



## Intergalactic Conference Initiative

### Materials

Planet cards with descriptions of each group's history/communication style.

### Lesson plan

This lesson requires little advance framing tell students they are attending an Intergalactic Conference. Break the crew into four or more groups. Each is a delegation from a different planet attending an intergalactic conference.

In private, give them their alien characteristics. You can use the following, or make up your own based on things you see in your class.

1. You are all from the planet **Areta**, and in your history, there were many wars. Your culture had a tendency to have very bad tempers, and arguments always started with the raising of voices. Finally, your ancestors decided that in order to stop these arguments that were leading to wars, everyone on the planet could only talk in a whisper. Furthermore, because people still have bad tempers and act rashly when angry, people on your planet now wait 5 seconds in silence before responding (in a whisper). This has led to a very peaceful existence.
2. You are from the planet **Epenoi**, and in your culture people generally live far apart from each other, as much of the land is countryside and people like having their own space. When people gather together, they stand 5 feet away from each other. If someone gets closer than 5 feet to you, you start to feel very uncomfortable and emit a loud humming noise to indicate to them that they are too close and need to move back to restore your "5 foot bubble." Once people are 5 feet away from you, you are happy and can converse normally.
3. On planet **Olivera**, where you are born, there is a constant loud hum that comes from the center of the planet. Because of this, all the inhabitants, including you, have a large percentage of hearing loss. Luckily, because of genetics, you can understand people speaking in a normal conversational tone because you are very sensitive to different frequencies of sound. However, when you talk, you talk much louder than people from other planets because you cannot hear how loud you are talking.
4. You are from the planet **Zoltron**, and in your society, touch is a very important means of communication. In fact, it has been found to be so soothing, that it is almost unheard of to have a conversation with someone without holding their hands or putting your hand on their shoulder. This is especially important when you first meet someone. If people resist your touch, you take it very personally and start to cry. Then you try again!
5. You are from the planet **Woooooooooh**, and in your society, people have extremely high energy levels because of the superfoods that are grown on your planet. Because of this, people on your planet never stop moving. The preferred method of moving is hopping up and down, running in small circles, or

dancing, but when having a conversation it is acceptable to do small kinesthetic movements such as slapping your leg or clapping, as long as you move your body around at least once a minute. This is perfectly normal to you and you don't really understand when people from other planets find it funny.

Ask each group to creatively decide their favorite sport, national food and most valuable invention.

Let the conference begin. Everyone has five minutes to find out as much info as possible about the other planets. Another way to do this is have a difficult task that everyone must complete as a group.

### **Debriefing**

First you can ask people to describe the other planets using adjectives, like angry, shy and generous. This generates a discussion about how we project our assumptions about the social meaning of certain actions onto others. How has this happened in people's own lives?

Second, participants can divulge their peculiar cultural habit and discuss the difficulty of communicating across cultures and misunderstandings that this can generate. How can we ensure clear and open communication between diverse people?

Third, participants can introduce other groups, and describe their sport, food, and invention; each group can then discuss their experience communicating with other groups, and brainstorm examples of other situations where they have made assumptions about other people/had assumptions made about them, and where they have had difficulty communicating across a cultural barrier.

### **Closing**

Encourage students to remain aware of communication issues throughout course, and emphasize that even if a communication barrier is not the fault of either party, it should still be addressed.