

ICAP Program Overview

Introduction

Population growth, underpinned by continued immigration, is an essential contributor to our future prosperity. This immigration will also deepen our cultural diversity. In the increasingly multicultural landscape that results, our ability to foster social cohesion will be critical - not only for our social well-being, but also for our economic success. If we are to cope with these changes, our trajectory toward success lies in the hearts and minds of our young people. Students can be empowered not only to tackle issues of collective identity (including racism and discrimination) but to take advantage of the opportunities that emerge from the knowledge and acceptance of each other's cultures.

Recognising this need for increased social harmony, and informed by experience gained in its incursion education programs over more than a decade, Cultural Infusion has developed the Intercultural Citizenship Ambassador Program (ICAP). ICAP is a two part, 16 x 50 minute session series designed to address the need for cultural harmony within our schools. ICAP aims to equip young Australians with the skills to become the future leaders of an increasingly diverse nation.

The Need

Australian school children come from diverse backgrounds including Indigenous, long term settler, refugee and recent migrant families. Many students lack the skills needed to juggle the various cultural contexts within their learning environments, let alone in the wider community. The recent conversion to a national curriculum has included broad acknowledgement of the need to be more culturally sensitive, with 'Intercultural Understanding' being specified as a general capability.

ICAP Objectives

- Engage students in an environment of inclusion, participation and trust
- Explore the feelings associated with empathy, self-worth and inclusion
- Teach the meaning of "culture" and "intercultural understanding"
- Map each student's perceptions of the elements of their culture
- Deepen understanding of intercultural relationships and cultural practices
- Equip students with tools for identifying their own barriers to social cohesion
- Encourage students to re-evaluate their own sense of belonging, and find empowerment from a broader intercultural perspective
- Introduce and practice communication and networking skills needed to develop intercultural relationships
- Foster students vision and leadership qualities that relate to global citizenship
- In partnership with the school, nurture creative initiatives into positive events for parents and the school community that promote intercultural cohesion

The ICAP Approach

Intercultural harmony and social cohesion is seen as the by-product of deeper self-awareness, self-esteem and values of consideration, curiosity and respect. According to research undertaken by the Scanlon Foundation, social cohesion is related to the following individual and social elements:

- Sense of belonging
- Social justice and equity
- Participation
- Acceptance
- Worth

A course that promotes and models these elements will also be in line with the intercultural learning objectives outlined in the 'UNESCO Four Pillars of Learning'. Cultural Infusion has built on these research findings and pillars and identified eight qualities needed for a student to become a successful Global Citizen.

The UNESCO Four Pillars of Learning

1. **LEARNING TO KNOW:** providing the cognitive tools required to better comprehend the world and its complexities, and to provide an appropriate and adequate foundation for future learning.
2. **LEARNING TO DO:** providing the skills that would enable individuals to effectively participate in the global economy and society.
3. **LEARNING TO BE:** providing self-analytical and social skills to enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential psycho-socially, affectively as well as physically, for an all-round 'complete person'.
4. **LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER:** exposing individuals to the values of human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and respect and peace at all levels of society and human relationships to enable individuals and societies to live together peacefully

Qualities of Global Citizenship

1. **SELF AWARENESS:** Knowing one's own thoughts and feelings and the role they play in interacting with one's environments
2. **INDEPENDENT THOUGHT:** Using ethical and logical reasoning in our independent thought process
3. **BELONGING:** Our own self-worth infused with inclusiveness
4. **INSPIRATION:** Creative thoughts and ideas for positive change
5. **VISION:** Future images that shape, energise and drive our efforts
6. **INITIATION:** Taking action and taking responsibility for the action
7. **LEADERSHIP:** How we influence and inspire others
8. **REFLECTION:** To review and integrate our thoughts and feelings

Part 1, Cultural Journeys, Sessions 1 to 8, “WHO WE ARE”

Part one starts with guided inquiry leading to a definition of culture. The definition is assembled through individual and group activities where each student identifies the elements of their own culture, including relations, traditions and heritage. It shows the positive relationship between identity, self-esteem, inclusion and human rights. Students discover the difficulties and opportunities inherent in cultural transitions, related to the experiences of migrants and refugees.

Session 1

MAKING OUR LEARNING GREAT: The main teaching approach uses facilitated self-managed learning. Students discuss and visualise how they will learn together during the course; while hearing about the journey they will take. Interactive exercises that combine fun and intrigue are used to develop feelings of trust and a preliminary commitment to ownership and responsibility for the conditions for learning – norms, rules and behaviours - within the group. The exercises are aided by maps of the world, which the students annotate and illustrate.

Session 2

GLIMPING CULTURE: Through icebreakers, games and quizzes, participants begin to understand the concept of ‘culture’ and to discover why it’s important in their lives. With a structured question and answer game, we clarify common cultural concepts and build awareness of the many varied ways humans express themselves with words, gestures and symbols. Rules and behaviours agreed in Session one are revisited and reinforced during this and subsequent sessions. (These rules are aligned with rules used in each school.)

Session 3

PROBING CULTURE: Students explore the origins of their own names and discover how many nations are represented within the group by mapping where they, their parents, and their grandparents were born. They learn about the diversity of cultures present in their group. Through drama exercises, students uncover the depths of cultural beliefs in the group and learn about ‘hidden culture’.

Session 4

CREATING NEW WORLDS: Students explore issues that arise when different cultures meet before splitting into smaller groups for this and the next session. Each group is invited to create their own new society made up of “landscapes” and places to live on a new planet; complete with cultural norms, languages and customs. The exercise leads to further discussion and reflection on how natural environments and human needs interact to develop distinct cultures.

Session 5

NAVIGATING NEW WORLDS: The groups tell each other about their new planet, and the way they live on the planet. Differences between the cultures of the planets are identified and discussed. The game is a safe way to stimulate the students’ appreciation of prejudice and discrimination as well as mutual respect. By debating “interplanetary” difficulties, the class uncovers the unconscious beliefs and judgements that block inclusive intercultural behaviours.

Session 6

EXPLORING BELONGING: The positive and negative connections between a sense of belonging or inclusion; and racism and cultural stereotyping are discussed. Students watch the acclaimed “Let’s Get Real” documentary on bullying, and discuss their reactions. The class examines the facts and beliefs that people use to separate those who belong from those who do not, noting the ethical challenges considered or ignored by groups and individuals. Students are asked to consider whether belonging is a basic human need and/or a basic human right.

Session 7

EXPLORING SELF ESTEEM: Students learn how their self-esteem is influenced by family, friends, and their surrounding culture. Students find and share ten things they like about themselves leading to a discussion about the value of positive feedback and praise, and its relationship with positive self-image and esteem. Students learn new skills that help them identify their own and their friends’ strengths, weaknesses and personal ideals.

Session 8

MAPPING AND SHARING OUR CULTURE:

Students use a visual, artistic process to map their own cultural heritage. Each student creates a ‘Body Map’ that mirrors what they know of their family history and cultural origins. They can then consider which aspects of their culture they like most and which aspects are of less importance, or of concern. Students can take the maps home; discuss them and continue building them together with their parents and any extended family. With student and parent permission, the maps can form a school culture exhibition.

Part 2, Cultural Ambassadors, Sessions 9 to 16, “HOW WE PARTICIPATE”

Part 2 of ICAP engages students in applying the skills and values they developed during Part 1. It exposes students to community leaders who share positive interfaith and intercultural experiences and it challenges them use their new skills to create an event for other students or the school community around intercultural understanding. In doing so it fosters team, advocacy and leadership skills.

Session 9

MUSICAL METAPHORS: During this session students play with **Sound Infusion**^{*}, a unique online tool that blends DIY music making with learning about other cultures. Students can instantly create their own tunes from music “loops” (snippets) from thousands of traditional instruments from around the world. The experience is a metaphor for the harmonies; and disharmonies, of interactions between cultures. The music making leads to an exploration of the cultures behind the music they have made and the crucial role of music in maintaining cultures over time. Students can use their tunes as a backing track to a video, a PowerPoint presentation or even a physical performance; and can share their work with other users around the world.

*In 2013, Cultural Infusion won the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations award for Intercultural Innovation with its ground breaking tool - ‘Sound Infusion’ <http://culturalinfusion.org.au/soundinfusion/>

Session 10

INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES AND VISIONS: By arranging discussions with inspiring people who are passionate about sharing cultures, we demystify cultural difference and stimulate curiosity. This session takes the form of a talk or presentation by a local leader or a Cultural Infusion performer. The guests stimulate student's creative ideas when they share their own stories and projects. Students can be captivated by a visually exciting performance leading into a conversation generating insights into the artist's culture. Students learn more about interfaith principles and intercultural issues, and visualise the kind of world they would like to live in.

Session 11

IDEAS FOR ACTION: Students get an insight into the reality of refugees by participating in a story about forced immigration, imagining what they would do in similar situations and discovering what is truly important to them in terms of standard of living and personal safety. Next, with the aid of social media, students find out how others around the world are fostering intercultural harmony and global citizenship. Through these conversations, exciting new action ideas are stimulated. Working in groups, students revisit their core values and preferences in relation to diversity and tolerance, reflecting on what has changed for them. They also brainstorm practical ideas for change. Broad options include: artwork, a musical presentation, a short play, an international food-sharing event, a debate with another group. Alternatively, Cultural Infusion artists and entertainers can involve the wider school and local community in the exploration of intercultural issues.

Sessions 12 - 14

PLANNING ACTION FOR CHANGE: The facilitator helps students to shape and focus ideas from the previous creative brainstorm and to settle on a practical "ambassador initiative". A plan of action is developed, and tasks are allocated and prioritised by the students. During this process one or more students emerge playing leadership roles, and the Session one rules are revised to support the group planning process. Facilitators ensure that individual students or small groups commit to taking responsibility for certain aspects of the planned event. During this planning stage, students are encouraged to document their event with photos, film and audio, which can be shared with similar classes in other schools.

Session 15

WE CELEBRATE TOGETHER: Students deliver their planned event, promoting intercultural understanding with members of the school community. Students share aspects of what they have learnt, celebrating their achievements with each other and the wider audience. Students experience what it means to be intercultural ambassadors and are each presented with an ICAP Award at the end of the event.

Session 16

WE REFLECT: Using structured facilitated reflection and guided meditation, students summarise what they have learned. The class reviews and reflects on what they have learnt throughout the course, describing what they think it means to be a cultural ambassador and a global citizen.

ICAP – Who is it for?

The course has international potential. In Australia the course is for students in years 5 to 8. The number of participants can vary from 8 – 30, but is optimal at around 15 to 25. Students at this stage of schooling are still exploring who they are, where they fit in, their values, and what is important to them. The course works in schools with both low and high degrees of cultural diversity among their students, with facilitators tailoring their teaching to the grade level and cultural circumstances of the school and the students. In schools that do not have a whole of school approach to intercultural understanding, students will be guided to offer enjoyable stories and events that encourage steps towards a whole of school approach. In schools, especially high schools that have gone further on the intercultural journey, events can have more sophisticated stories and content.

When our facilitators run the program we encourage observation by, ideally, two teachers, who can then support each other as they continue to run the program in the future.

ICAP – Program Structure

The course leads students through a highly structured sequence of action-based learning and reflection processes. While sessions appear to be simple, they are informed by a coherently structured process over the sixteen sessions.

Teacher training and support ensures that teachers are sensitive to cultural and religious nuances and variations relating to eye contact, physical contact, pairing with opposite sex or family members, and discussions on topics such as religion. The course provides a great deal of material that teachers can use in teaching other subjects and general capabilities.

While the most common format for the course is one, 50-minute class per week over two terms, other formats are possible. For example, the course can be delivered through two sessions a week over a single term, and alternatively through one session a fortnight over four terms.