

Becoming a Welcoming Classroom

Grade K

About Welcoming Class Meetings

A welcoming class meeting is an introductory lesson to help students understand what makes children feel welcome. And, to discover what the effect is of unwelcoming behavior, such as hurtful teasing, name calling and exclusion.

About Welcoming

Use this lesson when a new student enters your classroom, or when you observe students' behavior which is hurtful to others.

Lesson Purpose

- To create a more welcoming classroom
- To have students understand what makes them and others feel welcome or unwelcome in school.

Materials:

Chart Paper
Markers
Crayons
Drawing Paper

Book

The New Girl...and Me
By Jacqui Robbins

Vocabulary:

Name calling
Exclude
Hurtful
Teasing
Different
Similar
Comfortable

Time Suggested:

One 45 minute period

The Lesson:

1. Gather in a circle and introduce “Welcome”

Students come with a partner to the circle. Briefly review the class meeting rules. Remind the students that everyone likes to feel welcome and supported at school, whether they are new to the school or not. Also, remind them that no one likes to be teased or called hurtful words.

2. Discuss what it means to feel welcome at school.

Explain that the students will talk about times they've felt welcome and the times when their feelings might have been hurt. Point out that this can be a difficult topic to talk about and that you would like the students to focus on listening and responding in a caring way.

- Ask students for examples

3. Discuss what it means to feel unwelcome at school

- Ask students for examples

4. Read the book aloud “The New Girl and Me”

Discuss, asking these questions:

- Have any of you ever been new to a classroom, join a team or go to an event where you didn't know anyone?
- What did DJ do or say that made Shakeeta feel unwelcome or “not at home”?
- Has anyone ever seen an iguana? What does it look like? Eat?
- What finally made Shakeeta feel welcome?

Activity:

- Using the writing prompt, “I can help others feel welcome by...” ask students to respond verbally to this.
- Have students return to their desks to draw a welcoming picture.
- Upon completion, bring students back to the circle to share and comment.
- Display pictures around the room or in the hallway.

Summarize the Discussion

Summarize what the students have said about why welcoming a new student is important to the class and school community. Encourage students to notice both new and continuing students who might be playing alone on the playground, and to approach them with a welcoming voice and gesture.

Reflect and Adjourn the Meeting

Have the students briefly discuss how they did today listening and responding in a caring, welcoming way. Adjourn the meeting and have the students return to their seats.