

Lesson Blueprints: Discussions and Questions

Lesson Title: Talking Piece

Grade Level: PreK-2 and Elementary School

Project and Purpose

Students use a talking piece to focus attention in a discussion.

Essential Question

Why is it important to focus on the speaker?

Materials

A “talking piece” object to toss or pass (nerf balls are light and safe, but sometimes hard to catch; bean-bag balls or bean-bag type animals are good because they do not roll away; larger stuffed animals are good for younger students who have yet to develop fine motor skills)

Procedure

1. Select a topic for the discussion.
2. Create a circle with students. You should be able to walk around the circle to make the tossing distance as short as it needs to be for each individual student.
3. Explain that in today’s discussion, the teacher will toss or pass an object to the student whose turn it is to talk. When the student is finished, the student will toss or pass the object back to you. This will help everyone focus on the speaker without interrupting.
4. If tossing a ball or a talking piece, practice correct tossing technique:
 - Staying as close to each student as necessary, teacher first calls a student’s name and then tosses or passes the talking piece gently.
 - The object is always tossed or passed back to the teacher.
 - The talking piece is never thrown.
 - Only the person for whom it is intended may catch the object (no intercepting the object).
 - The person holding the talking piece “holds the floor” and speaks uninterrupted.
5. Have your questions ready, call a name, and toss or pass the talking piece to that student.

Conclusion

Ask students to write a journal entry about how it felt to use a talking piece in the discussion.

Options

- As another option when using a ball, have students sit and roll the ball.
- As their experience grows, encourage students to toss to each other. Remind them to say the person’s name first, then use the correct tossing technique.