

Open Circle Update #1

Dear Family:

This year our class is using the *Open Circle Curriculum*, a comprehensive social competency program that supports elementary school children in developing the social and emotional skills needed to be good learners and to form healthy, positive relationships with people throughout their lives.

Twice each week during the whole school year, the class will meet in a circle for about 15 minutes. Lesson topics will include being a good listener, including one another, cooperating, when to tell a responsible adult and when to handle situations yourself, teasing, recognizing differences among people, getting calm, problem solving, positive self-talk, and more. The goals of the lessons are to create a cooperative classroom environment and to give children the skills they need to solve interpersonal problems and to build positive relationships.

Sometimes your child will have a homework assignment from Open Circle that might require your participation. You can help your child develop the skills we are working on in Open Circle by discussing and practicing them at home. You might ask your child to tell you what we talked about in the last Open Circle.

You will receive *Open Circle Updates* periodically to keep you informed. They will include new vocabulary words and suggestions for some books that are related to the Open Circle lesson topics. You might like to check one or two of these books out of the library to read with your child.

The *Open Circle Curriculum* was developed by the Reach Out to Schools: Social Competency Program at the Stone Center at Wellesley College. All teachers who use Open Circle have received special training at Wellesley College to implement the curriculum in their classrooms.

If you have any questions about Open Circle, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

!! Mrs. Monteiro

Open Circle Update #2

Dear Family:

During our first Open Circle meetings, the class practiced taking their chairs and getting into a circle quietly, safely, and cooperatively. We form a circle so that everyone can see everyone else and be heard. We always leave one space open in case another person would like to join the circle. Everyone is welcome, and no one is ever left out. The Open Circle symbolizes the idea of an inclusive classroom community. Ask your child to tell you how the class gets into a circle.

Students worked on getting to know each other's names in one Open Circle. In order to be able to work well together, they need to know each other's names and how to pronounce them correctly. Ask your child to say the names of as many people in the class as she/he can remember.

In another Open Circle, we discussed classroom goals and developed some classroom rules based on those goals. We learned that a **goal** is something a person tries to get, something to work toward, or how you want things to end up. Just like individual people, whole classrooms can have goals too. We made some rules that will help to keep our classroom safe, make it a place where students feel cared about, and make it a place where we can do our best learning. Students also learned that some rules are **nonnegotiable**. This means "no choice." They may ask to have these rules explained, and they may ask questions about them, but they cannot be changed. Ask your child to share with you some of the classroom goals and rules that we developed. Ask for an example of a nonnegotiable rule in our classroom. Talk to your child about the rules in your home – for mealtime, bedtimes, and chores.

Yours truly,

☺ Mrs. Monteiro

Literature Connections:

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Aesop. "The Ants and the Grasshopper," "Bundle of Sticks" (various versions).

Allard, Harry. *Miss Nelson Is Missing*. Scholastic, 1978.

Miss Nelson's rambunctious class learns about the importance of rules in maintaining a functioning classroom community.

