

Creating the inclusive classroom – some activities

The English classroom can be a good place to use group games to help students to develop their skills which are needed for the inclusive classroom.

Teaching children to understand the reasons for rules

Games can be used to help children understand the importance of rules and to practise following them in a group. Students can learn to co-operate and work together.

Circle Time games

Change places if ...

Stand in the middle of the circle. Tell students that you are going to give an instructions and they should get up and change places in the circle if the statement is true for them. Give an example. 'For example, change places if you like chocolate'. Everyone who likes chocolate should now get up and change places with someone else in the circle. '

Do the first example together. When students move, find a seat and sit down yourself. This will leave one student with no chair, and they will have to stand in the middle of the circle.

Ask students 'What rule do we need to make this game fun and safe for everyone?' Elicit the idea that people should not push each other, run too fast and should be truthful.

It is now the turn of the student in the middle to say 'Change places if...' They should try to think of something that will make people move, for example, things they like, what people are wearing, things they can/can't do

Feedback This game practises listening skills and empathy skills.

Follow my leader

Tell students that they are now going to play a game which involves miming playing an instrument. Demonstrate, for example, playing the piano. Explain that one student is going to be the leader of the band. This student can change the instrument which the group should play. For example, everyone starts by miming playing the piano, the leader starts playing a guitar and all the students follow the leader by changing to play a guitar. Then choose one student to be a 'detective'. This student should go outside, out of earshot of the group. The group should choose the leader of the band, but make sure the detective has not heard. The group starts playing the instrument chosen by the leader. The detective should come back in and try to spot the leader of the band by trying to see who is changing the instrument being played. The detective can have 3 chances to find the leader.

Play this game a few times with different detectives and different leaders.

Feedback: This game practises paying attention to other people and co-operating in a group because it does not work if someone is not paying attention or breaks the rules.

Naming feelings

Students of all ages can find it difficult to recognise emotions and sometimes have a limited vocabulary for feelings, which means they sometimes behave badly in class and are unable to explain why.

What's my feeling?

A student goes out of the room and thinks of a feeling (or the teacher can give a word). The student comes back and mimes the feeling. Other students have to guess the right word. Students can also do this in small groups.

Feelings bingo

Give out cards with squares or ask students to draw them. 5 vertical columns and 3 horizontal works best. Tell students to write feelings words in 8 of the squares. Younger students can draw faces with different expressions. Read out a list of feelings words. If they have the word, students cover that square with a counter. Students try to get one line of their card completely covered. When they have done this, they shout 'Bingo'. They can then play again to see who can get all their words covered first. If they get all their words covered, they can then shout 'Bingo'.

Developing empathy

Guess about other people in the class

Ask students to write down the names of 5 other students in the class. Encourage them to choose some people who are not in their usual friendship group. Ask them to imagine 3 things that each person did last week and write it down. For example, I think Asif played football, talked on his phone and ate rice last week. When they have done this, ask them to stand up and speak to the people on their list to see if they have guessed correctly. When they have finished, ask them what they found out. This exercise develops empathy. It can be done with any tense you want to practice e.g. what was ... doing at 3pm Saturday, what is.... going to do this weekend

Guess about the class

Ask all students to write on a piece of paper:

- All of us...
- Some of us...
- None of us....

Then ask them to finish each sentence in a way which is true about the class. For example, all of us like chocolate, some of us like cakes, none of us like carrots. The topic can be chosen according to the vocabulary you want to practice. Ask students then to walk around the class and ask each person a question to see if their predictions are correct. For example, they will ask 'Do you like chocolate?'. Do a whole class feedback at the end to see if their

predictions were correct. This is a good game to build empathy as students have to think about everyone in the class.

Our lives

Students stand up in a circle. The teacher reads out statements and students should sit down if the statement is true about them. After each round, students should stand up again. Statements should be things which the teacher thinks will be true for some of the students, e.g. I like chocolate. I like football. I have more than 2 sisters.

Fun/Relaxation and brain breaks

Sensory activities bring students into the present moment. When we feel anxious and scared it is difficult to stay grounded in the present moment. Anxiety is future focused – which means we start to worry about something in the future which has not happened and find it difficult to enjoy the present. Breathing exercises can help.

4/7 breathing

Ask students to sit comfortably. Tell them they can close their eyes or look at the floor if closing their eyes does not feel okay. Demonstrate the breathing. Breathe in through the nose for a count of 4, then breathe out through the mouth for a count of 7. Ask students to follow you and then to do this a few times on their own.

Five Finger breathing

This exercise gives students a physical focus as well as breathing. It can be easier for younger students to do. Ask students to sit comfortably. Tell them to slowly trace around each finger of one hand with their forefinger from the other hand. As they move their finger up each finger they should breathe in deeply through their nose and when they move their finger downwards, they should breathe out deeply through their mouth.

Building self-esteem

Thank you stars

Each student takes a piece of paper and draws a star on one side. On the other side they write something nice to each student in the class. This can be set up as a routine where the children can collect the stars from a place in the class and give out at any time.

This encourages all students to focus on the strengths and positive attributes of each other.

My secret friend

All the class write their names on a piece of paper and give it to the teacher. The teacher puts all the names in a bag. The students pull out a name and do not show anyone. This is their secret friend for the week. Each student must try to be nice and kind and friendly to this person without telling them the secret friend.

For older students, you can adapt this activity slightly to 'Random acts of kindness'. Explain to them that research has shown that we all feel more positive and happier when we do something kind for other people. We also feel positive when a stranger for no reason does something nice for us, even a small thing. Have students choose names

from the hat and explain that they should try to find opportunities to do random acts of kindness for that person this week.

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More activities can be found in [‘Into the Classroom: Special Educational Needs’](#) (OUP) by Marie Delaney