

First Class Meeting Outline and Script

**Session Outline**

Below is a suggested outline for your first class meeting.

I. Have the class sit in a circle.

II. Explain the purposes of class meetings:

• getting to know each other better

• exploring the dynamics of peer relationships including bullying

• Problem-solving dilemmas within interpersonal relationships and bullying situations

• considering other people’s viewpoints

• making positive decisions in social situations

• Working together to stop or prevent peer abuse/bullying at school

• providing time to talk about other issues of importance to your students

III. Discuss the benefits of class meetings:

• build a stronger class community

• allow everyone to feel heard

• Help resolve problems to improve our school climate

• learn lifelong skills in community-building and communication

IV. Work with the class to develop your class meeting guidelines or ground rules:

1. Raise our hands when we want to say something.

2. Everyone has the right to be heard. No one person or group should dominate discussion.

3. Let others speak without interrupting (within certain time limits).

4. Everyone has the right to pass their turn in a guided discussion.

5. We can disagree without being disagreeable or saying unkind things to others; no “put-downs.”

6. When talking about bullying or other problems between students, we don’t mention names. (However, it is important that students tell you or another adult privately

If they know or suspect bullying or another type of problem is happening in the classroom or school.)

V. Introduce the topic of bullying.

VI. Introduce your school’s bullying prevention program. VII. Answer any additional questions students may have.

VIII. Let students know what they can expect at the next class meeting. Thank students for their positive participation.

**Script**

Estimated time: 40 minutes

Following are directions and a script you may want to follow as you lead your first class meeting with high school students. Adjust the language, as necessary, to fit the developmental levels of your students.

***Suggested format:***

1. Explain: **Today we are going to begin discussions that will give us time to get to know each other better and talk about ways we can work together as a group. We will refer to this time as a “class meeting.”**

2. Explain: **So that everyone can be seen and included, we will be putting our chairs in a circle. We will move the chairs and desks back when we are done. Please be respectful of everyone’s belongings when you do this.**

3. Students should move their chairs and desks to create space for the class meeting. This can be done in less than a minute as demonstrated in the *Class Meetings* DVD segment.

4. 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. Our goal is to have two meetings each month, where we will use this time to 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 we’ll certainly discuss is our school’s bullying prevention program; how we are treating each other, on and off campus; and how we can be kinder, more respectful, and more helpful to each other, and improve the environment in the school for everyone.**

5. Explain: **Some of the purposes for holding class meetings are:**

**• getting to know each other better**

**• exploring the dynamics of peer relationships including bullying**

**• Problem-solving dilemmas within interpersonal relationships and bullying situations**

**• considering other people’s viewpoints**

**• making positive decisions in social situations**

**• Working together to stop or prevent peer abuse/bullying at school**

**• providing time to talk about other issues of importance to you**

**Some of the benefits of having class meetings include:**

**• We will have a stronger class community**

**• Everyone in our class will feel heard**

**• We may be able to resolve problems to improve our school climate**

**• We will learn lifelong skills in community-building and communication**

6. Explain: **To make sure everyone gets a chance to share their opinions and feels comfortable in these meetings, we will need a few guidelines or ground rules for how we behave in our group. So, what do you think we need for everyone to feel comfort- able sharing in these meetings?** After a brief discussion, ask for a volunteer to record the agreed-upon guidelines or ground rules either on a laptop or flip chart paper.

7. Allow students to come up with their own words that convey these guidelines or ground rules. Discuss the guidelines as suggested below.

a. Raise our hands when we want to say something.

b. Everyone has the right to be heard. No one person or group should dominate discussion. **What does that mean? How can we make sure this happens?**

c. Let others speak without interrupting (within certain time limits).

**What does that mean?**

d. Everyone has the right to pass their turn in a guided discussion. **What does that mean?**

e. We can disagree without being disagreeable or saying unkind things to others;

No “put-downs.” **What are some examples of put-downs?** (Remember to include the nonverbal or less obvious put-downs such as eye-rolling, side conversations,

or laughing at another person’s comment.) **What are some positive ways to handle disagreements?**

f. When talking about bullying or other problems between students, we don’t mention names. **However, it is important to report when bullying or other serious concerns happen. 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 support the bullied student and get the bullying behavior to stop.**

8. Add other guidelines or ground rules that students think are important.

9. Before the next class meeting, post the guidelines or ground rules the students agreed to use. Make sure the guidelines or ground rules are visible for each class meeting. There is a poster of suggested ground rules or guidelines on this CD-ROM.

10. Say: **Let me explain a little more about class meetings. We are here to get to know**

**one another and to learn to work together better as a community. 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 at our school. We’ll have a chance to hear other points of view and have opportunities to make decisions about challenging situations. Today, let’s start by talking about something very important— bullying behavior. What does it mean to bully someone?**

11. Allow some discussion while providing affirmations and clarifications.

12. Explain: **Here’s a definition of bullying: 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.**

**Bullying is abuse; in the case of student-to-student bullying, it’s peer abuse. What do you think of that definition? Have you ever thought of bullying as “abuse”?**

13. Explain the basic types of bullying**—**physical or verbal bullying or direct and indirect bullying. Explain these terms. Talk briefly about the differences between bullying,

“kidding around” or “rough-and-tumble play,” and fighting. To prepare for this discussion, see chapter 2 of the *OBPP* Teacher Guide and document 3 on the *OBPP* Teacher Guide CD-ROM for a description of the differences.

14. Explain: **Here are three more additional things to know about bullying:**

a. **Bullying is when one student or a group of students are being aggressive or abusive to another student on purpose. Students who bully continue to do aggressive or mean things to the other student even though it harms the other student.**

Ask the following questions:

**• What types of bullying and harassment go on in our school? Please give examples of behaviors, but remember, please don’t use names.**

**• Is it sometimes hard to know if behavior is aggressive or if it’s all in fun?**

**• If you’re on the receiving end, how do you know?**

**• What about if you see it going on with others?**

**• Do you think teachers sometimes have a hard time knowing whether behavior is in fun or if it is harmful?**

b. In **bullying there is an imbalance of power where the students who bully use power inappropriately—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.**

Ask: **What are other examples of power imbalances?**

(Examples may include physical**—**age, size, strength; popularity; background characteristics**—**being a member of a minority group or having a family that makes less money; abilities**—**academic abilities, physical abilities; being outnumbered; presence of weapons.)

c. **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.**

15. Ask: **What is “harassment”? Are there differences between bullying and harassment?**

Legally, harassment is unwelcome conduct based on someone’s race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or religion that is severe, is pervasive or persistent, and creates a climate in our school that is hostile and uncomfortable. Even if you believe you were “just joking,” harassment has serious consequences.

16. Explain: **Here’s what our school’s anti-bullying and/or harassment policy says.**

(In student planners – Harassment is covered on page 19, bullying on page 21.)

17. Explain: **Some types of behavior that you may have considered bullying when you were in elementary or middle school may be against the law—especially as you become**

**an adult. Some examples of this would be civil rights violations—where someone is harassed because of race, gender, or disability. Also making threats either in person or online may be criminal or a civil rights violation. Forwarding nude pictures of minors (sometimes referred to as “sexting”) may be considered distributing pornography with serious consequences that may impact your future life opportunities.**

18. Explain: **Bullying and harassment really hurt those who are on the receiving end.**

**However, we also know that those who are allowed to harm others are also harmed— in terms of lifetime experiences and outcomes. We feel so strongly at our school that bullying and other harmful behaviors should not happen that we have decided to implement the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*.**

**Everyone in our school—staff and students alike—will be participating in making our school a more welcoming and inclusive place. We want to make sure that our school is a place where people care about each other, that we address problems, and that everyone is treated with respect. We will talk more about this at future class meetings, and we want your input into these efforts.**

19. Give students some examples of topics you may discuss at future class meetings (positive relationships, communication, stress-management, respecting differences, etc). Let students know that they will first explore guidelines or rules about positive behavior expectations regarding bullying (the four an-ti-bullying rules) at the next class meeting. Ask students to think about topics they would like to discuss during class meetings and bring ideas to the next class meeting as well.

20. Ask students if they have any questions about class meetings or the class meeting guidelines or ground rules.

21. Explain: **We have just completed our first class meeting. Our goal is to have a class meeting at least twice a month. It looks like we’ll have a lot to talk about. Thanks for your participation and good ideas. Our next meeting will be January 22nd.**

22. Ask students to please return the chairs and desks to their original location, and be careful and respectful of each other in doing so.