



# IDENTITY WORK ACROSS THE GRADES

## Kindergarten

Kindergarteners at St. Thomas's Day School are given ample opportunities to explore who they are in relation to the world around them as they engage in a wide variety of carefully curated play-based learning experiences. They are exposed to a variety of cultures, traditions, and beliefs through the celebration of holidays, exposure to literature, and navigation in a variety of social experiences with classmates. Confidence and positive self-esteem are nurtured, promoting a healthy sense of identity and giving children a sense of belonging within the group. Kindergarteners are highlighted and celebrated by all members of the St. Thomas's Day School community.

## Grade 1

Continuing the work that began in Kindergarten, students in first grade use art, storytelling, writing, and reflection to learn about how they are valued as individuals. They examine the idea that each person has multiple identities, including race, gender, age, role and so much more. They also explore similarities and differences between people, particularly with regard to values and beliefs. Students create keepsake boxes that celebrate who they are as unique and special individuals, work with their families to create life story presentations for their birthdays, and explore the cultures and traditions within their classroom via the Lower School Express.

## Grade 2

By second grade, the focus around identity shifts towards emotional intelligence. A second grader's day is interspersed with a series of check-ins and moments of reflection that help him/her understand and manage his/her feelings and emotions. When students enter the classroom each morning, they stop first at the "how are you feeling today?" Velcro board, a valuable tool that increases social-emotional learning and helps students develop self-regulation skills. The morning meeting is used to promote important peer conversations and provide opportunities for students to share, as well as listen to and learn from others. By learning to identify and acknowledge their own emotions, students begin to recognize the emotions of others, developing respect and empathy, which will in turn lead to the development of positive relationships. These skills also provide students with a strong foundation for future learning when they will dive into complex topics that may be challenging and evoke strong emotions.

## Grade 3

Identity work in third grade focuses on reflection around who students are as individuals within the classroom. Third graders explore their identities as students, examining what kind of learners they are, what kinds of spaces they work best in, how they communicate, and a variety of other behaviors. They also

examine how all of those qualities mix and interact within a community. Students learn to see and acknowledge each other, accepting each other's strengths, weaknesses, passions, and interests. There is an emphasis on building relationships and a sense of community that respects all individuals.

## **Grade 4**

In fourth grade, a year when students developmentally begin to explore who they are and where they fit among their peers, students engage in authentic explorations about what makes an individual special. This work includes creating identity maps, as well as writing poems and personal narratives that require students to reflect on their unique experiences and journeys. Students explore how their personal experiences impact their view of the world and learn to respect and appreciate different experiences and perspectives within the community. These activities build a strong foundation for work with multiperspective that will occur later in the year when they examine some of the untold stories of under-represented groups in history.

## **Grade 5**

Fifth graders build on the idea that their experiences, values, and beliefs influence their perceptions of the world. They explore how their identities are formed and transformed over time, examining their roles and relationships in the classroom setting, as well as in the larger community. From there, students are introduced to the concepts of social justice and equality. They write poetry, as well as personal reflections, and create multimedia presentations highlighting their thinking as they explore these complex concepts. This work sets the stage for the much deeper and more complex explorations of historical events around race and equality that will be studied in the future.

## **Grade 6**

Sixth graders, as the oldest and most mature students in the school, begin to examine how they can use their identities to affect change in the world. They examine the concepts of bias, privilege, equality, fairness, and justice. Woven throughout those investigations is the idea that people can express more than one identity and that identities often intersect, creating societal advantages or disadvantages depending on the circumstances. In addition, students explore how a person's identity can change over time with exposure to new experiences and new information. There is an emphasis on "making the world a better place" and on exercising one's right and ability to take action.