

Kindergarten–Grade 2
Category: Building a Positive
Classroom Climate
Topic: Team-Building

We Are All Welcome Here!

Background

Creating a positive classroom climate begins with creating a sense that everyone belongs and is accepted. Factors such as age, gender, social class, race, and popularity can affect whether students feel welcome and included. Students need to be able to trust adults and peers in order to talk freely about their feelings, fears, and problems with bullying. Adults need to model positive behavior for students and be alert to situations when students might feel excluded. Define and use terms such as “welcome,” “comfortable,” “accepted,” and “included” to frame this discussion.

Learner Outcomes

By the end of this session, students will be able to

- identify factors that make them feel welcome, accepted, and included at school
- identify ways students and adults can work together to make their class feel more welcoming and inclusive for all students
- discuss the need to adjust behavior to show respect for the needs of others

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers

- Age-appropriate literature such as *The Brand New Kid* (Katie Couric), *Chrysanthemum* (Kevin Henkes), *Oliver Button Is a Sissy* (Tomie dePaola), *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* (Eric Carle), *Swimmy* (Leo Lionni), *Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose* (Dr. Seuss), or *Chester's Way* (Kevin Henkes)

Preparation Needed

- On a sheet of chart paper, write the heading “I feel I belong when . . .”
- Familiarize yourself with the book you have chosen and the ways that characters in the book are made to feel welcome or excluded.

Class Meeting Outline

Opening Activity (15 minutes)

Teacher Tip



Based on the varying demographics of the children in your class, provide students with guidelines, such as encouraging them to greet everyone in the class, to make the class welcoming and inclusive for everyone. Consider religious, cultural, physical, emotional, and family differences.

1. When people welcome us to a place, we feel happy to be there. I'm going to read you a story. Think about what makes the person in the story feel welcome and know that other people are happy to have him or her there. Read the literature selection.
2. Discuss the following questions:
 - Did the person feel welcome? Were people happy the person was with them?
 - What did the other people do to make the person feel welcome?
3. What are some things that make you feel welcome and show you that people are happy you are there? List students' ideas on the chart paper.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

1. Process the activity.
 - What are some things that make people in our class feel welcome?
 - What behavior can make people feel left out?
 - What can we do in our classroom to make sure that everyone feels welcome and that we are happy everyone is here?

2. Grade 1: **How did you feel on your first day at this school? What things did teachers or other students do to make you feel welcome? How might each of us help new students feel welcome?**
3. Grade 2: Have students discuss the following question with a partner: **What could you do if some students don't feel welcome or feel left out?** After a few minutes, ask the partners to share their ideas with the group. Compile students' suggestions onto chart paper and post it in the classroom.

Wrap-Up

1. **I want to make sure everyone here feels welcome. We all can help. Every day, I will try to show each of you that I am happy you are here. You came up with lots of good ideas. You can help everyone feel welcome too by (highlight key student ideas). Let's all practice this week. We can talk about how that worked next time!**
2. Encourage additional questions and comments.

Curriculum Connections

Vocabulary: *accepted, belong, caring/uncaring, comfortable, different/same, included, welcome/unwelcome*

Language Arts:

- Conduct a "writer's workshop." Ask children to draw or write in response to the story that was read during the class meeting. They might write about how the character felt, what he/she experienced, and their thoughts about that. Some children will be able to make a connection to their own experiences.
- Role-play positive introductions or greetings to build social skills.

Social Studies: Help students research ways that people of different cultures greet each other.

Art:

- Create a large heart-shaped puzzle. Cut it into the same number of pieces as there are students in the class. Ask each student to color one piece with his or her favorite color and write his or her name on it. Each piece is then brought together to complete a beautiful, cooperatively made piece of art. You may wish to post a phrase by the heart that reads: "Each piece unique, together complete."
- Encourage students to create posters with words of welcome in different languages.
- Have students draw a picture, comic strip, or poster that illustrates something that makes them feel welcome at school or in their classroom.