

Classroom Activities, Section 1: Activities for Creating an Open Classroom Culture / a Safe Space

Activity Goals:

- Students will practice demonstrating respect towards their peers.
- Students will practice articulating emotions.
- Students will practice utilizing listening skills.

Through practicing these skills, students will contribute to the creation of the classroom as a safe space, where students are comfortable sharing when they may be experiencing fear, overwhelm, or other strong emotions as a reaction to antisemitism or other challenges.

Timing: Each activity listed below is designed to take between 5-15 minutes.

Note to the teacher: The four activities provided below are meant to provide the educator with practical examples that can be used in the classroom, but that also can serve as models for other activities as well. The educator is encouraged to collaborate with other educators to come up with additional activities that follow similar formats/ goals that are appropriate for their environment.

Activity 1: Greeting/Farewell

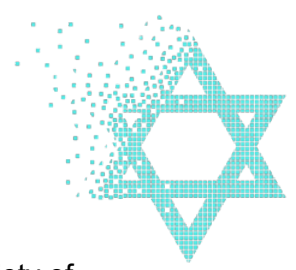
One way that teachers can encourage a culture of respect in their classroom is by instituting a daily morning greeting ritual at the beginning of the day/period which students have to participate in. This can be basic, such as “Today I am feeling X.” Performing this ritual every morning allows students to work on their listening skills and to provide others with a feeling of value. Once this space is created, it is more likely that in the event of more serious conversations, students will have the capacity to listen respectfully to each other and will feel comfortable doing so. This can also be done at the end of the day as well to wish students goodbye.

Activity 2: Introduce the Other

In order for students to practice listening skills and respect towards their peers, teachers can prompt students to turn and talk to each other surrounding a specific question or topic. These can be more serious or more fun/informal in nature. Following the timed turn and talk, the partners should share each other’s responses with the group as opposed to their own.

Examples:

- What is your partner’s favorite school subject and why?
- Share one memory from your partner’s summer vacation.
- Share one time that your partner had a challenge and how they overcame the challenge.



In order for students to practice expressing their feelings, teachers can employ a variety of methods in order to create a level of comfort. Teachers can begin the year by asking students to identify an emoji on a choice board (such as the one [here](#)) that describes how they are feeling. Once students are comfortable with doing so, the teacher can further the discussion by prompting students to share why they selected that particular emoji.

Following this activity, teachers can utilize specific sentence starters in order to provide students with a framework by which to express themselves. Teachers can decide to use these starters in the context of a morning meeting, after a specific activity/lesson, or at a specific juncture in the day.

Examples of Sentence Starters:

- I feel happy/sad/worried/curious when...
- When I am happy, I am able to...
- When I am angry, I have a hard time with...
- I feel X today because...

Once this space is created, it is more likely that in the event of more serious conversations, students will have the capacity to express their feelings and will feel more comfortable doing so.

Teachers can also use these starters when discussing/analyzing specific characters in texts, such as Chumash or Literature, in order to train students to think about emotions without needing to be about themselves.

Activity 4: Understanding Respect

In order to help students think deeply about what a respectful classroom environment looks like, teachers should create a “respect graphic organizer” with three sections (looks like, feels like, and sounds like) like in [this template](#). The teacher should prompt the students to fill in these three sections collaboratively as a class.

The teacher can follow up on this on a different day by providing individual examples of respectful and disrespectful behavior on individual index cards. Teachers can divide their students into small groups and ask the students to separate the examples into two separate piles. The teacher can then review the examples, and ask the students to suggest 1-2 examples of their own.

Following these activities, the class should come up with a class list of 3-5 ways that this will be implemented in their classroom and practiced by the students. This list should be hung up in the classroom and referenced and reinforced by the educator.