

## Learning about Labels

**Activity 3:** Suggested by Margaret LaDue from Paulsboro High School in New Jersey:

**Activity Name:**

**Grade Level:** 7 – 12

**Objectives:**

- Students will gain an understanding labels and attached stereotypes
- Students will gain an understanding of seeing someone as a whole person
- Students will agree to abstain from labeling one another

**Materials:** Index Cards, Markers, Tape, 2011 Creative Expression Contest 1<sup>st</sup> place Winning Video (<http://www.nonamecallingweek.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/227.html>)

**Preparation:**

- Before conducting this activity, make up a series of labels for students using the index cards and the labels Bully, Geek, Nerd, Air-Head and Emo (or other labels you see in your school). These are the labels students will explore during the activity.

**Note:** *Before conducting this activity, decide whether it would be best for your class to watch one group role-play, or have several smaller groups role-playing at once.*

**Activity:** Begin by leading the students in a brief discussion about the affects of labels using the following questions:

- What are labels? Are they good or bad?
- What happens when we generalize based on labels, and use stereotypes. (i.e. nerds, who are often very smart, are always bad at sports)
- How does it make you feel when you are given a label you don't like?
- How does it make you feel when people react differently to you because of a label that has been placed on you?

*Let the students know they will be doing a role-play during this activity, and ask them to remain respectful, and to refrain from using any offensive language during this activity.*

**One Group:**

Ask the class for five volunteers. Give each of the volunteers a label and tape it to their foreheads in such a way that they do not know what their label is. Include one blank label. Ask the rest of the class to remain silent while the volunteers participate. Ask the five volunteers to now engage in a brief conversation about a relevant topic (such as the importance of a healthy lunch, school uniforms or a topic related to their studies. Ask the volunteers to respond to the other volunteers as their label, to show how engagement with each other differs by our labels and the stereotypes attached. Let the volunteers act this out for few minutes. Then ask them to guess what their own labels were, based on how the other volunteers engaged with them. Ask them how they felt to "wear" their label.

**Many Groups:**

Divide the class into several groups of five students each. Ask the students to now engage in a brief conversation about a relevant topic (such as the importance of a healthy lunch, school uniforms or a topic related to their



studies). Ask the students to respond to the other volunteers as their label, to show how engagement with each other differs by our labels and the stereotypes attached. Let the students act this out for few minutes while you walk around and observe each group. Then ask them to guess what their own labels were, based on how the other volunteers engaged with them.

After students have role-played with labels, let them watch the 2011 Creative Expression Contest Winner video about labeling students. Let them know that this is a student made video and they should watch the video in silence, and process their own thoughts around labeling and name-calling.

After students have watched the video, lead them in a discussion using these questions:

- What did you notice about the way the volunteers interacted with each other? How do you think the labels affected the conversation?
- What did you learn from the video?
- Do you see labeling and this kind of resulting treatment of those labeled in our school?
- How does it make you feel when someone acts differently to you, based on stereotypes associated with a label that may have been placed upon you?
- How can we change this in our school?
- Can we all agree to be models for the school, and lose our preconceptions about people based on labels?