

We're All In This Together

Lesson Plan

Adapt this one-period **lesson plan** for any grade level and follow it with a simple and powerful **service project**. The **reflection** brings learning and service impact together.

Anticipatory Set: (5 minutes) Show the cover of the book *The Brand New Kid* by Katie Couric.

- Talk about what they think is going on and how the child might feel.
- **Ask**, “Why is it important to be kind to all people with whom you live, work, and play? What difference does it make to people and community?”

Part One: (20 minutes)

Teacher reads aloud the book *The Brand New Kid* by Katie Couric. Stop and discuss how the different students are acting and feeling.

1. Talk about ways to help a new student feel comfortable and accepted. Is it important for someone who has been here to welcome the new kid or family to the block? Is it better to wait until the new kid comes to you?
1. Being new isn't the only time someone might feel different. Sometimes people feel misunderstood and left out for any number of reasons. What is it like to feel you are different than others (different nationality, different abilities, different gender, different clothes, new to a situation)?
2. Discuss the meanings of the words *tolerance* and *inclusion*, and describe what it looks like to show respect and openness for the diversity in our classrooms and community.
3. Write, “All are welcome here” on the board. Tell the students your thoughts about school being a safe place for all. Ask the students if they feel they can say “All are welcome here” about all people in their school and community.
4. Brainstorm ways we can take action to make the words true.
5. As homework, have each student create an “All About Me” worksheet ([see Pinterest](#)) to share their interests and unique traits. The bios will be displayed in the halls to open dialogue.

Variation for older students:

Use the novel *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio in place of the picture book.

Variation for younger students:

Role-playing is a great way to get practice with difficult social situations. Assign some of the following roles and act out the situations.

- Your two best friends tease someone. You know the student doesn't play with anyone else. You don't like what your friends are doing.
- It is the first day of school. You say hello to one person who walks away. You see another student with something you like to do things with.

Part Two: (20 minutes) Introduce the students to using friendly and positive language to open dialogue with people. Show [this video](#) with tips for opening communication by treating people how you want to be treated. Discuss examples of things they can say to people they meet.

Motivate students by pointing out that communication through welcoming words can be a form of voluntary action for the common good, or philanthropy. They can make a better school culture with



their words. Civil dialogue includes active listening, openness, and reasonable response. Teach these tips for respectful conversation:

1. Treat people with respect – how you want to be treated.
2. Listen first and seek to understand, not just wait for your turn.
3. Think about what they said; repeat it back in your words.
4. It's okay to disagree, but not okay to be mean. Say what you think and feel with respect.
5. Accept that we are not the same, but we can understand and learn from others.
6. Look at what you have in common; let go of things that aren't important.

[This video is a humorous example](#) of disrespectful communication based on first impressions. With the above tips on the board as a guide, give the students a safe topic to discuss in pairs, in order to practice these. Safe topics may be around favorite animals, foods, or music taste.

Service Project

This service project may be started in class and completed in subsequent days, either with the class or with friends and family.

Project Overview:

Students create posters to display around the building to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all people.

Procedure:

1. Teacher leads a brainstorm to generate a list of welcoming and inclusive words and phrases.
2. Older students can search the internet for inspiring quotes.
3. Students design and create posters with words and pictures to promote an accepting and inclusive school where all are welcome and respected for who they are.
4. Students put posters up on the walls throughout the school where all students can see the posters. Students may also post their messages on social media.

Project Variations:

1. Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the word WELCOME. Write the letters vertically down a page. On the first line of the poem, write a word, phrase, or sentence that begins with W. On the second line of the poem, write a word, phrase, or sentence that begins with E. Continue with the remaining letters, writing a poem that expresses your thoughts about welcoming and including others.
2. Students create a short video demonstrating respectful civil dialogue and celebration of differences. Maybe use humor to show how it is and **is not** done.
3. Create a school newsletter with weekly examples of positive and negative situations students may face and how to respond to build a welcoming school culture. Share examples of safe people and places. Provide information about bullying and the impact of a bystander's behavior.

Reflection:

Depending on age and ability, students can write or share verbally their responses to the following:

1. What impact did the posters and biography worksheets have on your fellow students?
2. How do you feel about your school community after doing this project?
3. How did you feel when you saw positive interactions?

Follow-up: Discuss what they'd like to do next to continue building relationships and making sure all feel welcome in their community.

