

Creating a sense of belonging:

Building the Foundations for a Mental Health Friendly Classroom.

Learning Objective: To develop a classroom climate where all children and young people understand that it is their responsibility to help everyone feel like they belong.

Success Criteria:

- Children will be able to describe how they feel when they belong compared to feeling on the outside of a group.
- Children will be seen supporting each other.
- Children will be able to discuss why taking a risk in learning is important and talk about the importance of making mistakes.
- Children will be able to describe the types of behaviours that their class community works on.

Pupils Can.....

Children will be able to describe 3 things we do in class to help people feel like they belong to the class.

Children will be able to describe classroom rules and discuss why they are important to our class.

Children will be able to describe the ways that they all support each other and why this is important. They will be able to share why taking risks are important in learning and how they support each other try new things.



Belonging: Fostering a sense of belonging for children can create an environment where learning can thrive. When learning is open and collaborative children feel safe to share ideas, thoughts and opinions. They are confident when applying their knowledge or skills and know they will be supported when taking a risk or trying something new. When children feel that the adults around them know them and support them, they feel more able to have a go and experience greater motivation. All children should feel that the classroom is a safe space and that people care about them, and their needs and that they can develop positive relationships with other children and the adults they work with. Children and young people should feel safe enough in these relationships to seek help when needed.

A sense of belonging has been found to protect children and young people against mental health problems and improve learning. Children who feel they belong feel happier and more relaxed and have fewer behavioral problems they are also more motivated and more successful in their learning.

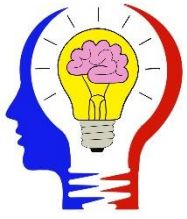


Big Al by Andrew Clements
Strictly No Elephants
by Lisa Mantchev and Taeun
Yoo

A Little Spot of Belonging By

Diane Alber

Taster: Introducing the concept of wanting to belong.



Share the book Big Al with the children.

Ask questions about the story:

1. Why do you think the other fish didn't accept Big Al?
2. Do you think this sort of thing happens in real life or just in the ocean?
3. How do you think Big Al felt at the beginning of the story?
4. What strategy did he use to help himself keep going?
5. When you feel upset, what strategies do you use?

Once a child uses the word belonging then take the time to explore this with the children

1. Why is belonging so important?
2. How do we feel when we belong to something?
3. How do we feel when we are not included and do not belong?

Explain that as a class you are going to create a place where everyone feels they belong and that to do this you need the children's help. Explain that over the next few days the children will be helping you work out how to make sure that the classroom is a safe space for everyone and how to make sure everyone feels they belong.



Building Task: What is a community?

Remind the children of the work previously undertaken about belonging. Share the definition

'A feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you.'

Explore what this means - A sense of belonging involves more than simply knowing people. It includes being accepted, listened to and given attention, and being supported by members of the group as well as giving these things to other people within the community.

Ask the children to describe what you might see in the classroom if people felt they belonged and what they might see in a classroom where this wasn't happening. Write the things children come up with on different sides of the screen.

- Children would be happy to come to school
 - Children would look after each other
 - Children would help each other if someone had a problem
 - Children would feel safe to ask for help if they were stuck
 - Children would be kind to each other.
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- Children would call each other names
 - Children would laugh at other people if they made a mistake
 - Children would leave people out of games
 - Children would not feel safe to have a go at something new in case they made a mistake

- Children would be unkind to each other.

Ask the children to work together to think of a definition for their classroom community. Share all the ideas and write up peoples suggestions. Model listening to others, and giving people attention.

Explore how the class shares similar goals and interests but that also people can be part of a community but like different things. Play the Yes that's me game.

Yes that's me

Ask children to stand up if the statement you say applies to them.

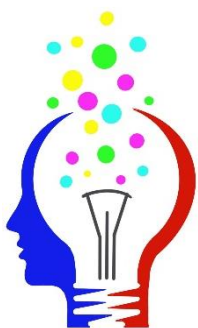
1. All those with blue eyes stand up. They share this characteristic
2. All those people with a sister
3. All those people who can ride a bike
4. All those people who have a pet
5. All those people that walk to school
6. All those people who can swim
7. All those people who like football
8. All those people who like reading
9. All those people who can't drive a car!
10. All those people who go to work!

Help children see that we often share things in common with people but sometimes we don't have to be part of the community.

Help the children understand that people with in a community may not always get along or agree on things but that they will try to listen and understand the other person's point of view or ideas. They also try be kind and give people another chance.

Collect important words that you come across: Community, Acceptance, Include, Exclude,

Finish the session with the story Strictly No Elephants. Explore how the different characters felt in the story.



Building Task:

Recap on the work you have done. Ask the children to think of places where they have a strong sense of belonging listen for why they feel they belong and how it makes them feel.

Share with the children the 4 questions

1. What are some times/places where you feel that you belong?
2. What are some times/places where someone may feel that they do not belong?
3. What are some ways you can make sure people feel included.
4. Set a personal goal – I am going to help my class community by.....

Ask the children to share their answers and discuss the different things that come up. Ask children to share their personal goal. Collect these and add them to the end classroom display.



Main Task: Creating a Class Charter.

Remind the children about all the work you have done on setting up a class community so that everyone feels they belong. Share with the children the Little Spot of Belonging.

Explore the different ways that each person within the community can help develop the community in a positive way. It is the responsibility of everyone.

List all the different ways linking back to the books that have been shared.

Ask children to work in pairs. Give each pair a way that people can behave to help develop a community and make sure people feel they belong. Ask them to write out the sentence and draw a picture to go with it.

Once the pictures have been completed, lay them all out on the tables and ask the children to take part in a silent exhibition. Ask the children to walk around the tables looking at all the work. Give the children 3 post it notes and ask them to write a positive note about 3 pictures – something they like or something that has been done well. Pictures can only have 3 notes on so if the picture they like is already full they have to choose another one. Make sure that each picture has a positive comment on.

Use the pictures to create a classroom display about 'Our Classroom Community and the ways we help people belong.'



Differentiation

- ✓ Pair children up so that all children feel supported in the work being asked of them.
- ✓ Ensure that children who need to move or fiddle when listening have a way of meeting that need. Blue tac, pencil and paper to doodle etc.
- ✓ Allow children to stand or sit when hearing a story.
- ✓ When undertaking the belonging activity children could write or draw the answers.
- ✓ Notice children working and comment on good practice.
- ✓ Ask children how they would like to be helped with an activity.



Teacher Tools and Techniques

Emotional Literacy	Describing how different characters feel in the stories shared. Extend emotional language Developing the ability to think about how someone else may feel - empathy
Developing Relationships	Talking partners- agreement and compromise Cooperation and collaboration Sharing information about themselves.
Self-Development	Sharing a personal goal as to how they will support their class community.
Skills for Learning	Sharing ideas Collaboration Being part of a community Goal setting
The Brain Learning and Behaviour	Communicating ideas. Understanding how a sense of belonging helps people feel safe. Understanding themselves more fully