

COOL CAFE NEWSLETTER:

Week #4: Including Others and Respecting Differences

THEME:

Including others, respecting and celebrating differences. 'Inclusion' is the act of including or being included within a group.

CONSIDER THIS!

- During ages 11 through 14, adolescents experience greater pressure to be part of a group and value time with friends over time spent with adults.
- Adolescents can think more deeply about individual differences based on culture, ethnicity, religious beliefs, disabilities, and even food preferences. Respect for differences can be encouraged and modeled during lunch.
- Inclusion represents the idea of including others and respecting differences throughout the school day.
- Encouraging new friendships and socialization between peer groups can promote inclusion of students who might struggle to make friends and feel lonely. It's important for students to learn that 'no one should eat alone during lunch'!

Let's Chat About Mental Health:

- Middle schoolers want to be a part of a peer group in order to achieve a sense of belonging. Within small friendship groups adolescents communicate, interact, and exchange intimate information to develop a sense of loyalty towards one another. This is a stepping stone to the development of mature adult relationships.
- Be aware of the negative effects of exclusion on a person's mental health and behavior. Look out for the loners! They may be struggling to fit in and hurting inside.

TIPS: EDUCATE, MOTIVATE, ACTIVATE, & ADVOCATE!

Educate

- People are different in terms of color, religion, beliefs, physical appearance, personality, skills and abilities, intelligence, etc. Celebrate our differences as a positive part of life and learning! Our differences make this world an interesting place to live in!
- Teach individuals what respect is and how to display it:
 - Show a sincere interest in learning about another person. Ex: beliefs, traditions, foods
 - Listen without judgement

- Be affirming by helping them feel like they matter
- Be polite and friendly
- Asking questions in kind ways
- Tune in to the person, not the difference
- Never insult or name call another person

Motivate

- Encourage students to reflect on what it FEELS like to be included
 - Social inclusion FEELS like: being helpful, loved, kind, joyful, powerful, wonderful

Activate and Advocate

- Encourage students to reflect on what social inclusion LOOKs like:
 - Including others at your lunch table; showing interest, acceptance, togetherness, respect, and active listening
 - Being a member of a club, participating in a variety of activities, sports and leisure pursuits
- Advocate inclusion by standing up for a friend if they are being treated unfairly or ignored. Listening to someone's needs.
- Advocate for yourself by stating what you need in a respectful way.
- Model inclusion by respecting all students, engaging in conversations with all individuals in the lunchroom, and encouraging students to sit with someone new.

Suggested Activities for Cafeteria Supervisors

Create interest tables to promote student discussions about inclusive and welcoming behaviors. Place 'table tent' interest topics on tables and allow students to sit at a table with a topic that they are interested in learning about

- Table Topic Ideas: dating, mental health, food sensitivity (gluten free, vegan), physical health, gender spectrum, culture, religion

Suggested Activities for Students

Poster activity: 'What Does Inclusion Feel and Look Like'? Have students fill out their own inclusion posters of what inclusion feels like and looks like to them. Post them in the lunch room as reminders.

- What does inclusion LOOK like to you?
- What does inclusion FEEL like to you?
- HOW can we include others?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Let's Talk About Respecting Differences and Including Others! Place a jar (or baggie) of question starters in the middle of the table. Each student will choose a question and ask another member at the table to answer it:

- What does the word respect mean to you?
- Describe an experience when you felt respected.
- Describe an experience where you felt disrespected.

- How do you welcome someone that is different from you ?
- How can you display respect for others when you may not necessarily agree with what they are saying?
- How can you encourage others to be respectful?
- How can you be more inclusive of others?
- How can you make someone feel included?
- Talk about the experience when you were the minority and how did it make you feel?
- Does social media make you feel included or excluded from others?
- What do you think your life would be like if you had no friends?
- How do you make new friends?
- What makes a good friend?
- How does social media affect your friendship with others?

Resources

Chadsey, J., & Han, K.G. (2005). Friendship-facilitation strategies: What do students in middle school tell us? *Council for Exceptional Children, 38*(2), 52-57.

The Family Dinner Project. (2019). Retrieved from <https://thefamilydinnerproject.org/>.

Oswald, B. (2013). Strategies for creating socially inclusive school communities for all students. Retrieved from http://dropoutprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/StrategiesForCreating_Oswald_Nov192013Solutions.pdf

Developed for Every Moment Counts (www.everymomentcounts.org)

Every Moment Counts is committed to building capacity of all school personnel, families, and community providers to promote children's mental health and contribute to prevention and intervention of mental health challenges through professional education, website resources, and coaching.

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