

LESSON 1

Ground Rules for Discussion

Goal

To create a supportive atmosphere where all youth feel accepted, valued, and comfortable expressing their ideas and feelings.

Materials

Chart paper and markers

Key Words and Phrases

Ground rules, supportive atmosphere, prejudice, name-calling, consensus

Process

1. Explain to students that many of the topics that they will be discussing (e.g., prejudice, name-calling) can become difficult at times because these subjects evoke many emotions for people. In order to have honest and meaningful exchanges, it is important for everyone to think about how they should communicate with one another during such discussions.
2. Divide students into small groups and give each group a piece of chart paper and marker. Tell each group to identify a recorder who will prepare a chart of the group's responses.
3. Instruct each group to come to consensus on two or three ground rules that they believe are important for the class to follow when having discussions. In addition to writing the ground rules on the chart paper, the recorder should also write down all of the reasons why group members decided that each rule is important.
4. Have each group choose one of its ground rules and prepare a short skit that shows the importance of the ground rule by either illustrating what could happen without it or by showing effective discussion because the rule is being followed.
5. Have each group identify a reporter to share its list with the class and then have the group perform its skit.
6. After all groups have performed, have a closing discussion about the identified ground rules. Ask students if they all agree to all of the posted rules, and, if not, which do they disagree with and why. Have the group work together to come to consensus on

NOTE: Instructors should circulate while groups are working to ensure that a variety of ground rules are represented.



which rules will stand as their “Class Ground Rules.”

7. Keep the “Class Ground Rules” posted in the room and refer to them before group discussion on difficult topics or whenever needed.

Connection to Standards

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking

- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Life Skills: Working With Others

- Contributes to the overall effort of a group

