“The Being” Activity

A Simple, Effective, Low-Cost Activity to Use in Your Classroom

Author

David Flores Jr, YouthBuild Charter School of California

The activity

The purpose of this activity is to create a safe space within the classroom for students to discuss issues around identity and diversity. Students will discuss what qualities make them feel safe and allow them to trust others, and create a “Being” that embodies those qualities. Through the creation and design of The Being, students begin to understand what specific feelings are being protected from insensitive and intolerant comments. Self-reflection is practiced since students are required to think about environments that produce a sense of safety, and students practice their public speaking skills while presenting their Being to the class. The Being activity is also a community builder since most students will be working with a partner(s) who is not a friend.

This activity is great for promoting a respectful classroom culture, classroom management, community building and classroom rituals & routines.

Students will learn

- Listening and teamwork skills
- Self-reflection
- Public speaking
- How to communicate effectively with others

Here’s what you do

Resources needed:
- Enough poster paper to create 4-5 life-size beings
- Markers

Approximate time:
2 hours

Visit https://youthbuild.org/my/education to access more classroom activity ideas
Instructions

1) **Think, Write, Pair-Share:**

- Individually, students are instructed to think about a person, place, or thing that helps them feel comfortable, relaxed, and safe during times of uncertainty. Students are instructed to capture their thoughts in writing.

- After writing, students are instructed to pair up and share their write-ups with a partner.

- After sharing with a partner, students debrief with the entire class. However, students are instructed that they must share the response of their partner with the class. Prior to sharing, the student must introduce their partner to the entire class.

2) **Recording:**

- As the students are sharing out, the teacher should be capturing the person, place or thing on the board. Please allow for enough space on the board to create multiple web maps.

- After all students have shared out, you might notice that it is necessary to have students elaborate on the specific person, place or thing on the board. For example, someone sharing “People I trust” can have multiple explanations. A web map on “People I trust” could produce a web map with “No two face” and from “No two face” “Authentic and Honest People” and “Keeping it 100% real” are both added.

3) **Activity 3 (Students):**

- After the share-out and web mapping, students are placed into random groups so they can begin creating their Being. (3-4 students per group)

- On a large sheet of butcher paper, an outline of one student is copied on the paper.
- After outlining a student, the entire group begins to place all of the safe words/feelings into The Being.

- On the outside of The Being, students place thoughts, words, or actions that serve to hurt The Being and therefore create a hostile classroom environment.

- Lastly, students are given time to decorate The Being to make it as attractive as possible before the presentations and voting.

4) **Activity 4 (post-vote):**

- The Being that receives the most votes is placed on the wall and serves as a reminder of the Safe Space students have collective described and created for the classroom.

**Success Tips**

- Upon completing the Safe Space web map, I take pictures of the board in the event we run out of time for the day. I then email the pictures to the students so they are reminded of what they should include in The Being.