

Social and Emotional Learning

Lesson Title: Being Cool, Part 1

Grade Level: High School

Project and Purpose

Students analyze the criteria for being “cool.”

Essential Question

How do you define what it means to be “cool”?

Materials

- Post-it notes and writing instruments
- Worksheet: “The Nine Defining Qualities of Cool” based on the book *How to Be Cool* by Tom Hodgkinson

Teacher

1. Distribute Post-it notes to each student and make sure there are extras available. Tell students to write the name of a very cool person on their Post-it note. This may be a celebrity, a public figure, an historical icon, a character from literature, or some other cool person. Tell them not to use names of people in school, just to avoid any awkward situations. If they have more than one name, they may use additional Post-it notes.
2. Have students place their notes on their foreheads. If they have multiple notes, they may place them on other parts of their faces or down their arms.
3. Have students stand as they are able and mingle with the other students, reading their peers’ Post-it notes.
4. At about 1 minute, call, “Freeze! Turn to the nearest partner and shake hands.” Make sure each person finds one other person in their immediate vicinity to work with. Have the two people discuss their coolest person notes, doing their best to explain their choices.
5. Ask partners to find seats next to/near each other (keeping notes intact). With the whole group, review the cool people choices and discuss the commonalities and differences they notice. Based on their choices and their partner discussions, what conclusions can they draw about what it means to be “cool”?
6. Give each set of partners one copy of “The Nine Defining Qualities of Cool” worksheet. Explain that this list comes from a book written by Tom Hodgkinson about icons and qualities of coolness. Review and clarify the information on the sheet.
7. Tell them they will work with their partners to analyze how their cool person meets — or defies — Hodgkinson’s criteria for being cool. They should write their notes in the third column and use the additional spaces for qualities, descriptors, and analysis particular to their selected cool person they believe should be added to the list.
8. When partners have completed their charts, ask volunteers to share their findings and allow classmates to ask respectful questions about their analysis.

Conclusion

Collect their worksheets and explain that they will use the information in the next session. Close by asking: How do you define what it means to be “cool”?

“The Nine Defining Qualities of Cool” based on the book *How to Be Cool* by Tom Hodgkinson

Cool person choice (pick one): _____

Work with your partner to analyze how your cool person meets — or defies — Hodgkinson’s criteria for being cool. Write your notes in the third column. Use the additional spaces for qualities, descriptors, and analysis you believe should be added to the chart.

Quality	Descriptor: This person...	Analysis
Style	has great physical coordination and knows how to dress	
Rebellion	questions authority	
Recklessness	values present pleasure over future health	
Rootlessness	travels a lot	
Promiscuity/Celibacy	does not believe in or practice monogamous commitment	
Self-expression	is somehow artistic (dance, drama, music, poetry, visual art, etc.)	
Flamboyance/Austerity	goes to one extreme or the other	
Taciturnity/Eloquence	makes words count	
Emotional self-control	stays relaxed and rarely loses temper or equilibrium (never loses their cool)	