

International Mother Language Day February 21

Overview and Purpose

This lesson is designed to teach children about International Mother Language Day and the specific rights of children highlighted by this UN Day; their right to practice their own mother language (CRC Article 30), and their right to a name (CRC Article 7).

Background Information for Teachers

International Mother Language Day

un.org/depts/dhl/language/

Profile of Languages in Canada

12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/rt-td/lng-eng.cfm

Grades

K – 3

Materials

Book entitled *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi

Friends cards in the different languages spoken in Canada (printable copy attached)

Clear wide-mouthed jar

Small blank index cards, stamp pads, markers, magnifying glasses

Activity One

- Begin by introducing February 21st as International Mother Language Day; a UN Day celebrated around the world. The day has special significance in Canada because we are a multilingual society with more than 100 different mother languages spoken.
- Read aloud from the book *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi.
- Discuss the rights of the child (CRC Articles 30 and 7) in relation to the book.
- Refer to the last page of the book where Unhei discovers Joey's Korean nickname—Chinku, which means "friend" in Korean.
- Present the jar containing the pieces of paper with the word "friend" in different languages. Explain that each student will get a turn to pick a piece of paper from the jar and read it aloud. Then the rest of the class will repeat the word aloud together.
- Refer to the page where Unhei introduces herself to the class and teaches everyone to pronounce her name slowly and clearly.

Global Themes

- Images and Perception
- Interdependence
- Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Activity Two

- Refer to page 16, where Unhei shows her new friend Joey her name stamp.
- Explain that each child has their own special name stamp just like Unhei's ... their own thumbprint! No one in the whole world has the same exact lines on his or her thumbs. Our "name stamp" and the names we have been given are reminders of how unique we all are.
- Distribute one card per student and instruct them to write their names on the card with the markers provided, and to use the stamp pads to design their name cards with their thumbprint.
- Let the students use the magnifying glass for a close-up view of the unique lines of their thumbprints.
- Suggest that students bring the artwork home to discuss with their families. Students can ask their parents how they decided what name to give them.

Discussion

Has there ever been a time when your name wasn't pronounced or spelled correctly? How did you feel? What did you do to solve the problem?

Has there ever been a time when you couldn't pronounce a name properly? How did you feel? What did you do to learn the name?

Extensions

Have each student in the class write his or her name on an 8.5x11 piece of blank paper, and then decorate it. If students have an English name and a first-language name, encourage students to make two pieces of artwork.

Invite the students' parents or community members into the class to share their own name stories and methods of writing in a variety of languages; for example, Chinese characters. Have the students write a journal entry about their name. Story starters could include:

My name was given to me by...

I like my name because...

If I could have a new name it would be...

Additional Resources

The Statistics Canada website for teachers includes topics such as immigration and citizenship: 12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm.

Picture Book: *In English, of Course* by Josephine Nobisso

The daughter of savvy Italian engineers, Josephine has lived in the city long enough to have learned a few words in English, but is overcome when her teacher makes her stand up in front of the class and tell about her life in Italy—in English, of course. The result is a charming tale of adventures and multicultural miscommunications as Josephine attempts to make herself understood.