

CLASS MEETINGS

What's inside?

The following packet contains materials and resources that will help you to create safe spaces, engaged discussions, and productive class meetings.

Class meetings are the best way to address existing or potential problems, check in with your students, and help build a safe and positive classroom. The materials herein offer tips and ideas for both structuring and leading these meetings, including information to help you address questions and situations around bullying. At the end of the packet, you'll find a log which you can use to keep tabs on the content and progress of your class meetings.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CLASS MEETINGS

How to Guide Students	2				
Class Agreement					
Bullying Basics	4				
Twenty Kinds of Class Meetings	5				
BioPoem	9				
BioPoem Outline and Example	10				
Sample Class Meetings	11				
First Meeting	12				
Helping Students Who Are Bullied	17				
Including Students Who Are Left Out	19				
Bullying: Telling an Adult	21				
Class Meeting Activity Log	24				



HOW TO GUIDE STUDENTS

Ways to create a safe environment where students feel confident to share openly, explore their feelings, and practice new skills.

TEAM SPIRIT

Encourage students to create an atmosphere of respect and collaboration during the opening sessions. In Session 1, they will draw up a Class Agreement. Take time at the end of sessions for students to check in on how they're functioning as a team, and to revisit the Class Agreement, if needed.

KEEP IT "STUDENT LED"

Let students play an active part in figuring out the what, where, when, how, and why of their activities and Take Action projects. Trust that they know best where their schools and communities can use help with bullying prevention. Coach the students to lead the planning, decision-making, learning, and fun as much as possible.

OKAY TO PASS

When sharing ideas and feelings, let students know that it's okay to "pass" or just offer a brief thought or two. Let students know that it's fine to share general ideas without getting personal or into specifics. Students will be likelier to share when they're in an environment where honest, open, and kind dialogue and confidentiality is respected.

SENSITIVE TOPICS

When an issue is raised that you feel you need help with, go to your designated council, school, or organization contacts for support. It's okay to tell students, "I'm not sure how to answer that." Let them know you'll follow up with them about it later.

FRIENDSHIP TALK

Students might not know exactly what it means to be a good friend, but you can help lead them to characteristics to look for in healthy relationships. Create an environment where students can open up about what they need from their friends, what they bring to their friendships, and how to make and keep true friends.



CLASS AGREEMENT

Create a safe space in the first meeting by having students brainstorm a **Class Agreement**. Explain that it is important to trust one another, and be honest and open during your time together. Suggest writing out the Class Agreement on paper or poster board and have all of the students sign it.

SAMPLE CLASS AGREEMENT RULES:

- **1** RAISE OUR HANDS IF WE WANT TO SAY SOMETHING.
- **2** EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD.
- **3** LET OTHERS SPEAK WITHOUT INTERRUPTING.
- **4** NO "PUT DOWNS": WE CAN DISAGREE WITHOUT BEING DISAGREEABLE OR SAYING MEAN THINGS.
- **5** WHEN TALKING ABOUT BULLYING OR OTHER PROBLEMS BETWEEN STUDENTS, WE DON'T MENTION NAMES.



BULLYING BASICS

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when a strong person hurts or frightens a less strong person, on purpose, again and again (or has a strong likelihood of occuring again), and that person who is being bullied cannot easily defend themselves.

REPORTING

Bullying is **very different** than harassment or intimidation. If a student lets you know they are experiencing <u>harassment</u>, <u>intimidation</u>, or <u>physical violence</u>, you will need to **report it to an organizational official**. Even if something was shared in confidence, you are responsible for passing on information if a student's safety is in question. Organization officials will address the issue according to their safety protocols.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

Whenever possible, use terms that describe the "**bullying behavior**" rather than the "bully," so the emphasis is on a action—not the whole person.

INSTEAD OF: "Have you been a bully?"

- **SAY:** "Have you ever engaged in any type of bullying behavior?"
- **INSTEAD OF:** "It seems like she's a bully."
- SAY: "It seems that she engaged in bullying behavior by taking the teasing a little too far."

WHY DO PEOPLE BULLY?

WHEN ASKED: "Why do people bully?"

- **SAY:** "There are many reasons, but people who engage in bullying behavior learned how to act that way either through family, friends, or the media. People who bully frequently get pleasure—an emotional payoff— from the student who is being bullied (target) response. So kids who get upset become targets; those who shrug off bullying behavior are left alone."
- WHEN ASKED: "How do I defend myself against someone who is bullying?"
- **SAY:** "Your first instinct is to defend yourself—after all, you're being attacked in some way. But research shows that one effective defense, in the moment when bullying is happening, is to show that insults don't affect you. Research also shows that there is power is numbers, and the role of the bystander can impact a potential bullying situation."



Here are some topics^{*} to inspire positive and engaging meetings in your classroom.

1

GOOD NEWS MEETING

Who has some good news to share?

2

CIRCLE WHIP

Go around the circle; everyone can either complete the "sentence-starter" or choose to pass. After everyone has had a turn, the teacher can use individual students' responses as a springboard for interactive discussion. Some sample sentence-starters are:

- Something I like about this class...
- Something I think would make our class better ...
- A decision I think we should make ...
- I'm wondering why ...
- I wish ...



APPRECIATION TIME

Who would you like to appreciate?

4

COMPLIMENT TIME

One or two children are chosen; taking one child at a time, the teacher invites classmates to say something they like or admire about that person.

5 GOAL-SETTING MEETING

Discuss the goals for the morning, the day, the week, a curriculum unit, the academic year, etc...

*From Educators for Social Responsibility, esrnational.org



6 RULE-SETTING MEETING

What rules do we need... for our classroom? For going to gym? For the upcoming field trip?

7

RULE-EVALUATING MEETING

Have students write about, then discuss the following questions: What are the school rules? Why do we have them? Are they good rules? If you could change one rule, what would it be? Do any of our classroom rules need changing to make them work better?

8 STAGE-SETTING MEETING

For example, before a small-group activity: What can you do to make things go smoothly in your group?

9

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

How well did you work together? How could you make it go better the next time? What was good about today? How can we make tomorrow a better day?

10 REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING

What did you learn from this activity (unit, project, book)? One new idea or understanding?

11 STUDENT PRESENTATION

One or two students present a piece of their work, such as a project or story; other class members ask questions and offer appreciative comments.



12

PROBLEM SOLVING/CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Individual problems: Who's having a problem that we might be able to help solve?
- Group problem: What's a class problem we should talk about?
- Complaints and recommendations: Ground rule: You can make a complaint about a problem, but you have to offer a recommendation for correcting it.
- Fairness meeting: How can we solve this conflict (e.g., cutting in line, disputes over materials or equipment, arguments over cleanup) in a way that's fair to everybody?

13 ACADEMIC ISSUES

Why do we have to study this? What would help you do a better job on homework? On the next test? How could the last test have been improved?

1 CLASS IMPROVEMENT MEETING

What changes would make our classroom better? Possibilities: Changing the physical arrangement of the classroom, new ways of working together, new learning games, ideas for class-created bulletin boards, etc.

15 FOLLOW-UP MEETING

How is the solution/change we agreed upon working? Can we make it work better?

16 PLANNING MEETING

What group projects would you like to do? What topics to study? What field trips to take? What would be fun to do differently next week in spelling, math, or science? What would be the most exciting way to study this next topic?



17 CONCEPT MEETING

What is a friend? How do you make one? What is a conscience? How does it help you? What is a lie? Is it ever right to tell one? What is trust? Why is it important?

18 STICKY SITUATIONS

What should you/would you do if:

- You find a wallet on the sidewalk with \$20 in it? You find just a \$20 bill?
- You see a kid stealing something from somebody else's locker?
- There's a new kid that you'd like to be nice to but your friends think he/she is weird?
- A friend asks to copy your homework?
- A friend you're with shoplifts a CD?
- Two kids on the bus are picking on a little kid and making him cry?

1Q SUGGESTION BOX/CLASS

Any appropriate item students have submitted for discussion.

20 MEETING ON MEETING

What have you liked about our class meetings? What haven't you liked? What have we accomplished? How can we improve our meetings?



BIOPOEM

What is a BioPoem?

A BioPoem is a creative way to get to know your students.

BioPoems are an efficient way to understand how students see themselves and, when used intermittently (e.g. every semester or every quarter), to understand how their sense of identity changes over time. The BioPoem is a great activity for class meetings and can be used as a consistent check-in for teachers to keep up with students as they develop.

Adjust the language, as necessary, to fit the developmental levels of your students. Younger students, for example, may opt to draw a picture for different answers (e.g. relationships they value).



BIOPOEM





SAMPLE CLASS MEETINGS

How do I lead an effective class meeting?

Good question!

The following pages contain outlines and scripts for four sample class meetings: 1) a first class meeting, 2) helping students who are bullied, 3) including students who are left out, and 4) telling an adult when we know someone is being bullied. These four samples are by no means exhaustive, but are included here to give you a concrete idea of how to structure a meeting and what sort of language to use. Adjust the language, as necessary, to fit the developmental levels of your students.



OUTLINE:

1. Get the class into a circle.

2. Explain the purpose of class meetings:

- Getting to know each other better.
- Learning about bullying.
- Discussing/problem-solving bullying situations.
- Working together to stop or prevent bullying at school.
- Talking about other issues of importance with your class.

3. Explain the benefits of class meetings:

- Build a strong class community.
- Allow everyone to feel heard.
- Help resolve problems before they becoming bigger.

4. Work with the class to discuss the class meeting ground rules:

- We raise our hand when we want to say something.
- Everyone has the right to be heard.
- We let others speak without interrupting (within certain time limits).

- Everyone has the right to pass.
- We can disagree without being disagreeable or saying mean things; no "put downs."
- When talking about bullying or other problems between students, we don't mention names.*
- 5. Introduce the topic of bullying.
- 6. Introduce your school's bullying prevention program.
- Answer any additional questions students may have.
- 8. Let students know what they can expect at the next class meeting. Thank students for their positive participation.

"However, it is important that students tell you or another adult if they know or suspect a bullying problem in the classroom. When this rule is presented, you may want to say to the students: "If you know of someone who is being bullied or is bullying others, please talk to me after our class meeting or sometime later."



SCRIPT:

Estimated time: 40 minutes. Divide into two meetings when working with younger students.

Say: "Today we are going to try something new. It's called a "class meeting." To do this, let's get our chairs in a circle so we can see each other. We will move the chairs and desks back when we are done. Please be respectful of everyone's belongings when you do this."

Students should move their chairs and desks to create space for your class meeting.

Say: "Thank you. A class meeting is different than what we normally do as a class because we aren't going to be focusing on a school subject. Class meetings, which we will have once a week (or more often for younger students), will be times when we can discuss any number of things that are important to us. Sometimes I will come up with a topic about something that's going on in our school or in the news, and sometimes you can suggest a topic. One thing that we'll certainly discuss is our school's bullying prevention program, how we are treating each other in this building, and how we can be kinder, more respectful, and more helpful to each other."

Share the purposes for and benefits of class meetings as described above in the outline.

Say: "To make sure everyone gets a chance to say his/her opinions and feels comfortable in these class meetings, we will need a few ground rules. What ground rules do you think are needed for everyone to feel comfortable talking?"

Let the students come up with their own words that convey these ground rules.

- We raise our hand when we want to say something.
- Everyone has the right to be heard.
 - Ask: "What does this mean? How can we make sure this happens?"
- We let others speak without interrupting (within certain time limits).
 - Ask: "What does this mean?"



- Everyone has the right to pass.
 - Ask: "What does this mean?"
- We can disagree without being disagreeable or saying mean things; no "put-downs."
 - **Ask:** "What are some examples of put-downs?" (Remember to include the nonverbal or less obvious put-downs such as eye- rolling, whispering to a neighbor, or laughing at another person's comment.) "What are some positive ways to handle disagreements?"
- When talking about bullying or other problems between students, we don't mention names.
 - **Say:** "However, it is important to report that bullying is happening. If you know of someone who is being bullied or is bullying others, please talk to me after our class meeting. I will take action to make sure the bullying stops."

You may add a few other ground rules that students think are appropriate.

After a brief discussion, ask someone to write the agreed-upon rules on poster board so that everyone can see them. Ask a student to be in charge of bringing out the poster for each class meeting.

Say: "Thank you. Let me explain a little more about class meetings. We are here to get to know one another better and to work together better as a group. We can discuss life here at school, such as the way students relate to each other, things you are concerned about here, or improvements you'd like to see happen. Today, I want to start talking about something very important—bullying. What does it mean to bully someone?"

Allow some discussion with a lot of affirmations.

Say: "Thank you. Let me give you a definition of bullying^{*}: A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself."

*Expressed in more everyday language one might say: **Bullying is when someone repeatedly** and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.



Simplify this definition if you have younger students to: Bullying is when someone says or does mean things to another person.

Say: "Here are some important things to know about bullying:

- Bullying is when one student or a group of students are being mean to another student on purpose. The students who bully continue to act mean to the other student even though it hurts the other student's feelings. Can you give examples of times when a student may hurt another student on purpose? (Talk briefly about the differences between bullying, rough-and-tumble play, and fighting.)
- In bullying, there is an imbalance of power where the students who bully use power in the wrong way—to hurt or make fun of someone. Sometimes a bigger student is picking on a smaller student or a group of students pick on one student. There is a power imbalance, and it is difficult for the student being bullied to make them stop."

Note: For younger students, you may need to explain what "imbalance" means. Usually, bullying happens again and again. However, it is important for you to know that if we see you bullying someone even once, you will be asked to stop, and there will most likely be consequences.

Ask: "What are the different ways students bully each other in this building? Remember, please don't use names."

Ask students to give examples. Explain the basic types of bullying—physical or verbal bullying or direct and indirect bullying. Explain these terms or simplify them for younger students.

Say: "That's a lot to think about. Think about whether you have ever been bullied by someone. In what ways were you bullied? How did it make you feel? Remember, if you'd like to discuss this in the group, please don't mention any names." (Allow for discussion with a lot of affirmations. Be sure other students don't make fun of people as they share.)



Say: "Bullying really hurts those who are bullied. We feel so strongly at our school that bullying should not happen, that we have decided to start a bullying prevention program - the Box Out Bullying Prevention Program (or BOBPP for short). Everyone in our school, staff and students alike, will be participating in this program. We want to make sure our school is a place where people care about each other and bullying never happens. We will talk more about this at future class meetings."

Give students some examples of bullying topics you may discuss at future class meetings. Let students know that they will first learn the four anti bullying rules, starting with rule 1, next time. Ask students to share ideas of topics they would like to discuss. If there are no suggestions, tell them to think about it and bring ideas to your next class meeting.

Also ask students if they have any questions about class meetings, your class meeting ground rules, and so on.

Say: "Well, we just had our first class meeting. Thanks for trying it out with me. It looks like we'll have a lot to talk about. Think about this topic of bullying and we can pick up our discussion again next time. Bullying is an important topic for us, but we will also be talking about many other topics in our class meetings throughout the school year. Again, we'll be meeting once each week."

Say: "Please return the chairs and desks to their original location, and be careful and respectful of each other in doing so."



HELPING STUDENTS WHO ARE BULLIED

SCRIPT:

Estimated time: 40 minutes.

Get students into their class meeting circle, as described in the First Class Meeting script. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

Say: "Today, we'll be talking about the second anti-bullying rule. Who remembers the first rule?" **Rule 1: We will not bully others.**

Ask: "Who can define bullying for us? What are some examples of bullying?" (Allow several students to respond.)

Ask: "Do you remember the second anti-bullying rule that was talked about at our school's kick-off assembly?" **Rule 2: We will try to help students who are bullied.**

Ask: "What are some ways you could help students who are being bullied?"(Allow several students to respond. Here are some sample answers to add if they are not mentioned:

- Intervene directly by telling the student who is doing the bullying to stop.
- Get help from an adult.
- Be a friend. Stand alongside the person who is being bullied.
- Don't join in on the bullying.)

Stress that **getting help from an adult may be the best option**, particularly if students think they may also get hurt by trying to stop the bullying. Explain that if bullying reported, you and all other school staff will be taking action.

Review again the negative consequences for bullying and the positive consequences that will occur for taking a stand against bullying.



HELPING STUDENTS WHO ARE BULLIED

Ask students to come up with positive ways to handle a situation if they were bystanders. For example, **ask**:

- "What would you say? What would you do?"
- "How hard would this be to do?"
- "How would it make the person who is being bullied feel?"
- "Do you think this solution will change the situation?"
- "Does this solution fit with our school's rules?"

Note: If students say it would do no good to tell an adult or it would be "tattling..." Explain that all adults in the school want to know about bullying and will do something about it. Also emphasize that telling an adult is not "tattling"; it is being a good friend and member of this school.

Ask: "If you were being bullied, do you think you would want someone to help you? In what ways?"

Note: If students suggest retaliation or violent options, talk about your school rules and why this is not appropriate.

Say: "To summarize what we've talked about today, there are several ways to help someone who is being bullied. Remember these options the next time you see someone being bullied. It is important that you do something not only because it is a school rule but also because it's the right thing to do.

If time permits, ask if students have any questions or would like to talk through any other concerns. Congratulate the class on working hard to understand how they can help someone who is being bullied.





INCLUDING STUDENTS WHO ARE LEFT OUT

SCRIPT:

Estimated time: 40 minutes.

Get students into their class meeting circle. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

Ask: "How have things been going this week in our classroom?" (Allow several students to respond.)

Explain that today you will be discussing the third anti-bullying rule.

Ask: "Do you remember the first anti-bullying rule? What is it, and what does it mean?" (Allow several students to respond.) **Rule 1: We will not bully others.**

Ask: "Who can remind us of the definition of bullying? What are some examples of bullying?" (Allow several students to respond.)

Ask students what is the second anti-bullying rule is. **Rule 2: We will try to help students who** are bullied.

Ask: "What are some ways we can help a student who is being bullied?" (Allow several students to respond.)

Ask: "What is the third anti-bullying rule discussed in our school's kick-off assembly?" Rule 3: We will try to include students who are left out. "What does this rule mean?" (Allow several students to respond.)
Say: "Another way to say this rule is that "Everyone should have someone to be with."

Say: "Think to yourselves, without mentioning names, whether there are students in our school who are often isolated or left out. Does everyone have someone to be with during recess or at lunch?"



INCLUDING STUDENTS WHO ARE LEFT OUT

Ask: "Why do you think some students don't include those who are alone? What might make including others so difficult?" (Allow several students to respond. Note that peer pressure to exclude students can be strong.)

Ask: "How can you include classmates who are often left alone at lunch, at recess or breaks, during group activities or other activities both during and outside of school hours?"

Make a list of the answers students give on a piece of poster board and post the ideas in your classroom. Encourage students to try these ideas out over the next few days. Be sure to reward or praise students who are putting these ideas into action.

Say: "Some students have a hard time making friends or connecting with others." **Ask:** "Why might it be hard for some students to do this?" (Possible answers:

- Some students are very shy.
- Some students might not have much practice.
- Some students may have been hurt by other students and have a hard time trusting others now.)

Remind students that sometimes it takes patience, encouragement, and courage to help isolated students feel comfortable and safe getting involved.

Say: "We've come up with some good ways to try to include students who are often left out. I want to remind you to try out these ideas this week. I'll be watching how this goes, hoping to "catch" you reaching out to those who are often left out.

If time permits, ask if students have any questions or would like to talk through any other concerns. Congratulate students on doing a good job in learning how they can follow this important rule.



BULLYING: TELLING AN ADULT

SCRIPT:

Estimated time: 40 minutes.

Get students into their class meeting circle. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

Ask: "How have things been going this week in our classroom?" (Allow several students to respond.)

Explain that today you are going to talk about the fourth anti-bullying rule. Ask if they remember the first anti-bullying rule. **Rule 1: We will not bully others.**

Ask: "What is the second anti-bullying rule?" **Rule 2: We will try to help students who are bullied.**

Ask who remembers the third anti-bullying rule and what the rule means. **Rule 3: We will try to include students who are left out.**

See if anyone tried to help include someone who was left out this week. (Remind students not to mention names.)

Ask: "What is the fourth and final anti-bullying rule that was discussed in our school's kickoff assembly?" Rule 4: If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Ask: "Think for a moment to yourselves . . . which adult(s) at school could you talk to if you or another student is being bullied?" (Remind students that every adult in your school has pledged to take bullying seriously and to do something about it if they are told it is occurring.)



BULLYING: TELLING AN ADULT

Say: "Sometimes students believe that telling an adult will make things worse for the person who is being bullied or they think that telling an adult is tattling.'"

Ask: "Why is telling so important? Why is it important to tell an adult at home and at school?" (Allow several students to respond.)

Explain that this rule is not just about telling an adult when you know that someone else is being bullied, but also about telling an adult if you are being bullied.

Ask: "Do you think that most students who are bullied actually tell someone? Who are they most likely to tell?" (Explain that a lot of students don't tell an adult when they are bullied, and then the bullying doesn't stop.)

Ask: "Why do you think students who are bullied often don't tell anyone?" (Allow several students to respond. If students say that adults won't do anything, remind them that now they will at your school.)

Ask: "What about bystanders? How common do you think it is for bystanders to report bullying?" (Explain that compared to students who experience bullying, even fewer students who witness bullying report it to adults.)

Ask: "Why don't bystanders report bullying more often?" (Discuss the "**bystander effect**"—the more witnesses there are, the less likely it is that anyone will get involved and help the student who is being bullied.)



BULLYING: TELLING AN ADULT

Remind students that everyone in school will be asked to follow this rule, so if you are thinking of bullying others, be aware that an adult will be told and that this adult will take action. For older students: If you have data from your school's administration of the Bullying Questionnaire, tell the class the percentage of students at your school who have told an adult about bullying. Explain that bystanders can play a very important role in stopping and preventing bullying by telling an adult. **Remind students that everyone has the right to go to school without being bullied or harassed**.

Ask: "What could we do at our school to make it more likely that students will report bullying?" (Ask a student to record other students' suggestions. Tell the class that you'll forward their suggestions to your school's Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee.)

Summarize the discussion by reminding students that telling an adult is not "tattling," but keeping someone safe.

Remind students that during class meetings, you have asked students not to use other students' names when talking about bullying. This does not mean you don't want to do anything about bullying. As has been mentioned in your class meeting rules, it is important for students to report bullying, but you encourage them to do so with you individually.

Answer any other questions or concerns students may have. Congratulate students on doing a great job understanding how important it is to tell an adult if they or someone else is being bullied.

CLASS MEETING ACTIVITY LOG

DATE:	TEACHI	ER:			
CLASS:	DAY:	мт	w T	HF	ТІМЕ:
What was your class meeting topic(s)? Was this planned or student generated?					
What resource materials did ye	ou use?				
How did this class meeting go? activities will you plan?	• What w	ould y	ou do	differe	ently next time? What extension
What ideas, if any, were generated for future class meetings?					
Is there any follow-up needed have questions for your Bullying	-			-	

24