

How to Set Up a “Mix It Up!” Day

This information is taken from: <http://www.tolerance.org/teach/>

“Mix It Up!” is a network for teen activists who want to challenge social boundaries in their schools and communities. At many schools around the country, the cafeteria at lunchtime is a social map of the whole school - a map crisscrossed with boundaries. These boundaries exist for many reasons - habit, friendship, status, fear, prejudice. The simple space of a cafeteria table is, for many of us, a comfort zone where we can be ourselves with those who know us best. Touch base. Regroup. Let down the guard that classroom pressures often require of us. For others, the lunchroom with all its boundaries is a world with its own pressures - a world of familiar strangers and rigid expectations. Each November, students across the country are going to stir things up in their school cafeterias. And you can do it, too.

Here are some ideas to help you “Mix It Up!” at Lunch:

Organize

All it takes is one person venturing outside the comfort zone to “Mix It Up!” but on _____, why not have a whole crowd sitting someplace new?

1. Ask your friends to join in. Who are the people you normally sit with at lunch? Ask them to trade in for a new seat on _____, too.
2. Pitch the idea to the clubs, sports teams and other groups you belong to. Do you belong to the French club? The basketball team? The student government association? Get peers involved - teachers and administrators, too.
3. . Invite other clubs to participate. Build a coalition of campus groups to do the mix! Ask friends to pitch the idea to the clubs they belong to. Get band members talking to basketball players, and the Ecology Club talking to cheerleaders. Get student government talking to the PTA! Get everyone involved.
4. Start a club. No clubs in sight? With a friend or two, ask a teacher to sponsor a “Mix It Up!” Club at your school. Make it official, and move forward!
5. Publicize. Make announcements on the school intercom. Write an article for the school newspaper. Make an announcement on campus radio or TV. Download “Mix It Up at Lunch” flyers and hang them up. Build an e-mail database, and use the Mix’s E-cards to send announcements to people who plan to participate and invite others to join in.



Plan

How are you going to “do the day?” Here are five ways to mix up lunchroom seating.

- Create a “calendar” out of twelve tables and sit by birth month or by Zodiac signs!
- Number several tables and draw your seat assignment from a hat.
- Draw candies out of a bag and sit with the matching tablecloth.
- Find a table where you don’t know more than two people.
- Give each person a “ticket” that matches the color tag on a chair.

Act

The day has arrived. It’s _____, and you’re sitting at a new table staring at a bunch of people you don’t know. What now? Here are five ideas to jump-start the conversation.

- What’s the last CD you bought?
- Imagine you rule the world. What’s the first law you’d make?
- What’s the craziest thing you ever did in public?
- You’re signing autographs. What are you famous for?
- You’re the principal. What’s the first class you drop - and what class do you add?

Document

How’d it go? What were the hits? The misses? What would you change? What would you do exactly the same? Where did your conversations take you? Will you talk to the people you mixed it up with again? How easy or hard was it to relate to others?

Write a story for “Mix It Up!” about your experiences; print it in the school newspaper, too. Take photographs of the cafeteria before, on and after the day. Draw a map of the social boundaries at your school.

Look Ahead

“Mix It Up!” kicks off this year with “Mix It Up at Lunch Day.” And that’s just what “the Day” is - a kick-off, a starting place. After Lunch projects get more serious. Sure, we make a personal decision every day about where we’re going to sit and who we’ll break bread with - but, sometimes, external factors shape those decisions. Does your school, for example, schedule lunch for AP and “regular” classes in different periods? Do you mainly hang out with people from your neighborhood? Are there rules, written or unwritten, about who is welcomed at which tables and who is not?

