

Cultural Appreciation

Thinking while we're talking

Positive language empowers. Always, but especially when dealing with persons different from ourselves, it's important to be sensitive to how our words might be heard. Think about the words that we use to describe and categorize others, whether it is to their face or behind their back. Discuss with your students how to speak kindly about and to others.

It is important to see both similarities and differences in a positive light! These differences might be cultural, racial, physical, or religious. They could seem trivial or like very very important differences. How can we not only tolerate our differences, but appreciate them, without changing ourselves?

Our program, People Like Me, presents dances and music as cultural expressions that were created by (and performed by) people from around the world and from right here in Northern California. Even dances born here in the U.S., like physically integrated dance, give you and your students a chance to discuss, and empathize with, a different way of life, a different culture.

For physically integrated dance, ask yourselves and your students the following questions, and then think of some of your own:

- Do disabled people dance?
- How do they dance at all?
- How would you dance if you couldn't use your legs? If you couldn't see?
- Can you feel rhythm if you are deaf?

What other ways do cultures come in contact with each other? How can we contribute to appreciation of many different kinds of cultures? What would it take for everyone to be able to support that goal? How can we start right here at home, with our friends and family?