

Learning

Knowing and understanding diversity at school

Take a step forward (Compass activity, modified for teachers and educators)

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/take-a-step-forward>

Learning objectives	To increase awareness and knowledge of diversity in the classroom and raise awareness about the inequality of opportunities in the school community.
Tasks	Teachers in a students' role take one step forward every time they agree with a statement.
Resources	Open space (hall, foyer, outdoors), role cards, music
Methods	Role play, discussion

- Create a calm atmosphere with some soft background music. Alternatively, ask the participants for silence.
- Hand out the role cards at random, one to each participant. Tell them to keep it to themselves and not to show it to anyone else.
- Invite them to sit down (preferably on the floor) and to read their role card.
- Now ask them to begin to get into role. To help, read out some of the following questions, pausing after each one, to give people time to reflect and build up a picture of themselves and their lives: What was your childhood like? What sort of house did you live in? What kind of games did you play? What sort of work did your parents do?
- Let's follow a school day: I wake up in my house..... All day Last thing before I sleep is to think about my future, my hopes, my fears...
- Now ask people to remain absolutely silent as they line up beside each other (like on a starting line).
- Tell the participants that you are going to read out a list of situations or events. Every time that they can answer "yes" to the statement, they should take a step forward. Otherwise, they should stay where they are and not move.
- Read out the situations one at a time. Pause for a while between each statement to allow people time to step forward and to look around to take note of their positions relative to each other.
- At the end, invite everyone to take note of their final positions. Then give them a couple of minutes to come out of their role before debriefing in plenary.
- Debriefing can be guided by the following questions:
 - How did people feel about stepping forward – or not?
 - For those who stepped forward often, at what point did they begin to notice that others were not moving as fast as they were?
 - Did anyone feel that there were moments when their basic human rights were being ignored?
 - How easy or difficult was it to play the different roles?
 - How did they imagine what the person they were playing was like?
 - Can people guess each other's roles? (Let people reveal their roles during this part of the discussion)
 - Does the exercise mirror school society in some way? How?
 - What first steps could be taken to address the inequalities in the school community?

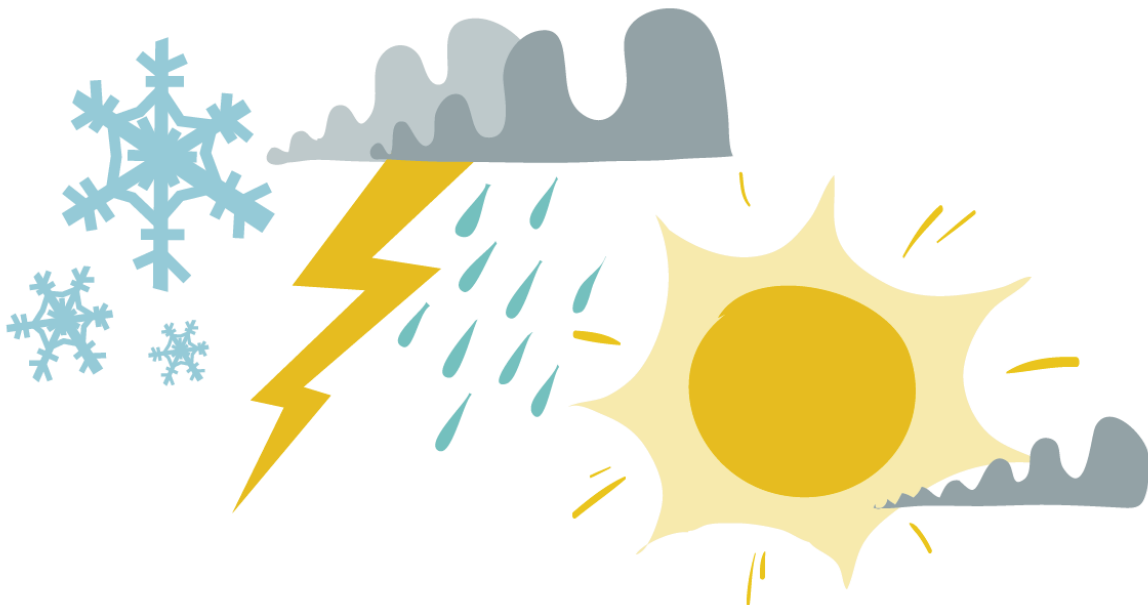
Tips for facilitators

If you do this activity outdoors, make sure that the participants can hear you, especially if you are doing it with a large group! You may need to use your co-facilitators to relay the statements.

In the imagining phase at the beginning, it is possible that some participants may say that they know little about the life of the person they have to impersonate. Tell them, this does not really matter, and that they should use their imagination and to act it out as best they can.

The power of this activity lies in the impact of actually seeing the distance increasing between the participants, especially at the end when there should be a big distance between those that stepped forward often and those who did not. To enhance the impact, it is important that you adjust the roles to reflect the realities of the participants' own lives. In so doing, be sure you adapt the roles so that only a minimum of people can take steps forward (i.e. can answer "yes"). This also applies if you have a large group and need more roles.

During the debriefing and evaluation, it is important to explore how the participants knew about the character whose role they had to play. Was it through personal experience or through other sources of information (news, books, and jokes)? How sure are they that the information and images they have of the characters are reliable? This way you can also introduce how stereotypes and prejudice work.



Worksheet

You are the daughter of the Math teacher at your school	Some of the teachers are clients at your mother's hairdressers shop
Your father is a priest	You are a daughter of Filipino immigrants
You have come to the country from India, seven years ago	Your parents are architects
Your father, a doctor, would like you to become a doctor as well	Your parents are workers at a clothes factory
You are the first of 5 children in the family. Your father works at the local municipality	Your parents are conservatively religious
You are the daughter of a financial immigrant from Pakistan	Your father owns a big shoe shop
Your parents have been unemployed for the last six months	Your parents are separated, they are in court, fighting for your custody
You are the son of a single parent family	Your parents have been divorced for 6 years now. Your mother is a history teacher
Your family has come from the United States. You have been living here for one year now	You are a Roma girl. You live in a camp, 20 minutes away from school
You are the daughter of an employee of the German embassy in the country	You are handicapped. You get around in move on a wheel chair
You are the first son of a Jewish family	Your father works in a factory, your mother is not working