

The ABCs of how to talk to your child about differences

border crossers

Border Crossers draws from experts in the field of multicultural and social justice education to inform its curriculum development and training methodology.

The ABCs offer some tools and resources for how to engage children in conversations about differences.

“Schools (should) become places where students and teachers can become border crossers engaged in critical and ethical reflection about what it means to bring a wider variety of cultures into dialogue with each other” —Henry Giroux, Critical Multiculturalist

Affirm

Acknowledge your child’s observations. Your child may share questions like, “Why is my pen pal’s skin color different from mine?” “How come my penpals’ school has/doesn’t have ___?” or “Why does s/he speak differently from me?”

Place value on what your child is sharing. You might say, “That’s an important question or observation, I’m so glad you shared that with me.”

Ask follow up questions like, “Why do you say that?” Encourage future conversations or questions.

Communicate to your child that it is OK to ask these types of questions and notice differences.

Be Honest

Explore your child’s feelings about what they are saying. Share your own feelings and experiences to help your child develop his/her thinking process.

As a parent, you also have an important role in providing accurate information to your children. You won’t always have an answer, but you can do some research and continue to learn together.

Continue the Conversation

When you are on the subway or bus, ask your child about the similarities and difference s/he notices about the neighborhoods to which you travel.

Read and discuss books with multicultural and social justice themes.

Ask your child about what s/he watches on TV and make connections or comparisons to your child’s life.

Talk about family traditions and make connections to friends who might have different traditions.

Educate yourself as a parent with regard to multicultural and social justice education

Create Change

Move the conversation to action by challenging children to become change makers. Ask, “What can we do about this?” and empower children to realize that they can do something right now to help create change! For ideas for ways to take action, visit: <http://www.dosomething.org>



For more information
please contact us at:
(646) 688-4470
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Bringing Classrooms
Together for Social Change

Parent/ Guardian Information Sheet

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Your child's school has entered into a partnership with a nearby school that will enhance his or her educational experience.

Here you will find important information about this exciting opportunity.

Program Overview

Your child's school has initiated a Partner School relationship with the support of Border Crossers, an organization that builds relationships between diverse New York City schools. This partnership will enrich students by exposing them to our city's diversity, enhancing leadership, and preparing them to be active citizens.

A Partner School relationship offers opportunities for collaboration and resource-sharing both inside and outside the classroom. Classrooms are paired as "pen pals" and students work together on a multicultural curriculum focused on themes such as a community or author study.

Several "Meet-Ups" occur during the school day when students meet face-to-face and get to know one another through team building games and student-led activities. Opportunities for Partner Schools to collaborate outside of the classroom may include professional development trainings for teachers, workshops for parent, and shared assemblies. Partner Schools also come together to plan community building events such as planting in a community garden or a joint block party.

Program Benefits

As part of the program, students:
... consider new perspectives and expand their worldview through exposure to other students who they would not ordinarily meet.
... form new friendships and develop empathy, respect, and understanding.
... become leaders and change-makers.

What to expect from your child's participation in Border Crossers

In Border Crossers, your child will be exposed to a Partner School that will be both similar to and different from their own school. When you ask your child about his or her experience, s/he may share statements such as, "I was surprised that my pen pal didn't look like me," or make observations comparing their school to their Partner School. As a parent you can help extend the experience and support your child by engaging in conversations about their feelings and experiences using the 'ABCs' handout.



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Bringing Communities
Together for Social Change

"We were driving through East Harlem and my son said, 'This is where my pen pal lives.' It was no longer an alienating or strange neighborhood to him—it was a place he had a friend." — parent of a Border Crossers student

Overview for Teachers

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“Many of my students’ worlds consist of a three block radius between home and school.”
— Border Crossers teacher from Washington Heights

Need

Despite the increasing diversity of our city’s residents, New York City has one of the most segregated school systems in the country. Separating children fosters inequities in the education system and perpetuates borders that divide our communities. Borders are further reinforced because students tend to stay isolated in their immediate neighborhood. In order to develop into culturally-competent citizens with the skills to solve complex social problems, young people require opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with peers from different backgrounds.

Solution

Border Crossers builds Partner School relationships between diverse New York City schools that are blocks apart, but miles away in terms of student demographics and access to resources. Through school-based programs and community-building initiatives, young students develop into leaders who create change in their classrooms, schools, and neighborhoods.

Support for Partner Schools

A Partner School relationship offers opportunities for collaboration and resource-sharing both within and outside the classroom. We organize students, teachers, school administrators, and

families to create more equitable, active, and collaborative communities. We support Partner Schools by providing curriculum, facilitation, on-site program staff, communication tools, and logistics-management. We also work with Partner Schools to plan and implement shared experiences such as community-building events, professional development for teachers, and parent exchanges. Border Crossers brings additional enrichment opportunities to Partner Schools through our relationships with nonprofit organizations and local leaders.

Curriculum

Classrooms from Partner Schools work together during the school year through a multicultural, social action-based curriculum. Several “Meet-Ups” occur during the school-day when students meet face-to-face and get to know one another through team-building games and student-led activities. Students also communicate through letter-writing, and participate in Community Action Projects such as planting in community gardens.

Border Crossers offers a variety of K-8 grade curricula that encompasses the New York State Learning Standards for Language Arts and Social Studies. Our curriculum focuses on three themes:

Identity: Who are we? How are we similar and different from each other?
Community: What does it mean to be part of a shared community?
Change: How can we work together to create change in our community?

Our flexible program model makes it easy for teachers to integrate our curriculum into their existing lesson plans. Border Crossers’ curriculum engages students through children’s literature, music, writing, art, and drama. Some sample curricula include:

K-3 Grade Curriculum Options: Lessons may focus on an Author Study (for example, Leo Lionni), Community Study, or an integration of various theme-specific Read Aloud books.

4-8 Grade Curriculum Options: Lessons may focus on a School Study, a Chapter Book Study (for example Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli), a Neighborhood Study (in partnership with Livable Streets Education), or the Penny Harvest (in partnership with Common Cents).

Program Benefits

Border Crossers students...

- ... consider new perspectives and expand their worldview through exposure to other students who they would not ordinarily meet.
- ... form new friendships and develop empathy, respect, and understanding.
- ... become leaders and change-makers.

Partner School teachers, administrators, and families...

- ... recognize the need to cross borders and form ongoing collaborations with diverse school communities.
- ... integrate multicultural, social justice education into their school culture.
- ... join students in taking action in the community beyond their school walls.

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