Generalizations and Stereotypes

Overview:
The goal of this lesson to explore the concept of culture and to provide a clear understanding of culture, cultural generalizations vs. cultural stereotypes and to describe some ways in which values and behavior may differ between cultures. Allowing students to explore their own culture as well as study the dynamics of a different culture will help students be able to see situations from a different perspective, allowing them to recognize the importance of embracing cultural differences as a way of sustaining and preserving mutual understanding.

Objectives:
Students will be able to:

- Define the notion of culture
- Explore dimensions of their own culture
- Differentiate between a cultural generalization and cultural stereotype
- Recognize stereotypes within their own culture
- Identify one or more characteristics of U.S Culture
- Distinguish aspects of a different culture

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Diagrams (the following are in PDF format) of culture, stereotypes, and generalizations, Photos students bring in to examine stereotypes and generalizations.

Common Core Standards:
CCSS ELA-LITERACY 9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
AFS Educational Goals:

Cultural Realm:
- Understand the concepts of “Culture” and intercultural adaptation
- Cultural knowledge and awareness: To become more aware of their own culture and recognize its influence on their behavior

Interpersonal Realm:
- Flexibility and Social Skills: To be comfortable handling a wide range of social situations and adapt to new environment by applying appropriate behaviors in diverse contexts

Activity:
- Ask students to explain what culture means to them?
- Show diagram of culture. Refer to the diagram to show that culture reflects the BELIEFS, VALUES, and ATTITUDES of a particular culture and influences BEHAVIOR
- What are some examples of cultures within the U. S.? (family, work, school, church, clubs, classes)
- List some things that, in combination, make each of factor unique. On the other hand, some of these traits maybe shared with most other members of a culture. Using one of the cultures within the U.S. that you identified (school, family) can you give examples of things that most members of this particular group/culture might share in common? (eg, education, experience, social class)
- Show “Definition of a Cultural Generalization”
- Ask students to give me an example of a cultural generalization? One might be “Many people from Country Z tend to keep their feelings to themselves.”
- Show the graphic on stereotype
- Ask student to give an example of stereotype. “People from Country X are lazy”
- To illustrate the difference between Cultural Generalization and Cultural Stereotype, have students find pictures, share them with the class, and have the class deal with stereotyping vs generalization:
  - People at a baseball game or other sport: “Many people in the U.S. attend X sport” vs “Everyone in the United States loves this sport.”
  - Surfer photo or something similar.. "Many people in CA like to surf, are in good shape, and are tan" vs “Everybody in CA likes to surf, have blond hair, and keep in good shape”
• Someone eating fast food: “Lots of Americans enjoy fast food,” vs “All Americans eat fast food every day.” Depending the people in the picture you could explore other judgments: “Americans always dress casually, All American girls wear make-up”

• A picture of pampered pets…some cultures do not allow pets in the homes, in their beds, eat off their plates, etc. “People in the US always treat their animals as members of the family” vs “Some Americans have pets that they treat as if they are family members”

• Challenge students to think of a cultural stereotypes of X culture? (This could be the target culture of the month)

• Ask student to reword this so it is a generalization rather than a stereotype

Adaptation:
Ideally, each month related activities for a target culture would be part of the building blocks toward a better understanding of culture itself. The target cultures could begin with the language being taught and then move to diverse cultures around the world. Simply these would include students being able to do the following:

• Practice appropriate use of polite speech in the target language in two or three contexts, i.e., greeting, showing appreciation, and refusing something

• List one or more basic “do’s and taboos” in the target culture in the following three areas: at home, at school, in the community

• Share and/or celebrate one “visible” and one “invisible” aspect that they have learned about themselves, the U.S. and the target culture

• Identify several cultural differences between themselves and their peers in the target culture.