Session 8: Creating an Inclusive Environment

Session Overview

This session is one of four *Apply and Refine* sessions. In this session, participants consider diversity in learning environments and how to address the needs of all learners. The focus is to build knowledge about the relationship between language, culture, and science in order to create more inclusive science education environments. Issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion are in the forefront of the national consciousness and have become an integral part of the planning and programming at most informal science education institutions. This session gets participants thinking about issues of inclusion by considering what kinds of differences exist between people and gaining a sense of other perspectives.

Session Objectives

In this session, participants:

. Explore a broad definition of diversity to mean all of the differences that exist between people, including ethnicity/race, gender, learning styles/work styles, language, visible and less visible disabilities, sexual orientation, personal values, socioeconomic conditions, and religious customs/religious beliefs.

. Consider the impact of educator assumptions, expectations and behaviors on learners' comfort level in a museum.

. Introduce participants to different models of thinking about learners from non-dominant cultures as having a fund of knowledge vs. having a deficit.

. Participants will modify an activity to be more inclusive of diverse learners and take away ideas of effective ways to include all learners.

Session Activities at a Glance

Quick Write. Participants reflect on and write about their thoughts from the reading.

Discussion: *What are differences?* Participants think about issues of inclusion by considering what kinds of differences exist between people and gaining a sense of other perspectives.

Activity: *Apple & Ocean.* This activity is presented in its entirety in Spanish using strategies designed to present high-level science concepts to English language learners who have reached intermediate-level language proficiency. Participants use an apple and a pie chart to represent the planet. They slice the apple and draw the chart into

sections illustrating various critical resources available from the land and ocean, and realize what a small fraction of the planet they represent.

Discussion: *Activity Debrief.* In English, debrief participants' experience in the activity. Then challenge them to work together to brainstorm a class list of strategies they noticed the educator using to help learners feel more included and be able to understand the lesson in Spanish. They will also receive a list of suggested strategies for use with English language learners.

Discussion: Examining cultural values. Participants discuss how the ways in which cultural values can be perceived differently.

Research Discussion. Participants discuss two modes of thinking about learners from non-dominant cultures – "funds of knowledge" and "deficit model thinking."

Application. Participants work with others at their tables to modify a COSIA activity for diverse audiences. The participants share their modifications with the whole group.

Homework. Readings & tasks are assigned.