

Classroom Meetings

Support for Social Emotional Learning



A photograph of a classroom with rows of light-colored wooden desks and chairs. In the foreground, a spiral-bound notebook is open on a desk, with a yellow pencil resting on it. The background is slightly blurred, showing more desks and chairs receding into the distance.

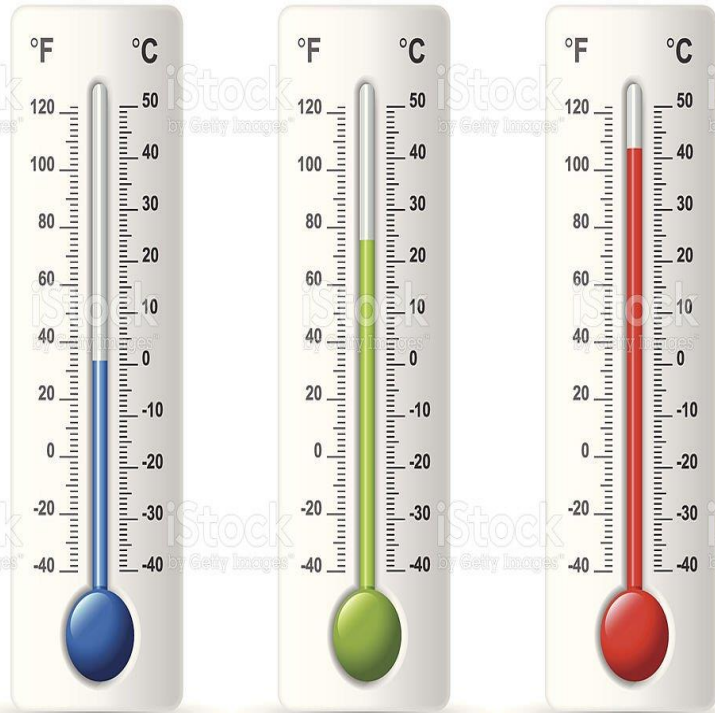
The Class Meeting Schedule

Classroom meetings can take place at any point during the day and for as long as you see necessary. That is the day and time that we are finishing up work and decompressing from the week. Children have just completed a full week of activities and playing with friends. They often have plenty to talk about and share. Our meetings usually last around 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the lesson and need for talk time.

Opening the Class Meeting

- ▶ We start every class meeting sitting together in a circle at the carpet. I like to set an intention for the meeting to get children focused and ready to listen. We use our chime and some deep quiet breathing to clear our heads and calm our bodies.
- ▶ I review a few rules about respectful listening (looking at the speaker, listening to what they are saying, having a calm body). We remind ourselves that the only person allowed to talk is the person with the “talking stick” or any item that you have chosen for children to hold when it’s their turn to speak. We wait for everyone show they are ready and we begin.

Temperature (Sharing Feelings within the Class Meeting)



We take turns going around the circle and passing our “talking stick” or another item. We take turns giving our temperature out of 10 to express how we are feeling at the time (0 being not good and 10 being great). Children can say their temperature and give a reason if they wish. For example, *I am an 8 because I played a fun game of soccer with my friends at lunch.* As we go around the circle, if children are not ready for their turn, they can have a pass and we will come back to them.

Gratitude

(Giving Thanks during the Class Meeting)

- ▶ This is another variation to include instead of temperatures during meetings. Take turns going around the circle and expressing gratitude for something. It can be absolutely anything. We use the words “I am thankful for...” when the talking stick comes to us. For example, *I am thankful for the nice weather outside, or I am thankful for my mom because she takes good care of me.*
- ▶ Again, giving gratitude is something we spend time learning about initially. We share all the things we are thankful for and brainstorm them on a chart for ideas in the future. I encourage children to be authentic and to think with their hearts when it is their turn. Some children prefer to use an idea from the chart or an idea they have heard from a friend, which is fine as well.



Conflict Resolution (Using the Class Meeting for Problem Solving)

It is important for children to learn problem-solving strategies that they can eventually learn and use independently. During the “beefs” portion of effective classroom meetings we talk about and learn problem-solving strategies. There requires teaching ahead of time about the different ways to solve a problem.

Teach students that when a problem occurs they can do a few different things:

Tell the person to “STOP”

Say how it makes them feel “It makes me feel... when you...!”

Suggest a solution to the problem

Walk away and leave the situation

Get help from an adult you know

There needs to be a few rules set during this time to avoid intentionally hurting feelings. Limiting the number of “beefs” expressed during a meeting to 3 or 4 is helpful. I also have a rule against naming the names of friends in our classroom or school that the problem is with to maintain and show respect. As adults, we wouldn’t want to be “called out” for our mistakes in front of our peers and therefore we wouldn’t want our students doing that to each other either.

Social Emotional Learning (Discussion/Lesson/Book)

This is the culminating part of an effective classroom meeting. This part can take on any shape or form depending on what you want to teach your class or what your needs are. You may want to see how the week goes and if there are any issues that stand out and need to be addressed. Or decide to have a short discussion with your class after a book about the topic. You could have a discussion and have students write and draw about what you discussed. In addition, you might choose to have your students role-play different scenarios and discuss their feelings. Finally, you may choose to do a separate lesson and activity to build Social Emotional Learning.



Topics for Lessons

During each week, I have **AT LEAST** one meeting and a lesson on a specific social and emotional learning topic. Some of these ideas are listed below.

- ▶ Self-regulation (expressing emotions appropriately, calming down, self-control)
- ▶ Friendship skills (taking turns, sharing, listening)
- ▶ Empathy (caring about others, thinking of others before ourselves, helping others)
- ▶ Bullying (how to stop it, how to recognize it)
- ▶ Conflict resolution (problem-solving skills)
- ▶ Respect (recognizing differences, appreciation, acceptance, kindness, love)
- ▶ Cooperation and responsibility (for oneself, with others, in the classroom and school)
- ▶ Basic needs (versus wants)

Classroom Chart

What is Working?	Goals to improve by next week
Line behavior in the hall	Attendance
Behavior during Math	We are taking too long at the bathroom break
Turning in homework	Gym-We got into trouble
No tardy students	Multiplication and division facts
Writing paragraphs	People are saying mean things to one another
Everyone is wearing their uniform	Lunch behavior
We behaved for the substitute teacher	School supplies

*Have the students share weekly some ways that they can reach the goals for the following week. You can select 3 goals to work on for the week and POST them. This will help them keep one another accountable in the classroom, build a positive environment, and make them a part of the conflict resolution in the classroom.

Class Meeting Video



Resources

- ▶ <https://proudtobeprimary.com/class-meeting/>
- ▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6_pLkwaCeY
- ▶ https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/teachers/articles/2018-2019/teacher-mag/bts/meeting-questions-printable_BTS2018.pdf
- ▶ https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/teachers/articles/2018-2019/teacher-mag/bts/meeting-questions-printable_BTS2018.pdf