

Exclusion

ABOUT PROBLEM-SOLVING CLASS MEETINGS

Problem-Solving Class Meetings are used to discuss any problem affecting the classroom community. These meetings are opportunities for the students to see why some actions are problems for the community. The students reflect on their own behavior, build empathy, and invest in solutions they have arrived at themselves. Sometimes Problem-Solving Class Meetings don't lead to explicit solutions but rather raise students' awareness of the problems and their effects—an important step in changing behavior.

Not all problems are suitable for whole-class discussion. Problems involving only one or two students are better addressed individually. Use class meetings only if you feel that all the students can benefit from a general discussion about the issue.

ABOUT EXCLUSION

Use this meeting when you have noticed that students are excluding one another by forming cliques, “closing” games, or isolating individuals in other ways.

This lesson may take more than one class period.

Lesson Purpose

Students:

- Discuss the effects of exclusion on the community
- Generate ideas for including others
- Build on one another's thinking

Materials

- “Class Meeting Rules” chart

The Lesson

1 GATHER IN A CIRCLE AND INTRODUCE THE PROBLEM

Have the students come to the circle with partners sitting together. Briefly review the class meeting rules. Remind the students that they have been working all year to make school a safe place where everyone feels welcome. Explain that you've noticed some students leaving others out of group activities. (For example, "I've seen some people keeping others out of their games on the playground and not letting others sit with them in the lunchroom.")

Explain that today the students will talk about the problem and what they can do as a community to make sure everyone is included.

2 DISCUSS EXCLUSION AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY

First in pairs and then as a class, discuss:

Q Have you ever been left out of a group activity? What happened?

Q Have you ever seen someone else being left out? How do you think that person felt?

Students might say:

"They said I couldn't play in the kickball game, and I felt angry."

"I wanted to cry and go home."

"They might feel like no one likes them."

"I think they felt lonely when no one sat with them."

Q Why do you think people leave others out of group activities?

Students might say:

"They don't want to be friends with the person."

"Maybe because they don't speak the same language."

"The person never follows the rules."

"People might leave other people out because their friends tell them to."



Exclusion is an emotional issue for both victims and perpetrators, and students need to feel safe and supported while discussing it. Remind the students to use "people" or "students" instead of particular students' names.



In any social group, it is normal for individuals to form closer bonds with some people than with others. The students will need help distinguishing between the appropriate expression of social preferences and mean-spirited or deliberate isolation of others.

If you notice that certain children are consistently excluded because their attempts to be included tend to be confrontational or disruptive, help these children individually by teaching them more successful social strategies—asking whether they can join in, agreeing to play by the rules, and being inclusive themselves.

Ask and briefly discuss:

Q Why do we want to make sure everyone feels included?

3 GENERATE SOLUTIONS

Summarize what the students have said about the effects of exclusion on the community. Explain that partners will talk about how they can make sure everyone feels included. Have the students use “Think, Pair, Share” to think about and discuss the following questions one at a time. After partners talk, have a few volunteers share their thinking with the group.

Q What might you do if you feel left out of a group activity or if you see someone else being left out?

Q If you’ve left someone out and hurt their feelings, what might you do to try to make it right?

Q What can you do as a member of our community to make sure everyone is included?

Students might say:

“Ask them to please let me play.”

“In addition to what [Lola] said, I think I would invite people to play in the game.”

“I agree with [Lola and Grady], and if I see someone sitting by himself in the lunchroom, I will ask him to sit with me.”

As the students share, ask follow-up questions such as:

Q What idea do you have that’s different from [Tito’s] idea?

Q How might it feel to [say you’re sorry to someone]? How might the other person feel?

Q What questions do you have for [Gina] about her idea?



As the students share, encourage them to use the prompts

“I agree with ____ because...,”

“I disagree with ____ because...,”

and “In addition to what ____ said, I think...” to add to one another’s thinking.

Think, Pair, Share



The students may say that they exclude other students when they cheat, are mean, or display other antisocial behaviors. Acknowledge this and explain that you will try to help those students learn how to interact with others.

Make sure the students know that if they are being excluded or see someone else being excluded, it’s okay to go to an adult for help.

4 SUMMARIZE AND ADJOURN THE MEETING

Summarize the students' possible solutions and explain that you would like them to try out their ideas for including everyone. (For example, "We discussed that if you see someone being left out of a game, you can remind the people in the game that the person might feel sad and suggest asking them to play. We also said that if you see someone sitting alone in the lunchroom, you can ask her to eat with you.")

Remind the students of the importance of including everyone in the community and let them know that you will check in with them later to see how things are going. Adjourn the class meeting and have the students return to their desks.

After the Lesson

Plan to have a check-in meeting in a day or two to talk about how the students are doing including others. Checking in consistently and periodically during the year will reinforce the students' understanding that excluding others is not acceptable behavior. Use the Model Daily Check-in lesson (see Week 2) as a guide.