

Class Meetings

The topic of Class Meetings was not covered during this training because the Santa Rosa School teachers have been using class meetings for years. Class meetings are very important for the successful application of Positive Discipline. Participating in the following activities will complete your training.

We suggest you go to: www.positivediscipline.com/videos and watch Bill Scott and his faculty and students from Rocky Mount Elementary School as they introduce the Eight Building Blocks for Class Meetings. It is several years old (featuring old versions of the PDC manual and book), but everything else is timeless.

Guidelines for Effective Class Meetings

1. Students sit in a circle, and the teacher sits in the circle at the same level if possible.
2. In classes where the students are old enough, students will eventually lead the meetings.
3. The teacher (or student in charge) will start the compliments by passing a “talking item” (such as a talking stick or Kush ball) around the circle so every student has an opportunity to give a compliment, pass, or ask for a compliment. It is effective to have Elementary School students use the words, “I would like to compliment _____ for _____. (When students say, “I like the way _____”, it is more about them than the other person.) Middle and High School students seem to prefer, “I would like to acknowledge _____”, or “I appreciate _____.”
4. When students ask to “get” a compliment, they have two or three seconds to choose someone (several students will raise their hands) to give them a compliment. Otherwise it starts looking like a popularity contest.
5. The receiver of a compliment will say, “Thank you.”
6. The teacher or student in charge will handle the agenda and read off the next item to be discussed.
7. After the agenda item is read, the student who placed the problem on the agenda can choose between,
 - a) Sharing feelings while others listen.
 - b) Discussion without fixing.
 - c) Asking for problem-solving help.
8. If the student asks for discussion without fixing, or for problem-solving help, the talking item will be passed around the circle again for students to discuss without fixing, or to brainstorm for solutions. (Short comments are also allowed.)
9. The teacher refrains from commenting on the students suggestions (except to make sure the student is giving a suggestion. It may be necessary to say, “How could you turn that into a

suggestion?”). When the item reaches the teacher, he or she can make a comment or suggestion—but only then.

10. Each suggestion is written in a notebook or on a flip chart.

11. In the beginning, the students may suggest things that sound more like punishment than a solution. If this is the case, the teacher or student in charge can request that they go over each suggestion and delete those that are hurtful, not helpful, not respectful, not reasonable, or not practical. This should be done at the end of brainstorming, not during.

12. In most cases, the talking item will go around the circle twice to give children an opportunity to make a suggestion they didn't think of before listening to others. (This doesn't take as long as some fear.)

13. A vote will be taken only if the problem involves the whole class. Otherwise, the student who put the problem on the agenda can choose the suggestion he or she thinks will be most helpful. When two students are involved, each can choose the suggestion that will be most helpful to him or her. (If the suggestions they choose seem incompatible, they can get together and work it out.)

Six Reasons Class Meetings Fail

1. Not forming a circle.
2. Not having them regularly (3 to 5 times a week in elementary school) to give students a chance to absorb and practice the skills.
3. Not allowing time for students to learn the eight skills for class meetings.
4. Not passing a talking item around the circle so every child has a chance to speak or pass.
5. Not allowing a student to choose the solution he/she thinks would be the most helpful.
6. Control and expediency are seen as more important than teaching children life skills.

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