

# My Culture

## Discovery High School Colorado Springs, CO

Discovery High School is the alternative high school for Widefield School District 3. At Discovery, they want to help students find success and connectivity through exposure. One way they accomplished this was through a six-week unit called My Culture. Students had the opportunity to explore and compare their cultures based on personal experiences while focused on differences such as socioeconomics, religion, finances, ability, and demographics.

The planning and implementation of this practice came from the entire school staff and focused on implementing cross-cultural aspects into each subject matter. The teachers co-planned and implemented culture-specific lessons into their instruction to allow students to gain perspective when examining other cultures. Each teacher participated in planning off-site field experiences for students to gain real-world exposure to different cultures. This required collaboration with multiple community organizations (mosques, catholic churches, senior living centers, guest speakers, etc.) to allow students and staff to engage and learn about their cultures.

Each student celebrated their diversity by studying and creating multiple projects to show who they are through their culture. One such project was the study of real games played by different cultures. Students could adapt a game to their culture and essentially make up a new game, including new rules, with challenges that address some of the differences studied in the associated culture. During the unit on religions, students and staff visited different religious locations, as well as listened to speakers that engaged them in an inquiry-based journey through the religion. These field experiences lent themselves to deep discussion because they provided the perspective of the community being served.

For the final project, students were intentionally grouped based on various backgrounds and groups they were in during the exploration phase of this unit. The students were then challenged to study a specific group and be able to present on that group's culture. The culminating projects were a walking museum and individual presentations that celebrated culture and diversity. Parents, community members, and school board personnel were all invited to experience the journey that was My Culture.



The practice was evaluated on multiple aspects. The evaluation process included peer review and feedback, teacher review and feedback, and administrative review and feedback. Students had the opportunity to revise their projects, as well as make tweaks prior to the final presentations. Stakeholders were provided with a rubric and through these were able to celebrate and give positive feedback to the students about their cultural presentations.

To replicate this project, take time to understand the cultures students are examining and be deliberate about the expectation of what students do. It would have been more effective to have students working on their final projects from the very beginning. However, Discovery High School would not change the experience the students had when examining their own culture and learning about others.