

# Talking About Diversity

Learning to appreciate all kinds of diversity, such as racial, cultural, socioeconomic, gender, gender identities, abilities and language is an important skill in our diverse schools, communities and society. Here are tips for teachers about classrooms and conversations.

## **DO use these practices to foster greater understanding and to learn from each other**

- **Do** treat all people with respect, dignity, and courtesy
- **Do** actively listen more than you speak
- **Do** learn about where a student lives, their country of origin, culture, language or orientation, etc.
- **Do** recognize the struggles of students, regardless of your comfort level with the situation
- **Do** recognize that many diverse groups are represented in your classrooms
- **Do** provide a supportive channel for students to be demonstrative of their thoughts
- **Do** put effort into breaking down a controversial situation to affirm students and to promote inclusivity
- **Do** be alert for microaggressions in classrooms that are covert and overt
- **Do** acknowledge that you and we don't have all the answers, but we will work to find them
- **Do** bring in guest speakers with balanced perspectives on diversity topics
- **Do** create a safe environment for all identities
- **Do** recognize and celebrate everyone's uniqueness
- **Do** value diversity through accepting and respecting differences
- **Do** create a classroom climate where students can discuss equity issues

## **DON'T think you're alone; there are resources available at each school—just ask your administrator**

- **Don't** make the focus of the conversation about yourself
- **Don't** interrupt people while they are speaking
- **Don't** assume that if you have not encountered a situation, it does not exist
- **Don't** assume that a student is an expert on any experiences beyond their own
- **Don't** expect a student to speak for their entire group
- **Don't** deny a student's opportunity to speak their truth
- **Don't** generalize all characteristics of one culture, race or identity to all in that category
- **Don't** try to force your personal preference for interacting on another person
- **Don't** assume that a student is exaggerating their experience with inequality or inequities
- **Don't** imply that you have the same feeling as the student regarding racism, gender, poverty, etc.
- **Don't** make assumptions solely due to one factor, such as race, language, country of origin, etc.
- **Don't** put emphasis on stereotypes throughout your conversation
- **Don't** assert ideas outside of your level of experience
- **Don't** equate access with equity or presence with participation
- **Don't** treat cultural competency as a fad, it's the means to greater understanding and equity

Sources: SUNY Brockport  
University of Denver  
NYSED