

Co-construct Cultural Competency

My Life Map

Adapted from Dr. José Medina

Students will:

- Identify personal experiences that have changed them
- Reflect on these experiences
- Share experiences that changed the way they react to the world

Before Activity:

- Prepare an example of your personal life map to share with the class.
- Designate a means to display your life map in the classroom.

During Activity:

- Explain that a life map is a visual representation of important events that have changed us and the way we see and react to the world up to this point.
- Ask students to volunteer responses to the question, “What makes an event so important that it changes us?” List their responses, including Events that taught them something about life, Events that made them feel more mature or grown up, Events that gave them inspiration for the future, Events that highlight how important it is to enjoy life.
- Ask students to jot down experiences that have changed them and how they felt about the event.
- Students work on their life maps individually, representing each event with a symbol or picture. The picture or symbol should indicate how they felt about the event.
- Students write a short sentence or phrase for each event.
- Ask for volunteers to share some events they feel comfortable with others knowing.

Evidence of Success

- Students identify and describe how they felt about experiences that have changed them.
- Students explain why these experiences changed the way they react to the world.
- Students respectfully listen and comment on peers’ life maps.

Quick Tips

- Remind students that an important event doesn't have to be exciting or memorable for others; the map is about showing what is important to each of them, and to reflect on why the experience changed them.
- An extension of this activity can be to invite students to add additional images they would like to be part of their future.
- Younger students should be asked to provide only 3-5 experiences.

Watch Out For

- Be empathetic to students who might not realize why a specific event was important in their life and can only remember the impact it had on them or the emotions it caused. Ask students, “What important lesson or understanding did I come to during this period of time?”
- Overemphasizing written language may cause students with developing proficiency to lose confidence. Highlight both written work and visuals to ensure all students can contribute meaningfully.

Grades: K-12

Domains: Speaking, Writing

Grouping: One On One, Full Classroom

High Support: 1s and 2s

- Allow students to write the labels of their events in their native language.
- Students can use printed pictures instead of drawing them.

Moderate Support: 3s and 4s

- Provide time for students to discuss events with a trusted partner or an adult if they need support with their labels or images.

Light Support: 5s and 6s

- Ask students to write a brief summary of each event after the life map is completed.

Dual Language Teaching Tips

- A life map will illustrate events in a student's life that were impactful, and possibly emotional or traumatic. Use this activity as an opportunity to discover more about your students' past experiences and uncover topics that might still be negatively affecting them. Knowing that there is someone on their side provides the student with hope and an opportunity to believe in their self-worth.
- Discuss ways in which the life map depicts their values, their identities, and what is truly important to them. Constantly encourage students to take pride in and celebrate their culture, emphasizing that through the Dual Language program, students of different ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds are integrated.
- The sharing of a life map will provide opportunities for conversation, empathy, and possibly discordance. Ensure that conversations regarding perspectives are respectful of each other's cultures. Remind students that the classroom is an inclusive environment, and they should treat each other with respect, empathy, justice, and fairness.
- This is not a language-specific activity. Students will work through this activity interacting with their peers and using all of their linguistic repertoire so that both languages are equally valued.