

*Celebrating Differences and Similarities:  
Exploring Identity*

Kindergarten Mini-Unit  
By Michelle White

## **Unit Rationale and Link to Standards:**

This unit was created as a back to school unit for building community in the classroom and celebrating one another's differences and similarities. The unit introduces children to a variety of topics surrounding multiculturalism and fosters an appreciation of diversity. Children will be introduced to one another as individuals and begin to understand the many differences and similarities that they share. In this unit students will explore what some of the things that make us different are and what some of the things that we share are. Children will be introduced to racial diversity in a developmentally appropriate way and observe it as only one part of our identity. Students will learn that they all share similarities with one another and also with children from around the world. This unit will foster an appreciation of one another's identities and an understanding that even though we do have all of these differences the more important things about us are our similarities.

In developing this unit I did not want to make it merely a multicultural unit, I wanted to make this unit an introduction to just some of our differences and similarities that we share in a multicultural classroom. Although this is only one unit that celebrates these things, multicultural literature and resources would be included in many units throughout the year.

This unit will cover several Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. The standards that are covered in this unit are in the Reading Literature strand, Reading Informational Texts strand, and the Speaking and Listening strand. A full list of the standards that will be covered are on the following page.

## **Relevant Common Core Literacy Standards:**

### **Strand: Reading Literature**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.10 Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

### **Strand: Reading Informational Texts**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.K.10 Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

### **Strand: Speaking and Listening**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.4 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.6 Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

## **Unit Objectives**

1. Students will recognize themselves as unique individuals and recognize others as unique individuals.
2. Students will develop an appreciation for, and understanding of diversity.
3. Students will build an appreciation for their similarities and differences.
4. Students will see the value in the similarities that they share with one another and others in the world.

# Celebrating Differences and Similarities: Exploring Identity

## Lesson 1: Introduction to Ourselves

### Objectives:

1. Introduce concept of identity
2. Give students the opportunity to get to know one another

**Focus Questions:** Who are each of us? What makes us who we are?

**Duration:** 60 minutes

### Materials:

1. Letter to Parents (sent out prior to activity, an example provided in the Appendix)
2. Brown paper bags (given to students with the letter to parents)
3. Teacher's paper bag and each student's paper bag filled with the following things: A picture of your family, a drawing of your home, something from your family's favorite holiday, something that makes you happy, and something that makes you cry.

### Procedures:

#### *Part One: Introduction (5 minutes)*

1. Call all students to the carpet area and instruct them to bring their paper bags with them. An explanation of the assignment will have been given to students the previous day, but restate what the assignment is about so that the children will be more comfortable sharing. Explain that in each of our paper bags we have things that describe who all of us are. Explain that each of our bags contain pictures of our family, a picture that we drew of our home, something from our family's favorite holiday, something that makes us happy, and something that makes us cry.

#### *Part Two: (~42 minutes)*

2. As the teacher, present your bag first. Take out the things one at a time and explain what they are and why you chose each of them to put in your bag. (2 minutes)
3. Going around the circle at the carpet area, give each student the opportunity to present his/her bag (~ 2 minutes for each student)

### Closure and Evaluation:

#### *Part Three: Closing Discussion (13 minutes)*

4. Discuss with students some of the things that we all learned about one another. Going around the circle have each student share something surprising that they learned about someone else in the classroom (10 minutes)
5. Explain how each of the things in our bags tells something about who each of us is. (3 minutes)

## Lesson 2: Self-Portrait

**Objectives:** Students will:

1. Recognize how each one of us has a different appearance
2. Create an accurate self-portrait of themselves

**Duration:** 48 minutes

**Materials:**

1. *Shades of People* by Shelly Rotner
2. A mirror
3. Large piece of white paper for each student
4. Paintbrush for each student
5. Multicultural paints
6. Black, white, red, pink, blue, green, brown, yellow paint (for eyes and physical features) on paper plates for each group
7. A cup for each shade of multicultural paint at all of the tables
8. Spoons for each cup
9. Small paper plates to mix paints on
10. Cup of water for each student
11. Yarn in various colors and textures representative of hair

**Procedures:**

**Part One: (10 minutes)**

1. Read *Shades of People* by Shelly Rotner. Discuss the book with students. Explain that we all have a different appearance and we all have different and beautiful shades of skin. Explain that we are going to paint a self-portrait of ourselves and mix paint to be the same color as our skin. Explain that we are going to paint our eyes the color that they are, and we are going to add yarn that looks like our hair to our pictures. Pass the mirror around so that each student can observe their own hair, skin and eye color.

**Part Two: (~42 minutes)**

2. Explain to students that at each table there is a cup that is filled with a different shade of (multicultural) paint. Tell the students to hold their hand above each shade of paint to see which one is closest to the shade of their skin. Instruct students to then put a spoonful of that color onto their plate and then if the shade needs to be a little bit lighter to add a drop of white and if it needs to be darker add one of the darker shades to the paint and mix it in. (Demonstrate how adding white or a darker color changes the color). Go around the room and assist anyone who needs help making their skin color. (10 minutes)
3. Tell the students that after they have mixed the colors to match the shade of their skin that they need to paint a large oval on the paper for their face. Explain that they are just doing the skin and that they will do their mouths and eyes after they have painted their skin. (Do a quick example to show students). (3 minutes)

4. Once student have painted their skin-tone circle or oval on their paper, pass out a paper plate with all of the other colors on it to each table. Explain that they need to paint things accurately and tell them that can outline their eyes, nose, and mouth in black and then fill them in with the appropriate colors. (Quickly add these features to the example to show the students) (15 minutes)
5. Once students have completed their face have them find the yarn that resembles their own hair and allow them to glue it to their paper. (5 minutes)

**Closure and Evaluation:**

***Part Three: Closing Discussion (5 minutes)***

6. Discuss the experience of creating a self-portrait with the students. Ask students what it felt like when they finally matched the color of paint to the color of their skin. Discuss how each one of the self-portraits shows how different and special all of us are.

**Lesson 3: Ourselves as Individuals with Kandinsky Concentric Circles**

*(This was adapted from Erin Sample's activity found at: <http://samplesuperstars.blogspot.com/2012/07/i-am-unique-back-to-school-unit.html>)*

**Objectives:** Students will:

1. View themselves as unique individuals
2. View others as unique individuals

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Materials:**

1. 6x6 piece of white paper for each students
2. Paintbrush for each student
3. Small cup of water for each student
4. Paper towel for each student
5. A paper plate at each group with the following colors of paint on it: purple, blue, red, orange, yellow, black, pink, green, and gold.
6. A large picture of Wassily Kandinsky's *Squares with Concentric Circles* painting
7. A projector to project the directions onto the white board or copies of the directions for each student.

**Procedures:**

***Part One: (10 minutes)***

1. Show students the large picture of Kandinsky's *Squares with Concentric Circles* and have a discussion about the painting with the students. Ask the students questions about what they observe in the painting, the different colors, etc. Help guide the discussion and lead the students to observe that each of the squares with the circles in them is unique. Explain to the students that together we are all going to paint a picture just as beautiful as Kandinsky's but that our picture is going to be extra special. Explain that

each of us is going to paint a square with circles in it that represents who we are, and that each of our circles will be different.

***Part Two: (30 minutes)***

2. Instruct students to go to their tables where all of the supplies have been laid out. Explain that although they may want to just start painting right away that it is very important that they wait and follow each of the directions (3 minutes)
3. Go through the directions one step at a time, projecting the instructions so that students are able to hear and visualize what color they are supposed to paint. Allow students enough time to paint the appropriate color before moving to the next step (27 minutes)

**Step One:** In the middle of your square paint a small circle with the color that matches your answer: “Are you a boy or girl?” Boy-Blue, Girl-Purple.

**Step Two:** Paint a ring around your circle with the color that matches your answer: “How many kids are in your family?” 1-Red, 2-Green, 3-Orange, 4-Yellow, 5 or more-Black.

**Step Three:** Paint a ring around your circle with the color that matches your answer: “Do you have brothers or sisters?” Brothers only-Blue, Sisters only-Pink, Brothers and Sisters-Orange, None-Purple.

**Step Four:** Paint a ring around your circle with the color that matches your answer: “What do you like to do for fun?” Read-Green, Movies-Yellow, Sports-Red, Draw-Purple.

**Step Five:** Paint a ring around your circle with the color that matches your answer: “What is your favorite food?” Spaghetti-Blue, Tacos-Black, Pizza-Orange, Chicken nuggets-Purple, Something else-Green.

**Step Six:** Paint a ring around your circle with the color that matches your answer: “What kind of pet do you have?” Dog-Red, Cat-Yellow, Fish-Green, Other-Purple.

**Step Seven:** Paint a ring around your circle in Gold to show that we are all in this class together to learn and have fun.

**Step Eight:** Paint in the leftover white on your square with your favorite color.

**Closure and Evaluation:**

***Part Three: Closing Discussion (5 minutes)***

4. Spread all of the completed squares out on the floor to dry and have students gather around them to observe the differences. Explain how each square is unique just like each one of us is unique but that together we make a beautiful picture. (After the squares are dry hang them all side by side to create a large mural in the classroom).

## Lesson 4: Appreciating Diversity

**Objectives:** Students will:

1. Develop an appreciation for diversity and differences

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Materials:**

1. *The Crayon Box That Talked* by Shane DeRolf
2. Large piece of white paper for each student
3. Paintbrush for each student
4. Paper plate at each table with light purple paint on it
5. Small cup of water for each student
6. Paper towel for each student
7. Several more colors of paint on paper plates for each group

**Procedures:**

***Part One: (5 minutes)***

1. Explain to the students that we are going to do a fun painting activity, but tell them that there is one rule for this activity. Tell the students that they can paint whatever they want but that they are only allowed to use one color to paint their picture!

***Part Two: (20 minutes)***

2. Have students go to their tables and begin the activity. Allow them to begin their pictures and work on them for about 3 minutes.
3. Then, call out “FREEZE”! Tell all of the students to stop what they’re doing, and put their brushes down. Then, give each table paper plates with all of the other different colors of paint on them. Tell students that now they can use all of the colors on the table to paint their picture (11 minutes)
4. Once students have finished have everyone gather at the carpet area. Have a conversation with the students about what it felt like to only use one color. Ask them if it was hard to paint what they wanted to paint with only one color. Then ask them what it felt like to use all of the colors, ask students if their picture looked better with only one color or after they used all of the colors. (6 minutes)

**Closure and Evaluation:**

***Part Three: Closing Discussion (15 minutes)***

5. Read *The Crayon Box That Talked* by Shane DeRolf. Discuss the story with the students, explaining how we are all kind of like crayons because we are all very different but that each one of us brings something very special to the classroom and the world. Remind the children that we all through that the pictures that we painted were much more beautiful when we used all of the colors instead of only one.

## Lesson 5: Our Similarities and Differences

**Objectives:** Students will:

1. Observe the things that make each of them different
2. Observe the similarities they share with one another
3. Recognize the significance of the similarities that we all share

**Duration:** 35 minutes

**Materials:**

1. *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox

**Procedures:**

***Part One: (10 minutes)***

1. Gather students at the carpet area and explain to them that we are going to play a game. Explain to the students that you are going to ask some questions. If their answer to the question is “yes” they should stay at the carpet area, if their answer is “no” they should go across the room to the chalkboard.
2. Ask the following questions (begin with questions that will illustrate the differences in the group and then lead to questions that will unify the group):
  - Do you have red hair?
  - Do you have brown hair?
  - Is your favorite color blue?
  - Is your favorite color purple?
  - Do you have a sister?
  - Do you ride the bus to school?
  - Does your name have the letter A in it?
  - Do you have a pet?
  - Do you know the ABC song?
  - Do you like surprises?
  - Do you like the smell of stinky feet?
  - Do you like recess?
  - Do you get scared when you see a kitten?
  - Do you like to play games with your parents?
  - Do you get sad when you get hurt?
  - Do you go to (name of school) Elementary?

(Questions can be added or removed according to the particular group of students)

***Part Two: (15 minutes)***

3. Read *Whoever you Are* by Mem Fox, engaging students in the reading (5 minutes)

4. Tell the students to try and recall some of the things from our paper bags. Ask the students what were some of the things that were different about us? Ask the students what were some of the things that were similar about us? (Record answers in a Venn Diagram or T-chart on the board). Lead the discussion to reveal that a lot of the things were the same about us were the things that made us happy or sad. Explain how although we all may be different we all have the very same feelings. Allow the students time to discuss and share some of their feelings that are the same or some examples that they have recalled. (10 minutes)

**Closure and Evaluation:**

***Part Three: Closing Discussion (10 minutes)***

5. Going around the circle have each student share something special that they have learned about themselves, someone else, or all people.
6. Explain that although we are all very different and unique we are also all very alike and although people from all over the world may be very different and unique, they are also a lot like us too.

## Appendix:

### Paper Bag Activity Letter to Parents:

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In our classroom we have been getting to know one another and will be talking about what makes us different and why our differences make us special. We will be doing an activity in class this week where we will all be presenting things about ourselves. Your child has been provided with a paper bag and we ask that you help them select the following items to put into their bag and present to the class:

- A picture of my family (can be a drawing if you do not have any photos available)
- A drawing of my home
- Something from my family's favorite holiday
- Something that makes me happy
- Something that makes me cry

Please contact me if you have any additional questions about this assignment.

The due dates is \_\_\_\_\_.

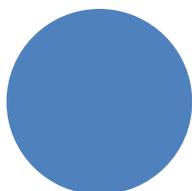
Thank you,

**Wassily Kandinsky, *Squares with Concentric Circles***

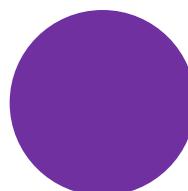


**Are you a boy or girl?**

**Boy**

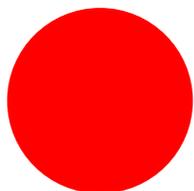


**Girl**

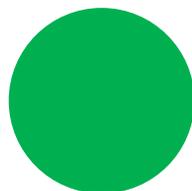


**How many kids are in your family?**

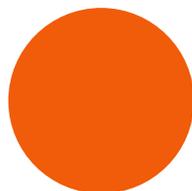
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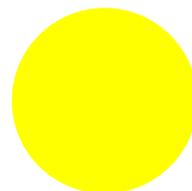
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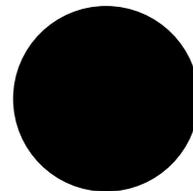
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**4**



**5 or more**



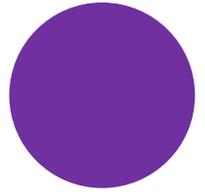
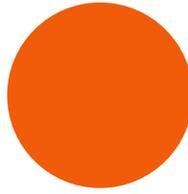
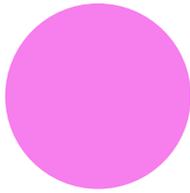
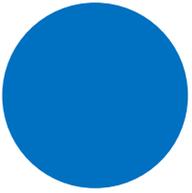
**Do you have brothers or sisters?**

**Brothers only**

**Sisters only**

**Brothers and Sisters**

**None**



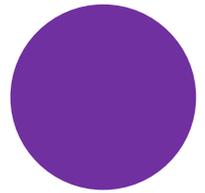
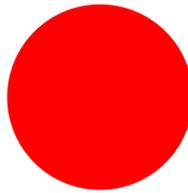
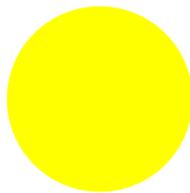
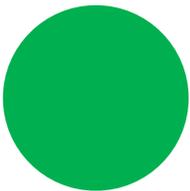
**What do you like to do for fun?**

**Read**

**Movies**

**Sports**

**Draw**



## What is your favorite food?

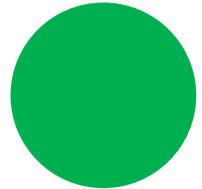
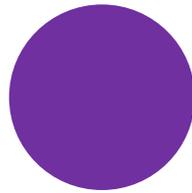
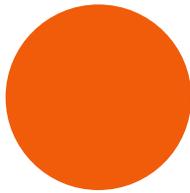
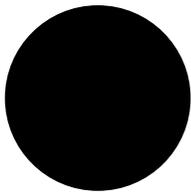
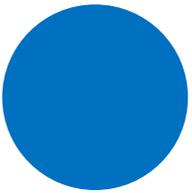
**Spaghetti**

**Tacos**

**Pizza**

**Chicken  
Nuggets**

**Something  
else**



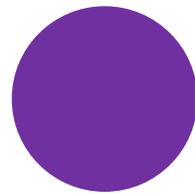
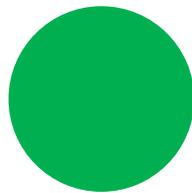
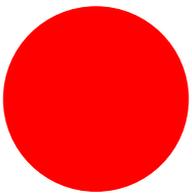
## What pet do you have?

**Dog**

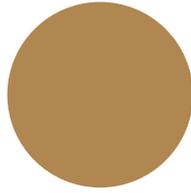
**Cat**

**Fish**

**Other**



**Paint a ring around your circle in Gold to show that we are all  
in this class together to learn and have fun.**



**Paint in the left over white on your square with your favorite  
color.**

**Related Children's Literature:**

All the Colors We Are by Katie Kissinger

The Colors of Us by Karen Katz

Same, Same but Different by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

**Credits:**

The Kandinsky Concentric Circles Activity was adapted from an activity by Erin Sample, found here at:

<http://samplesuperstars.blogspot.com/2012/07/i-am-unique-back-to-school-unit.html>