



WHAT PEOPLE WANT

Cultural commonalities

“In all my work what I try to say is that as human beings we are more alike than we are unlike,” – Maya Angelou, poet and author

Cultural values and beliefs are so accepted by each group that they are not questioned or even need to be stated. While each culture thinks its own ways are superior, conflicts with other cultures are not always caused by our differences. Improving intercultural relationships and valuing diversity requires patience, flexibility, humility, acceptance of the unknown and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of humor.

Following are some values all humans share. By focusing on what is shared, we can break out of our ethnocentric boxes and begin to find new ways of educating all students for success in life.

In every culture:

- We respond to respect and disrespect
- We seek acceptance, and to be valued and supported
- We want to live in an environment of trust and safety
- We want to know our life experiences matter and are understood
- We want our strengths acknowledged
- We want encouragement and hope
- We do not want to be labeled and marginalized

Renowned education theorist Ernest Boyer said true multicultural education affirms the individual while recognizing the universal nature of all people. He suggested a curriculum based on cultural similarities encourages deeper understanding of subject matter. Meeting the challenges of diversity is a central goal of quality teaching. Boyer’s human commonalities provide a firm structure for this goal.

Human Commonalities:	Applied Knowledge:	Human Commonalities:	Applied Knowledge:
Shared Use of Symbols	<i>Multimedia composition with sound, graphics, and text</i>	Shared Sense of Time and Space	<i>Project on the history of Anchorage, or ethnic group's contributions to the city</i>
Shared Life Cycle	<i>Community service with elderly, young children, or infirm</i>	Shared Relationship with Nature	<i>Project on environmental concerns and stewardship</i>
Shared Membership in Groups	<i>Participate in school activities, sports, community or religious groups</i>	Shared Values and Beliefs	<i>Project related to diversity, mutual trust and respect, and responsible citizenship</i>
Shared Producing and Consuming	<i>Project related to marketing and economics</i>	Shared Sense of the Aesthetic	<i>Composition, exhibition of artwork or performance</i>

