“Go Fish” Activity

CRLA Training Topics Covered:
- Cultural awareness, inter-cultural communication, diversity, and/or special needs students
- How to tutor/deal with target populations

Learning Objectives:
Students experience positions of both privilege and disadvantage, enabling them to identify privilege and empathize with students of varying backgrounds and educational experiences.

Description of the Activity:
This variation of Go Fish uses a simple and familiar card game to trigger discussion about and appreciation of a variety of topics within diversity. Students play a modified game of Go Fish. Each person plays using a different definition of what they can play as a matching set. Each player’s rule gives them a distinct advantage or disadvantage during gameplay and leads to one clear winner, one clear loser, and one or two players who finish in the middle.

The game illustrates potential breakpoints in communication, especially in the chain from instructor to student to tutor and back.

This activity is designed for three or more students.

Materials needed:
- One standard deck of playing cards per game
- One copy of basic rules per table
- One set definition per player; each player in a game has a different set definition

Directions:
Recommended opening: Play an online video titled “Inclusion, Exclusion, Illusion, and Collusion,” by Helen Turnbull. This video discusses how we all have biases that we need to be aware of and overcome.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zV8OpXhl2g

Each game should have 3-4 players.

Hand out one copy of the basic rules (attached) to each group, and one set definition (attached) to each player.
Individual rules:

Hand each player a slip with the rule that defines what counts as a set for them in the game. The different set definitions are:

- A set is four-of-a-kind (e.g. all four kings)
- A set is a pair of the same color (e.g. two red kings)
- A set is any pair (e.g. any two kings)
- A set is a pair of non-matching colors* (e.g. a black and a red king)

*This set is not used if only three players.

Variations:

1) Secret or shared set definitions
   - Have the participants keep their definition of a set a secret. (As tutors, we don’t always know what students are working through internally)
   - Make the definitions of the set known. (Sometimes students are very forthcoming and you know what you are working with from the beginning of the session.)

2) Scoring
   - Score 5 points for each numbered card, 10 for each face card, and 15 for each ace. Deduct the same point values for cards remaining in a player’s hand. (Gives more potential for the person gathering four-of-a-kind sets to win, replicating a student overcoming challenges.)

3) Play multiple rounds in which players experience different rules.

Debrief:

This game can result in many different discussions. Suggested topics:

- Students who face a lack of outside support, e.g. first generation students
- Students with language barriers
- Students with disabilities may be playing with different rules
- First year students navigating higher education for the first time
- Students with more obstacles to overcome, e.g. work, extracurricular commitments, family
- Having to meet the various academic expectations of outside influences
- Don’t make assumptions about others’ background, experiences, etc.
- Be aware of your biases and manage their impact
- How did it feel to play in your role(s)?