



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Cliques in Schools (High School)

Activities will help students:

- recognize the cliques at their own school
- explore ways to integrate all students and form new friendships
- learn how to communicate with people outside of their friendship circles/cliques

Essential Questions

- What is the difference between a friendship group and a clique?
- Are cliques positive or negative forces in a school community?
- How can it be powerful to make friends outside of your clique?
- How can learning to communicate with all people help you in the future?

Activities

1. While friendship circles can be healthy and made up of people who share common interests, a clique can be something entirely different. (*Note: You may wish to record this definition of clique on the board or on chart paper.*) A **clique** is a group of friends that often has the following characteristics:
 - extreme control over the members of the group (“We only wear brand-name clothing.”)
 - strict rules about who is allowed into the group (“We don’t hang out with people like THAT.”)
 - inflexible exit from the group (“If she hangs out with THAT girl, we’re not going to be friends with her.”)
2. Are there cliques at your school? Take a moment to work on your own to think about the different groups that surround you in class every day. Make a list of the clique nicknames (*jocks, preps*) in your school community.
3. Share your list with your classmates to create one class list of the cliques at your school. (*Note: You may wish to record this class list on the board or on chart paper.*)
4. So what is so wrong with being in a clique? Cliques can be really restricting. In the “real world,” or life after high school, you will have to communicate with many different kinds of people, especially in college and later in your work environment. Learning to talk to people in different cliques can help you in the future.
5. As a class, choose one of the following activities to help cliques mingle:
 - Research different species of animals that also form “cliques” naturally. Do social groupings occur outside of the human race? What are the similarities and differences between human cliques and animal social groups? You may want to discuss this project with your science teacher for advice. Present what you’ve discovered to your class.
 - Interview someone who is in college to investigate whether or not cliques exist beyond high school. Create a list of questions such as “What are the social groups like in college?” or “Do you think there are strong divisions between sorority/fraternity members and other groups on campus?” Record your interview subject’s answers and write an article summarizing your findings. You may want to see if your school newspaper would be willing to publish your article.