

Developing Empathy **&** **Being An Ally** Grade 4

About Developing Empathy and Being an Ally

In this lesson students will begin to identify how hurtful name calling can be, and how important it is to become someone's ally.

Students will be introduced to an article by Robert, an 11 year old, whose family has 2 moms.

Lesson Purpose

- Students will be able to identify ways in which name calling is hurtful.
- Students will learn the importance of being an ally in order to interrupt or stop name calling.
- Students will be able to identify helpful strategies in order to become an ally to another person.

Materials:

Student Copies of
the article
"My School is
Accepting – But Things
Could Be Better"
by Robert

Vocabulary Words

Ally
Empathy
Name Calling
Gay
Lesbian
LGBT
Student generated
vocabulary list of hurtful
words

Time Suggested

Two 30- 40 minute
sessions.

The Lesson:

Name Calling

- What hurts your feelings?
- What types of name calling have you heard or been a target of out in the playground?

Empathy

- What does the word empathy mean? Can someone give me the definition? If not, define
- **Empathy** – is how a person feels when he or she can understand someone else’s feelings and motives in a certain situation OR
Empathy – is when you understand another person’s feelings by remembering or imagining being in a similar situation

Activity

1. Write “name-calling” on one side of the board and empathy on the other. Ask students to brainstorm everything they think about when they hear the word name-calling. Record their responses on the board. Help them identify any themes in their list such as: the way name-calling makes someone feel, motives for name-calling, or situations where name-calling might occur.
2. Ask the students to read/or read to them the short essay by Robert, an 11 year old boy who lives with his family.

After students have read the short essay have them meet in small groups of four to five students. Make sure to have one person in each group be designated as the recorder who will write down all their ideas. Another person could be designated as the reporter to report back the group’s ideas. Write the following questions on the board and ask each group to answer them:

- How do you think Robert feels when he hears people say things like, “this is gay” or “You’re so gay?”
- Do you have empathy for Robert? Why or why not?
- As the groups are meeting, go from group to group to check for understanding and to make sure they are staying on track
- Ask each group to report back the feelings they think Robert had.

3. Lead a class discussion about whether your students have ever felt similar to how they imagined Robert felt. Consider prompts to generate discussion such as:
- What situations led to those feelings?
 - How did you respond?
 - What made you feel better?
 - If you were Robert what would you do when people said things that felt hurtful?
 - Do you have empathy for Robert because of these situations that you've experienced?

4. Being an Ally

Ally- A person who does something to help or stand up for another person. For example, if a friend of yours was being teased, you would be an ally if you asked the person doing the teasing to stop being mean.

- Ask students to number on a piece of paper:
 1. I would be VERY UNCOMFORTABLE
 2. I would be A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE
 3. I would be PRETTY UNCOMFORTABLE
 4. I would be VERY COMFORTABLE
- Tell students you are going to read some statements about ways they could be an ally to Robert.
- When you read each statement they will quietly and individually think which statement most pertains to them. Tell the students that there is not a right or wrong way to respond. Engage in discussion about what makes it hard or easy to be an ally for someone. Repeat this for each statement.
 - Talk to Robert individually and tell him that you are sorry that people are calling him names and using phrases like, "this is so gay".
 - Talk to Robert and ask him what he thinks would help people stop name-calling, Offer to help him.
When you hear a person say something like, "That's so gay" say, "It's not OK to say that. Using the word gay like that hurts people's feelings."
 - Tell a teacher or another adult that you're bothered by the kind of words you're hearing other students use. Ask this adult to do something about the situation.

Summarizing the Lesson

- Ask the class to share out what they have learned about name-calling and about how to be an ally for someone. Write all of these suggestions on the board/chart paper.
- Ask students if they can suggest new class rules related to name calling and being an ally.

Reflect

Discuss how being an ally to someone who feels targeted can/will change both of your lives in a positive way.