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Guide to Improving Civil Discourse in the Classroom and to Using the Self-Assessment Tool for Students (Grades 3-5)

This guide is designed to help educators create an environment for students to reflect thoughtfully and effectively on their civil discourse skills. The Guide is organized to give educators suggestions for introducing the civil discourse tools offered in this project, explain the self-assessment process, and guide students through their self-assessment of their current and developing civil discourse skills. The guidance provided in this document is intended to be a useful addition to other advice you may receive from your school leaders and is not intended to contradict school or district policy.

Definition: *Civil discourse is conversation about important but challenging issues that incorporate the values of:*

- *showing care, compassion, and kindness;*
- *listening to and trying to understand how others think and feel*
- *being a good sport and team player*
- *doing the right thing*
- *showing respect*

Below we list some resources for teaching students in grades 3-5 the skills related to the values of civil discourse.

Before You Start

- It is recommended that, before you introduce the self-assessment to the students, you take the [Guided Self Assessment and Action Plan for Educators](#). Thinking about what is easy, difficult, and useful for you will help you understand what the students are experiencing when using the self-assessment for grades 3-5.
- Click on these links to get more information on the [APA Civil Discourse project](#), and access the [Online Teaching Resources](#).
- Consider how you might share your work with the [APA Civil Discourse Project](#) with your school leaders and parents.

Introduction to Students

- Start with a brief discussion of civil discourse. Ask students what they think the words means and why it's important. Explain that "discourse" refers to the conversations or discussions that take place between people. Civil discourse can be described as respectful talk between people.
- The core values of civil discourse include one's ability to show care, compassion, kindness, good listening and understanding skills, humility, integrity, and mutual respect.

Explain the Self-Assessment Process

- Tell students, this self-assessment is a way for them to think about their own civil discourse skills. This is about developing their abilities to communicate effectively with others.
- Stress that there are no right or wrong answers to the self-assessment; this is about their personal growth in learning these important skills.
- Tell students that they can expect their answers to change over time as they learn more about these skills and how to use them when interacting with others.

Guide Students Through Each Section on Civil Discourse Values and the Skills of Civil Discourse

- Before you have students fill out the self-assessment, introduce and practice the skills of each of the five civil discourse values, one at a time rather than all at once.
- Begin by defining the value and giving students examples of behaviors associated with each value.
- Discuss scenarios given below, which show situations where the value and associated skills might occur.
- Multimedia that teach specific skills or aspects of the value are also identified in the materials below and might be incorporated into the lessons as needed. Feel free to use other multimedia resources that might be readily available to you.
- Help students learn to fill out the Civil Discourse Self-Assessment for Students in Grades 3-5. Directions for using that tool are in the document. Educators might also find the Civil Discourse Toolkit on the website of the American Psychological Association. These resources include: "[Helping Educators Create the Context for Civil Discourse](#)" (Suggestions for the classroom and school), "[The Civil Discourse Resources List for Educators](#)" (Online teaching resources), [Civil Discourse Research References](#) (related research citations)

On the following pages, each value and the skills associated with the value are defined, examples and scenarios are offered, and multimedia tools for teaching the skills are listed.

Care, Compassion, and Kindness

We show care, compassion, and kindness when we do something for the benefit (good) of someone else, without expecting anything in return.

Examples of Care, Compassion, and Kindness in Action to Share With Students

- *Example:* When I saw someone alone at recess, I invited them to play. That made both of us feel better.
- *Example:* At lunch, I noticed a new student sitting alone, so I invited them to sit with me and my friends. They smiled, and we all had a good time talking.
- *Example:* If a friend is sick, I make them a card to help them feel better.
- *Example:* When a new kid comes to my class, I talk with them to make them feel comfortable.
- *Example:* When we came home from the grocery store, my mom was struggling to carry all the bags, so I helped. She thanked me and I felt happy for being helpful.
- *Example:* When my sibling was feeling sick, I brought them water and helped them get comfortable.
- *Example:* On the bus, I heard someone say something mean to another student and I asked them to please try to be kinder.

Scenarios for Discussion of Care, Compassion, and Kindness to Share With Students

- A new student joins your class and seems really quiet, even if it looks like they want to say something. What are some ways you can make them feel welcome?
- You see a classmate struggling to open their lunch container, but no one is helping them. What would you do?
- Your friend tripped in the hallway, and some kids are laughing. How can you respond to show kindness?
- Your friend gets a new haircut, and some kids are making fun of them. You don't think the haircut is bad, but you're not sure what to say. What could you do to show kindness?
- You're at the grocery store and you see an older person struggling to lift something heavy. What could you do?
- Your younger sibling is having a bad day and is being rude to you. How can you respond with kindness instead of being rude back?

Resources for Teaching: Potential Multimedia for Care, Compassion, and Kindness

- [Explaining compassion for kids during Mental Health Week](#) (CBC Kids News) 3rd grade and up
- [Friends=Happiness TEDxKids A TED Talk presented by 3rd grader](#) (Eyva Dusetzina) 3rd Grade and up
- [Color Your World With Kindness](#) (BetterWorldians Foundation) 3rd Grade
- [The Science of Kindness](#) (2:15) (randomactsofkindness) The benefits of kindness. 3rd grade and up

Listening: Understanding How Others Think and Feel

We show that we are listening to others when we say we understand what someone is saying.

Examples of Listening and Understanding How Others Feel in Action to Share With Students

- *Example:* My friend and I had different favorite sports, but instead of arguing, I listened to why they liked theirs. We both learned something new and still had fun talking.
- *Example:* When my friend was upset, I listened without interrupting. I tried to understand how they felt, just like I want others to listen to me.
- *Example:* I wait my turn to speak and don't interrupt when someone else is talking.
- *Example:* My older brother was having a bad day, so instead of bothering them, I gave them space until they were ready to talk.
- *Example:* I noticed my usually talkative cousin was acting quiet during a family gathering, so I asked them if they were okay and if they wanted to talk.
- *Example:* During a family dinner, my sibling was upset about something that happened at school. I listened to them without interrupting, and they felt better knowing they were heard.
- *Example:* When I disagree with a friend, I try to figure out if we disagree on facts or beliefs.

Scenarios for Discussion of Listening to and Understanding How Others Feel to Share With Students

- Your friend is upset, but you're not sure why. What can you do to show them you care and want to understand?
- You have a disagreement with your friend and they feel upset about it. How would you handle this situation?
- A family member is telling you a story about when they were younger, but it's a long story, and you have heard it many times before. How can you still show respect?
- Your best friend is mad at you, but you don't understand why. Instead of getting mad back, what could you say or do?

Resources for Teaching: Potential Multimedia for Listening to and Understanding How Others Feel

- [Communication Skills: Empathetic Listening - Inside Out](#), 2015 (Academy of Social Competency) 3rd grade and up.
- [What is Empathy?](#) The students in this video share about times when they have shown empathy to others, as well as times they have received empathy. The video helps students understand what empathy can look like in their own lives. Third to fifth graders.
- [All About Empathy](#) Mylemarks socioemotional learning for kids YouTube 4th grade and up.
- [Active Listening](#) YouTube LearnFree video 5th grade and up.
- [Active listening is a skill! Here's how it's done.](#) What's Your Story? | Heartlines 3rd grade and up.
- [6 Tips for Active Listening # LittleThings](#) Grades 4 and 5. SpunOut.ie presents 6 easy tips on how to actively listen, and support a friend or loved one.

Humility: Being a Good Sport and Team Player, Showing My Way Isn't the Only Way

We show humility when we are modest and do not brag about how great we are. It's about understanding that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. We show humility when we value the strengths, viewpoints, and wisdom of others.

Examples of Humility in Action to Share With Students

- *Example:* You play in a soccer game with a friend and lose, but you congratulate the winning team.
- *Example:* It's like when we play a game, and realize we're not the best at it, so we decide to learn from friends who are better at it instead of feeling bad about ourselves.
- *Example:* Your soccer team wins a competition and you tell the other team that you were impressed by their performance and how much they must have prepared.
- *Example:* I thought I was really good at video games, but my sibling always beat me. Instead of getting upset, I ask them for tips, and we both have fun playing together.

Scenarios for Discussion of Humility: Being a Good Sport and Team Player, Showing My Way Isn't the Only Way to Share With Students

- Your class is doing a group project, and someone has a different idea than you. How can you show humility and be open to their ideas?
- You and your friend both try out for a school play. Your friend gets the lead role, and you get a smaller part. How do you react?
- You play in a basketball game against another class and your class wins the game. How do you respond to the losing team?
- A family member corrects you about something, but you don't like being wrong. How should you respond?
- You see a friend struggling with something you're really good at. How can you help them without making them feel bad (humiliated)?

Resources for Teaching: Potential Multimedia to Visually Explain Humility: Being a Good Sport and Team Player, Showing My Way Isn't the Only Way:

- [Science Station-Humility \(The Big Idea Experience\)](#) a science based approach to humility, 5th grade students
- Character Education: [Humility](#) Universidad de Navarra. Grade 4 and 5.
- [Intellectual Humility](#) Thomas Templeton. Grade 5 and up. Some on the science behind admitting we are wrong.

Integrity: Doing the Right Thing

We show integrity when we are honest and do the right thing, even when no one is watching. Integrity is about keeping your promises and being fair. We show integrity when we are true to our values, and show that we can be trusted.

Examples of Integrity: Doing the Right Thing in Action to Share With Students

- *Example:* I saw trash on the playground. No one told me to pick it up, but I did anyway. It made our school look nicer, and I felt proud of myself for helping out.
- *Example:* I told my friend I would sit with them at lunch. Even when another friend invited me to sit somewhere else, I kept my promise. My friend was happy I didn't forget.
- *Example:* I accidentally broke something at a friend's house. I told them the truth and offered to help fix it. They appreciated my honesty, and I felt proud for owning up to my mistake.
- *Example:* If I forget to do a chore, I tell the truth instead of making up an excuse.

Scenarios for Discussion of Integrity: Doing the Right Thing to Share With Students

- **Damaging Property:** You accidentally break something in the student center while playing. No one saw you do it. Do you confess and offer to make up for the damage or pretend it never happened?
- **Discrimination:** You notice that a peer is treating another peer unfairly because of their race, gender, or background. Do you speak up, report it, or stay silent?
- **You forgot to do your homework,** and your friend offers to let you copy theirs. What do you do?
- **You find money on the ground at school,** but you don't know who it belongs to. What should you do?
- **Peer Pressure and Stealing:** Your friends pressure you to steal candy from a store. They say it's harmless and everyone does it. Do you give in or stand up to them?
- **You're in a competition,** and you see another player cheat to win. You want to win too, but you know it's wrong to cheat. How do you handle it?
- **You and your sibling are home alone,** and you were told not to eat snacks before dinner. Your sibling wants to break the rule—how do you handle it?

Resources for Teaching: Multimedia to Further Explain Integrity

- [We Act with Integrity](#). Video about temptation and integrity. no words, integrity 3rd grade and up
- [Integrity \(Doing the Right Thing\)](#) Singalong with the Ubongo Kids | African Educational Cartoons, Ubongo Kids Grades 3 and up.
- [Integrity for Kids: Unlocking the Strength Within](#) (Educational Videos for Students) third grade and up
- ["The Power of Integrity: Doing What's Right!"](#) [Motivation For ELEMENTARY STUDENTS] (McCarthy Math Academy) she does a good job explaining what integrity means (3-5 grade?)
- [Global Values: INTEGRITY](#) (Our New Evolution) Different adults explain what integrity means to them (3rd grade and up)
- [Integrity for Kids | How to Build a Sense of Integrity](#) Resisting Negativity (The Mr Saad Show)

Mutual Respect: I Respect You, You Respect Me

We show mutual respect: I respect you, you respect me when we treat others the way we want to be treated. It's about being kind to people, listening when someone is talking, and not being mean.

Mutual Respect: I Respect You, You Respect Me in Action to Share With Students

- *Example:* In a group project, I can appreciate my friends' ideas even if they're different from mine, just like I want them to listen to my ideas too.
- *Example:* I disagreed with my classmate, but I still listened to them. They felt respected, and we had a good conversation
- *Example:* My sibling wanted to play a different game than me. Instead of saying no, we took turns choosing games.
- *Example:* At a family dinner, my sibling shared their opinion about something, and I disagreed. Instead of arguing, I listened to what they had to say and told them what I agreed with before giving my opinion.

Scenarios for Discussion of Mutual Respect: I Respect You, You Respect Me to Share With Students

- You and a friend have different opinions about your favorite sport. How can you disagree without being unkind?
- Your teacher asks the class a question, and your friend gives the wrong answer. Some kids start laughing. What would you do?
- Your friend has an idea for a game, but you think your idea is better. How can you handle the situation in a respectful way?
- You and your best friend disagree on a topic you both like. How can you talk about your opinions without arguing?

Resources for Teaching: Multimedia to Further Explain Mutual Respect

- Sesame Street [Word on the Street: Respect](#) Muppets discuss respect and sing about it. 3rd Grade
- [Five Ways to Show Respect](#) Joy Sun Bear 3rd grade.
- [Show Some Respect](#) (RocketKids) 4th and 5th grade and up
- [The Respect Mirror](#). The skills of respect Life Skills for Children and Young Adults. Grades 3-5