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Pre-Task Activity #1: What are our rights and responsibilities in the classroom?

Purpose

This lesson is designed to familiarize students with the classroom rules and routines. The activities in this lesson also provide students and teachers with the opportunity to get to know one another on the first day of school, as many of the activities require pairing up and working in groups.

Teachers may begin by explaining to students that they are all citizens of the classroom and as citizens they should be able to identify their rights and responsibilities which might include; keeping the classroom clean; being respectful to others while it is their turn to speak; behaving appropriately and safely, etc.

Strand and Expectations

Canada and World Connections

Overall Expectations

Students will:

- identify concrete examples of how government plays a role in contemporary society and of how the rights of groups and individuals and the responsibilities of citizenship apply to their own lives.

Specific Expectations

Students will:

- identify responsibilities that accompany particular rights use graphic organizers to sort, classify, and connect information
- model activities and processes of responsible citizenship (e.g., engage in democratic class meetings to decide on a class set of rules)

Time Required: Two 40 min periods

Resources

- Polacco, Patricia. *Mr. Lincoln's Way*. New York: Philomel Books, 2001.
- Ensure that ESL students are involved in creating the official class set of rules, perhaps allowing them to write versions of the class set in their own language, or adding cultural symbols to the official class set. This will allow students to recognize the diversity in the classroom and help newcomers feel welcomed and included. In viewing linguistic diversity and bilingualism as resources, teachers can help engage ESLs in meaningful interaction with their English-speaking peers.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Starting the lesson with an ice breaker game can help establish a classroom community that emphasizes mutual respect and attentive listening among others.
 - Have students play “People Bingo” to help them get to know one another, and establish a positive start to the school year. Students fill in bingo squares by interviewing classmates who match the descriptions in the boxes. When a match is found, the name is recorded in the box beside a number. The same person’s name may only be used once. When the card is completed, student must call out “BINGO.” (Appendix #5)
2. Think-Pair-Share: In pairs students answer the following two questions:
 - What makes a good learning environment?
 - What does an accepting, safe and respectful learning environment look like, sound like, and feel like?
3. Explain to students that in order for everyone’s learning to take place in an accepting, safe, and respectful environment, both students and teachers should agree upon a class set of rules/guidelines. Teachers may also ask students to read the school code of conduct, often found in students’ agendas.
4. Divide the class into groups of three or four and have each group create a list of the Top Ten rules they consider essential to creating and sustaining this type of an environment. Explain to students that they are to rank the rules according to priority. Have one representative from each group read their #1 rule to the class. Once each group has read aloud their #1 rule, ask the other groups for a show of hands if they had the same/a similar rule. If there appears to be a consensus, record the rule on an official class set of rules. Students continue to share their rules and decide on an official class set. (Inform students that the teacher has veto power and will ultimately determine which rules are included/excluded). Once the official class set has been created have each student sign the official document/class contract and have it visibly posted somewhere in the room.
5. Explain to students why this type of a collaborative approach seeks to ensure that everyone’s best interest is taken into consideration. Students should also understand that each rule implies both a right and a responsibility. As well, with every right there is a corresponding responsibility to ensure the rights of others are being met. For example, the right to go out for recess corresponds with the responsibility to arrive back to class on time. The right to an education corresponds with the responsibility of a student to be an active agent in his/her own learning, to try their best, etc.
6. In their groups students compose a list of rights and responsibilities. Students are to use the official classroom set of rules to rewrite them as statements of rights and responsibilities. Use the following chart to organize rights in one column and responsibilities in the other.

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES

7. At the end of the unit students will be expected to create a brochure. Teachers can help students prepare for the final task by having them create a pamphlet. Students may be asked to use the list of rights and responsibilities to create a simple pamphlet, where on one side they briefly describe a right and on the other the corresponding responsibility. Using the checklist provided, (Appendix #6) teachers may show students how to successfully create a pamphlet or brochure.

Assessment

- Formative assessment: small-group work, reflective paragraphs, rights/responsibilities pamphlet
- Reflection/journal entry: students write a short paragraph about the significance of rights and responsibilities in the classroom.
- Possible questions for students to reflect on:
 - a. What is the difference between a right and a responsibility?
 - b. What have I learned about my rights and responsibilities in the classroom?
 - c. How are rights and responsibilities related to our needs and wants?

Accommodations

- Encourage ESL students to record any unfamiliar vocabulary into a personal dictionary. Every time a student is introduced to a new word, encourage them to find antonyms and synonyms, or include visuals. This will make the activity more meaningful and help expand vocabulary.
- Students may be put into pairs to help those with special needs complete the reflective paragraph assignment.
- Allow ESL students to write their reflective paragraphs in their first/native language.
- Students with special needs may have their reflective paragraphs reduced to one or two sentences or may use adaptive software.
- If possible allow newcomers and beginning learners of English to be seated beside peers who speak their first language for the first two weeks.
- If newcomers are willing to share, invite them to participate in the discussion by describing the school culture they experienced back home (similarities/differences).

Extensions

- Teachers may read to students “Mr. Lincoln’s Way,” written by Patricia Polacco published in 2001. This book tells the story of a principal, Mr. Lincoln, and how he helped a school bully deal with his own problems and feelings of hatred. The book also deals with the issue of racism and may be used to introduce students to diversity and the importance of tolerance and acceptance of the diversity in the classroom.
- In groups students will visually demonstrate two rights and their corresponding responsibilities. Teachers may randomly assign rights to groups or draw them out of a hat. Students will decide which right they would like to present in the form of a poster and which right they will present in the form of a short skit.