

# Welcome Back 1: Introducing Class Meetings

**IN THIS MEETING**, the students begin to build a caring classroom community. They learn a procedure for bringing their chairs to the circle in a safe and orderly way. They begin to get to know one another through a teambuilding activity, learn the rules for Class Meetings, and reflect on how to act in caring and friendly ways. Then they learn the procedure for returning with chairs to their desks afterward.

35 minutes

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# CLASS MEETING

## Welcome Back 1: Introducing Class Meetings

### PURPOSE

- Get to know one another
- Learn and practice Class Meeting rules and procedures
- Speak clearly and listen to one another

### ABOUT THIS CLASS MEETING

Class Meetings are important whole-class discussions in which the students make decisions about their classroom, build relationships, and talk about problems affecting their class. Class Meetings are central to cultivating students' social, emotional, and ethical development.

Class Meetings are held with chairs arranged in a circle, which allows the students to sit comfortably for a longer period time than they can sit on the floor. A circle is the ideal arrangement because it puts everyone on equal footing and the students can address one another directly. If you are social distancing, you may need to have students form the circle on the perimeter of the room, or, if possible, have the meeting outside.

If needed, break the meeting into two parts, stopping after the teambuilding activity with a brief reflection on how students followed the "Class Meeting Rules." Begin the second part with a brief reminder of how to move chairs and of the "Class Meeting Rules" before proceeding with Step 5, Relate Values to Behavior.

### MATERIALS

- Space for the class to sit in a circle in chairs
- "Class Meeting Rules" chart, prepared ahead
- Statements about yourself (two true and one a lie) on a sheet of scratch paper, prepared ahead
- Clipboard with paper and pencil for each student, prepared ahead

## 1 Introduce Class Meetings and Gather in a Circle (5-7 minutes)

Explain that the students will have their first Class Meeting today and that Class Meetings are a special kind of discussion in which the students talk about important topics related to the classroom community. Class Meetings are held in a circle. The students will bring their chairs so that they can sit comfortably for the whole meeting.

### Teacher Note

Consider using a visual signal, such as a hand in the air, to gain the students' attention. Teach the students how to respond to the signal, for example, to finish talking, place their own hands in the air, and turn their attention to you. As you use this signal, reinforce its effectiveness by waiting until all the students have responded to it before moving on.

## WELCOME BACK 1: INTRODUCING CLASS MEETINGS

### Teacher Note

If you are social distancing, consider marking the floor with tape to denote where students should put their chairs and having only a few students move to the circle at a time.

### Facilitation Tip

When asking a question, pause for 5–10 seconds before calling on anyone to respond. This gives the students time to think quietly to themselves before they start to talk.

Explain and model exactly how you would like the students to move their chairs to the circle.

Ask and briefly discuss:

- Q *What are you going to do to make sure you move safely with your chair?*
- Q *What are you going to do to make sure you care for others as you move your chair?*
- Q *What can happen if students aren't careful when they move their chairs?*

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

### **You might say:**

When I call your table, please stand up, pick up your chair by the back and carefully walk with your chair to the rug to a designated spot. Remember to stay far enough apart from your classmates. Once you have your chair in place, sit quietly until everyone has come to the circle.

## 2 Teach the Class Meeting Rules (5 minutes)

Explain that because the students will sometimes discuss challenging topics during Class Meetings, such as problems the class is facing, there are rules for students to follow so that everyone will feel safe participating. Show the “Class Meeting Rules” chart, and read and explain each rule aloud.

### Teacher Note

Feel free to adapt these rules or substitute your own rules.

### CLASS MEETING RULES

- One person talks at a time.
- Look at the person who is talking.
- Let classmates have their own feelings and opinions.
- When discussing problems, don't use names. Say “people.”

Ask and briefly discuss:

- Q *Why is it important that only one person talks at a time during a Class Meeting? What would happen if everyone talked at the same time?*
- Q *Why is it important to look at and listen carefully to your classmates during Class Meetings?*
- Q *Why is it important that everyone is allowed to share their own feelings and opinions?*

Explain that students will practice these rules today and that you will check in with them at the end of the meeting to see how they did.

### 3 Model the “Two Truths and a Lie” Activity

(2–3 minutes)

Explain that at this meeting students will get to know each other better by doing an activity called “Two Truths and a Lie.” Explain that you have written three statements about yourself—two that are true and one that is a lie. Read your three statements aloud twice, then ask:

*Q Which statement do you think is a lie?*

Call on two or three volunteers to guess which statement is a lie and then reveal the lie.

### 4 Do the “Two Truths and a Lie” Activity

(10 minutes)

Distribute a clipboard with paper and a pencil to each student. Have the students each take a few minutes to write two true things and one untrue thing about themselves.

Consider using prompts to support the students. You may wish to write the following prompts where the students can easily see them:

- I like \_\_\_\_\_.
- I have a \_\_\_\_\_.
- I like to \_\_\_\_\_.
- I have been to \_\_\_\_\_.

Encourage the students to choose one prompt and write three sentences, making one of them untrue.

Then, have the students take turns reading their statements aloud to the class. After each student reads their statements, call on two or three volunteers to guess which statement is a lie, and then have the student reveal which one is the lie.

Reflect. After all students have shared their statements, ask:

*Q What is one interesting thing you learned about a classmate?*

*Q What is one thing that surprised you about a classmate?*

Tell the students that they will take a few minutes to reflect on the way they cared for each other during this meeting. Collect the clipboards and pencils, or have the students place them under their chairs.

#### Teacher Note

Second and third graders may need longer to write the statements for “Two Truths and a Lie.” Consider having them write the statements before the meeting or introduce the task at their desks and have them write before calling them to the circle.

## 5 Relate Values to Behavior (5–7 minutes)

Point out that you noticed during the activity ways the students acted in caring and friendly ways. Share some of your observations with the class.

Then ask:

- Q *What other ways did you see people being friendly and caring during the activity?*
- Q *What are some other ways you have already noticed people acting in friendly and caring ways?*
- Q *How else can we be friendly and caring toward each other at school?*

### **Students might say:**

- “I saw people nodding and putting their thumbs up when others shared interesting things about themselves.”
- “This morning lots of people seemed so happy to see each other. It was a nice way to start the day.”
- “We can be friendly and caring by listening to each other when we have discussions.”

Invite the students to continue to notice when others act in caring, friendly, and other respectful ways, and encourage them to act in these ways themselves.

### **Teacher Note**

In the coming days, look for opportunities to point out the ways students are being friendly and caring and exhibiting other prosocial behavior. Helping the students understand what these values look like in practice will aid in establishing a caring classroom community.

### **Teacher Note**

Keep the “Class Meeting Rules” chart posted to refer to throughout the year.

## 6 Reflect and Adjourn the Meeting (5 minutes)

Review the “Class Meeting Rules” chart, and share a few of your observations of how the students did following the rules. Ask and briefly discuss:

- Q *When did you look at the person who was talking?*
- Q *What rules did you follow? How did that help our Class Meeting?*

Explain how you would like the students to move back to their desks, including what to do when they get there. If you prefer that students return the clipboard, paper, and pencil, explain the expected procedure for them to do so as well.

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

### **You might say:**

When I point to you, please stand up, pick up your chair, and carefully walk back to your desk. Then please sit at your desk and take out your writing journal and a pencil.