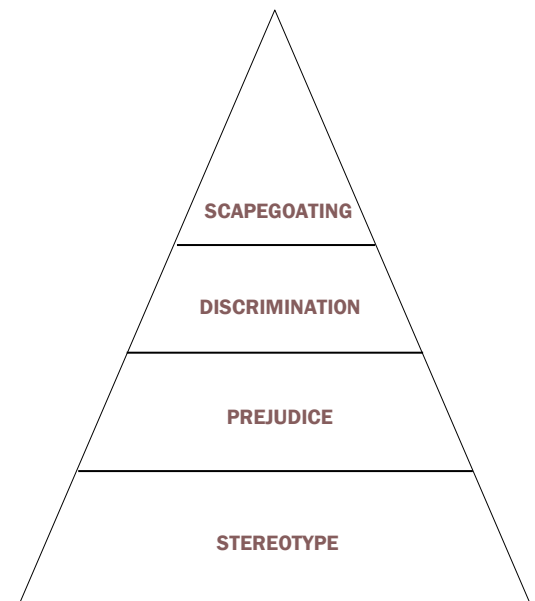


Figure 1

13. Working together in their groups, have students think of examples similar to those on the board that illustrate how negative attitudes and behaviors can escalate. Instruct them to write their responses on the chart paper in the appropriate sections of the pyramid. Encourage students to refer to the definitions as needed.
14. After all groups have presented, have a whole-group discussion, using some or all of the following questions:
15. Close this lesson by having students write an essay on how they can stop the escalation of hateful attitudes and behaviors in their schools and communities.

Assessment Recommendations:

Students' understanding should be assessed through:

- ➔ contribution to class discussion
- ➔ active participation in a small group assignment
- ➔ ability to provide examples or evidence to support ideas
- ➔ willingness to listen and consider the ideas of others
- ➔ presentation of ideas in essay form

Extended Activities:

- ➔ Designate a bulletin board in the classroom where students can post articles from print resources or from the Internet that illustrate the concepts covered in this lesson. Provide time for students to discuss the articles and consider whether the situation is an example of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and/or scapegoating. Encourage students to examine how a situation, which may appear to be a clear example of one of these concepts, will, upon careful examination, often reveal an escalation of hate. For example, the brutal deaths of Matthew Shepard and James Byrd did not happen without underlying stereotypes and prejudice toward gay men and African Americans.
- ➔ Have students research cultural groups that have been victims of prejudice and discrimination in the United States and prepare timelines of important events that trace their struggles.
- ➔ Have students research the treatment of German Americans and Japanese Americans during World War II and report their findings in a written or oral report. Their presentation should explain how treatment of these two groups escalated from stereotypes about them to blaming them for events over which they had no control. Encourage students to learn about young people who work to end prejudice and discrimination in their schools and communities.