Your Stories

Some great ideas from the UnityWorks site teams!

No Room in My Heart for Prejudice

Roosevelt Elementary school created a “Unity Wall” which included this display on “No Room in My Heart for Prejudice.” Here, librarian Leigh Lohrasbi & school counselor Lupita Mason add photos of every staff member and student to the wall. As a key part of this project, rather than grouping the photos by classroom or arranging them in alphabetical order, the photos were deliberately placed next to those from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Students were then asked to locate their own photo, to meet the two people on either side, and to say hello.

Next, the Roosevelt UnityWorks Team organized a classroom-based art and essay competition, inviting students to explain what "No room in my heart for prejudice" means to them. Winning entries were shared with the entire school.

In a letter to staff, Principal Dan Williams explained: “We continue to educate our students year-long in the understanding that although we are physically and culturally different, we can learn to respect each other since we are all part of the same race: human. Teachers, you are our best hope to make a difference in each classroom. If we change the lives of even one student, it is worth it.”

Family Tree

Garfield Elementary School teacher Amy Moloso created a colorful "family tree" using photographs of her 4th and 5th grade students, with cutouts of their arms and hands for the branches.

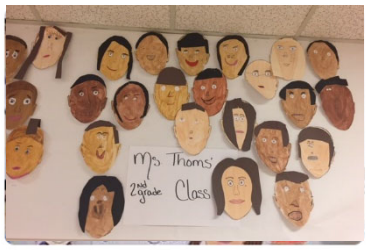
What a wonderful way to illustrate the oneness of humanity!

Skin-Color Portraits Increase Student Acceptance

Concerned about a sharp increase in incidents of racial bias and bullying, the Hoover Elementary UnityWorks team was able to successfully eliminate these incidents and completely change the school culture through a series of lessons on race and skin color based on our **Teaching Unity** curriculum.

For their culminating activity, 50 staff and over 700 students created beautiful self-portraits, mixing paint to accurately match their own skin colors. The portraits were then displayed throughout the school.

As a direct result, incidents of racial bias, went from double digits to zero, overnight. "We are now a community!" said Principal Luz Juarez-Stump.



Top left: The UnityWorks site team. Top right: Teacher Robyn Harris explains the activity to her students.

Watch this short video about Hoover's Journey.

Diversity Plan Unifies School Community

Washington Middle School administrators were concerned about the lack of parental involvement, which correlates with low academic achievement. Almost 94% of the students' families are Hispanic immigrants. Most did not speak English, and many did not feel welcome at school.

In consultation with those families, the UnityWorks site team developed a plan that succeeded in improving school climate and raising parental involvement from only 5 people, to over 450 in a single year. Teams of staff, faculty, students, parents and community members met monthly to research and prepare a colorful year-end celebration through the arts, performances and food.

As Assistant Principal Julio Sanchez explains, "The program was a family-friendly evening of entertainment and educational experiences. Over 450 people attended this great event where we learned about our own cultural diversity. The program provided many opportunities to advance the conversation about unity in diversity, and to demonstrate respect for the cultural backgrounds of all students. We've been improving the program for four years now, and have been making progress towards our goals every year."

Activities included:

- Dance: Traditional Aztec, Native American, Fusion, Mexican folkloric
- Cultural art making: aguinaldos, beading, cookie decoration, bracelets
- Cultural food: tamales, pozole, fry bread, champurado, fried chicken

From teacher Jana Hoberg: “Our Multicultural Festival was the culminating program for a wonderful, unifying educational process which included months of research and preparation by the entire school community. We worked together in planning teams with students, teachers, administrators, parents and other community members to learn about the different cultures and ethnic groups represented at our school. Our site team's goal was to increase community involvement, which went from only five people at the first meeting to over 450 participants at the final event!”

Speaking through a translator, parent Jacoba Barrios shares her joy at finally being included.

For additional highlights from the UnityWorks Schools, click here