

Morning Meeting Amid Tragedy

Grades 3–6

Lesson Plan

When students return to school after a tragedy, it is essential to welcome students back into the classroom and allow them to sit in a space where they feel comfortable. As your students enter, observe their actions and take the opportunity to look for students who are struggling. Students who remain quiet may have a more challenging time expressing themselves.

To ensure that the conversation remains respectful, relevant, and without misinformation, the teacher or advisor should act as a facilitator throughout this Morning Meeting.

As students enter the classroom, greet each student and direct them to read and respond to the message.

A Greeting: “Good Morning” Greeting

Stick with a well-known greeting in your classroom with which students already feel familiar and comfortable. The important thing for this component is to ensure that every student is seen, acknowledged, and welcomed by name. If you do not have a particular greeting in mind, consider using the “Good Morning” greeting.

In this greeting, two students face each other, say “Good morning, [classmate’s name],” and then greet each other with a gesture of their choice—such as a wave, salute, bow, thumbs-up, or peace sign. Continue around the circle until all students have individually greeted each other.

Sharing: Partner Share

Start by acknowledging that sometimes things happen in your community that can be very scary and challenging to deal with. Depending on what you know about your students, you may choose to name the specific event they are dealing with. Otherwise, you might speak broadly about challenging events and how they can impact their feelings and class community.

Explain to your students that Morning Meeting is a safe space to share their thoughts and feelings as long as everyone respects the classroom rules. Refer to the rules and remind students to keep them present when sharing with a classmate.

Ask students to find a partner and share their response to the following prompt:

“Being in school today makes me feel _____.”

Have each partner respond to the sentence starter then allow them to discuss it with their partner for 2–3 minutes. Circulate as students are talking to listen in and take note of who may need a private check-in throughout the day.

The *Responsive Classroom* practice of Morning Meeting provides students with a **safe and predictable environment**, which is especially important in the wake of a tragedy in the classroom or school community.

Activity: Snowball

Remind students of the morning message prompt and their responses. Explain that when bad things happen, it can be helpful to think of ways to support your friends and family and make them feel better. One way to do this is by offering small acts of kindness.

Provide a few examples of small acts of kindness, such as carrying someone's backpack, helping someone reach a book on a top shelf, or offering someone a hug.

Ask students to each take a small slip of paper and write down one act of kindness they could do during the school day. Circulate as students write responses, and offer support or guidance as needed. Once students have written their act of kindness down, have them crumple it up into a small ball.

Once everyone is ready, students form a circle and gently toss their "snowballs" into the center. Then, they pick up a nearby snowball and going around the circle, read the responses aloud. (Ideally, they will retrieve one that isn't their own.)

Inform students that they can keep this slip of paper with them throughout the day. Encourage them to find a time and place to perform their act of kindness to brighten an otherwise challenging day for a classmate or teacher.

Morning Message

Dear students,

When feeling down, I list things I am grateful for. Being in school with you is on my list! What are some strategies that you use to make yourself feel better? Write one below.