



Self-Management

ABOUT CENTER FOR THE COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

The Caring School Community (CSC) program is a nationally recognized, research-based program for grades K–6 that builds classroom and schoolwide community while developing students' social and emotional (SEL) skills and competencies.

Introducing Class Meetings

By: The Caring School Community

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ABOUT CHECK-IN CLASS MEETINGS

In the Caring School Community program, students participate in various types of class meetings: Check-in Class Meetings, Planning/Decision-Making Class Meetings, and Problem-Solving Class Meetings.

In the beginning of the year, many class meetings are check-in meetings. The purpose of Check-in Class Meetings is to give the students a chance to reflect on their day. In these meetings, the students' commitment to the classroom community is enhanced. They have opportunities to celebrate what they have learned, evaluate how they have worked together, or share their thoughts about their day. Allow 10–15 minutes, preferably near the end of the day, for check-in meetings. To build a sense of belonging among your students, plan to do a Check-in Class Meeting every day.

At this first class meeting of the year, the emphasis is on establishing class meeting rules, teaching the procedures for class meetings, and helping students get used to talking in class meetings. A model for subsequent daily Check-in Class Meetings, along with ideas for check-in topics, is provided in Week 3 in the Model Daily Check-in

Lesson Purpose

Students:

- Learn and practice class meeting rules and procedures
- Take turns talking
- Listen to others
- Practice "Turn to Your Partner"

Materials

- "Class Meeting Rules" chart, prepared ahead (see "Before the Lesson")
- Space for the class to sit in a circle

Before the Lesson

Prepare and post a chart of “Class Meeting Rules” for the students to follow during all class meetings. Consider using or adapting the following rules:

- One person talks at a time.
- Look at the person talking.
- When mentioning problems, refer to “people” instead of using names.

Decide on a procedure for having the students form a circle for all class meetings. Establishing and reviewing this procedure will help class meetings proceed smoothly.

The Lesson

1 INTRODUCE CLASS MEETINGS AND GATHER IN A CIRCLE

Explain that this year the students will regularly come together in class meetings. Class meetings are a special kind of discussion in which students will sit in a circle and talk about their classroom community. The purpose is to learn how to work well together so that everyone in the class feels safe and comfortable. Explain that today they will form a circle to have their first class meeting of the year.

Explain how you would like the students to move into a circle and remind them to move safely and responsibly.

Have the students move to the circle with partners sitting together. If necessary, have them return to their desks and practice the procedure again until they are able to move in an orderly way.

Point out ways in which they took responsibility for themselves as they were moving. Explain that it is important for them to move responsibly to the circle every time they have a class meeting.



If at all possible, arrange the students in a circle for all class meetings. A circle puts everyone on equal footing, and the students are able to address one another directly. If you do not have enough space to form a circle, have the students arrange their chairs so that most students can see one another.

Class Meeting Lessons

2 TEACH THE CLASS MEETING RULES

Explain that there are rules you expect the students to follow during class meetings so that everyone will feel safe participating. Show the “Class Meeting Rules” chart and briefly explain each rule.

As you explain each rule, ask questions like these to help the students think about why the rule is important:

Q What would happen if everyone talked at the same time in a class meeting?

Q Why is it important to look at the person who’s talking?

Students might say:

“You wouldn’t get to hear what anyone was saying.”

“If you look at the person who’s talking, it will help you listen.”

Explain that today the students will practice the first two of the class meeting rules. Remind the students to talk one at a time and to look at the person speaking. If necessary, model this with a student. Explain that you will check in with them at the end of the meeting to see how they did.

3 SHARE IN THE CIRCLE AND PRACTICE LOOKING AT THE PERSON TALKING

Explain that today in the class meeting, the students will get to know one another by sharing news about their day. Ask:

Q What is one thing you did in school today that you want to tell your family about?

Provide the students with a few moments of “wait time” to think before you call on anyone to respond. Have several volunteers share their ideas with the class.

Help the students explain their thinking in more detail by asking the following questions. Remind the students to look at and listen to the person speaking.

CLASS MEETING RULES

- One person talks at a time.
- Look at the person talking.
- When mentioning problems refer to “people” instead of using names.



If the students have difficulty generating ideas, offer some suggestions such as those in “Students might say.”



Giving the students a few seconds of quiet “wait time” before discussing a question allows them time to consider the question and form a response before anyone starts talking. It increases student participation in discussions and encourages longer, more thoughtful answers. Use wait time during all student discussions throughout the day.

Ask:

- Q Who else liked [making self-portraits] today? What part did you like about it, and why?**
- Q What will you want to tell your family tonight about [making self-portraits]?**

4 REFLECT ON THE MEETING

Remind the students that they have been practicing turning and talking to a partner. Review the procedure for “Turn to Your Partner.” (For example, “When I say ‘Turn to your partner,’ you will turn to face your partner and start talking about the question I ask. When I raise my hand, finish what you are saying, raise your own hand, and turn back to face me.”) Explain that in addition to listening carefully to their partner you expect the students to explain their thinking clearly and completely. Ask:



Turn to Your Partner

- Q I noticed people listening carefully and looking at the person who was talking during our meeting. Why is it important to listen to the person talking?**

Use “Turn to Your Partner” to have partners discuss the question. After a moment, signal to bring their attention back to you. Have two or three volunteers share their thinking with the class.

5 ADJOURN THE MEETING

Explain how you would like the students to move from the circle. Adjourn the meeting and have them return to their seats. If necessary, have them practice the procedure until they are able to move in an orderly way.

After the Lesson

Save the “Class Meeting Rules” chart for use throughout the year.