***Building a Multi-Faith Campus***

**(85 minute Activity Guide)**

**I. Preparation:**

* Prepare a list of key points or phrases of the definition of the word pluralism and write them on flipchart paper.

**II. Required Materials:**

* Copies of “Creating a Multi-Faith School: Issues to Consider” handout for all participants (see “Handouts” Section).
* Poster paper (or construction paper), markers and crayons
* *How to be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook (Fifth Edition),* by Stuart Matlins and Arthur Magida (2010)
* “Definition of Pluralism” (Key points) should be written on chart paper and posted where all can see.
* The words “Prayer Space”, “Food”, “Religious Classes” and “Dress Code” should each be written on a separate big piece of paper.

**III. Introduction: (10 minutes)**

1. If this is follow-up to the “Pluralism Activity”, provide a transition to and overview of this activity.
2. Introduce the scenario: A community-based school religious school is being developed in your town, centered on the value of religious pluralism. You are invited to be a part of the initial planning process. The hope is that this school will accommodate children from the faith communities represented in the group today. The school has been tentatively named "The New Welcome Multi-Faith Academy". As the planning committee, what is your **vision** for the school? Refer the group back to the definition of pluralism. - e.g. interfaith dialogue is encouraged (and expected), a climate of curiosity is created – curious questions are expected, as a school community we stand up for those who are being put down.
3. Capture everyone's **vision** on the flip chart and post where everyone can see it.
4. Distribute copies of the handout "Creating a Multi-Faith School: Issues to Consider” to all participants. There are many aspects of a school to be considered. The handout includes six issues. Point out that today, the Planning Committee is charged with making recommendations for four areas:

* Prayer space
* Food
* Religious Classes
* Dress code

Point out that in reality, in would be unrealistic for an actual committee to be charged with examining all of these aspects of the creation of a new school in such a short period of time.

5. Acknowledge that today we will not be focusing on the calendar and whether or not classes should be co-ed or single sex.

**IV. Small Group Activity: (Part One – 20 minutes)**

1. Introduce the small group activity:

* Before creating suggestions for the School Board for The New Welcome Multi-faith Academy related to the “issues to consider”, we are going to spend some time exploring the related community practices/ needs in each of our own traditions/beliefs. (Practices related to the 4 issues identified above).
* We are aware that **within** each tradition/belief, practices/needs may vary. Note - It is very important for the group to hold this tension, and not over-simplify it, during this activity.

1. Create small groups of participants and distribute poster paper and markers to each small group.
2. Ask each small group to create a list of their traditions/practices/needs related to each “issue to consider”, knowing that this list will be utilized by a multi-faith team assigned to work on each issue during the next phase of the activity. Each group should identify practices that **"must be" observed** by and reflected as all-school practice, and those which would be "**nice to be" observed.**
3. Reference the guides/resources you have brought, i.e. *How to be a Perfect Stranger*, that have been created as helpful guides for those trying to navigate these sorts of religious sensitivities. Suggests that these resources may be helpful but that each religious cohort in the room now has the opportunity to express **their communities’ practices / needs in their own best language.**
4. Ask each small group to go to a separate space and begin task.
5. With at least **10 minutes left**, invite each small group to present their list to the large group. Note that if groups are not finished creating their list, they can simply present what they have. As time allows, invite participants to ask questions of the small groups.

**IV. Small Group Activity: (Part Two – 15 minutes)**

1. Post paper with each issue area in a different part of the room where the group is meeting. Invite the youth participants to work on the issue they’re most interested in.
2. Distribute construction paper, markers and crayons or flip chart paper to each small group.
3. Small groups discuss their issues and each religious tradition’s related practices / needs, highlighting which practices “must” be observed by and reflected as an all-school practice, and which would be “nice to have”.

**VI. Debriefing: (10 minutes)**

1. Facilitate large group discussion:

* To what degree do the **blueprints** meet the **vision** you have identified for your school?
* What **compromises** did you need to make?
* What **challenges** seemed insurmountable?
* How might this lesson **apply to the outside world**, e.g. your own school, your own congregation, your home, a visit to the home of someone of another tradition?

**VI. Closing: (5 minutes)**

1. Distribute handout, “Definition of Pluralism”
2. Acknowledge the high level of difficulty/challenge in creating this Multi-Faith School and honor each person's contribution to this project today!
3. Closing prompt: e.g. “I plan to apply this session to my outside world by…..”

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| **NOTES:**   1. This activity complements and best used following the Pluralism Activity. 2. If you have more than 85 minutes to conduct this session, each step can easily use more time to go deeper. 3. If you have less time consider focusing on 3 issue areas instead of 4. |

**Building a Multi-Faith School: Issues to Consider**

*Adapted from the Pluralism Discussion Guide developed by the Interfaith Youth Core.*

Food Facilities

Each religious community has a say as to what can and cannot be eaten by followers of their tradition, as well as how food products are to be handled and prepared. The school must decide how to deal with these issues in creating a school cafeteria. How will everyone’s dietary needs be met, and how will the school make sure that all of its students are comfortable eating in the school cafeteria? Draw a blueprint for the cafeteria and kitchen that communicates your suggestions to the school board. Now imagine running an interfaith pot-luck program. Create an agenda for an evening of sharing foods across faiths.

Dress Code

Each religious community may have particular points to make about dress styles and required clothing, as well as ideas of modesty. How will students be required to dress in school? Will there be a dress code? If so, what will it say? What special exceptions, if any, will be made to accommodate special religious dress? Draft a poster to be hung by student lockers that communicates your suggestions for review by the school board.

Religious Classes

How will the students learn about their own faith tradition in the context of other faiths? Will students be required to take classes about their religion? Will they be required to take classes about other religions, in addition to their own, or will these classes be optional? Should there be special classes teaching respect for religious diversity? Create a sample students’ schedule that communicates your suggestions for review by the school board. Now, imagine a class that aims to teach respect for religious diversity. Create a new course syllabus for this class.

Daily Prayer and Space

Time and space must be allotted for daily prayer and other religious rituals. Will there be separate prayer spaces for each faith tradition or is there a way of making one space work for all religions? Is there a way to ensure that prayer and classes don’t interfere with one another? What artwork will be hung on the walls? How will the space help one connect with the divine? What texts will students read / pray from? Additionally, prayer times vary throughout the week and year; how will that be handled? Is there a dress code for the prayer space? Draw a blueprint for the chapel that communicates your suggestions to the school board.

School Calendar

Each religious community has different religious holidays, some of which include fasting and the prohibition of work. What kind of school calendar should the school have? Consider the number of days students will have off for holiday break and when that will be. Also think about how the minimum state requirement of 185 days will be met. Finally, think about which days students will be allowed to go home early if need be, and whether, on holidays, the whole school will be dismissed early, or just members of the faith observing a holiday. Create a sample calendar for the fall term that communicates your suggestions to the school board.

Co-educational Issues

Some faiths will support separating children in the same classroom. The different religious communities each have something to say about this point. How can this issue be reconciled? How should the classroom look? Should certain classes, such as gym, be separated, while others be co-ed? Draw a blueprint for the gymnasium that communicates your suggestions to the school board.