



SAY SOMETHING

Belonging Unit

GRADES 6-8



In this Belonging Unit, students will engage in key learnings and messages from the *Say Something* program. They will learn how to apply the *Say Something* framework; work collaboratively to create a community of care; and bridge connections to Trusted Adults. Students and Trusted Adults will work together to build a school community steeped in belonging.

Unit Essential Question:

How can we use our agency to create a safe space by including others and building a community of belonging?



To learn more about the full curriculum components and the various resources associated with the *Say Something* curriculum, visit this [guide](#). Here, you will gain access to the curriculum's essential questions, thematic unit rationale, and additional engagement activities.

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Know the Signs Community Agreement

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Produce a classroom agreement that aligns with the *Say Something* program and Sandy Hook Promise values by engaging in a discussion.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competency

- Social Awareness
- Self-Awareness
- Responsible Decision-Making

Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 6:** Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Workbook](#)
- Markers or colored pencils

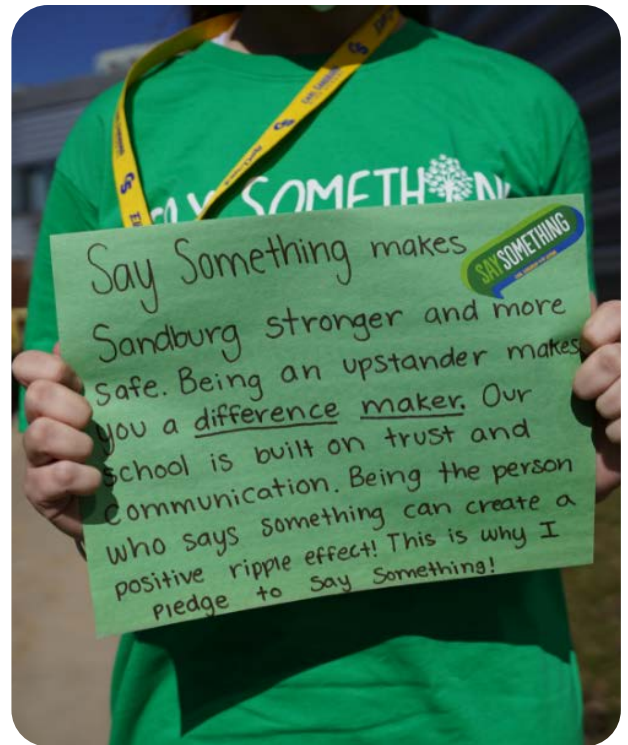
Educators:

- Chart paper
- Markers

Mindful Minute

Belly Breathing

Place your hands on your belly. Take one big breath in, and one big breath out. Focus on how your belly feels as you do this. Do this for the next minute.



Grades:

6-8

Estimated Time Needed

45-60 minutes

Notes

Student Connector

Common Ground

Place students into random groups of five. Two ways to create random groups are described below. Once in their groups, students have five minutes to find five things they all have in common. Let students know that they must be creative and should not choose obvious responses (i.e., same grade). Once the time is up, have each group share their Common Grounds and how they came to discover it.

Ways to create student groups:

Use a deck of cards (playing cards or Uno). Ask students to select a card and find their group members by finding matches (e.g., Kings find other Kings, form a rainbow with four different colors, add card numbers to equal 15). Organize the deck before class with the correct number of cards for the class size and numbers of like cards depending on the size of groups you'd like to create.

Wordle Jumble: Cut out letters that create words connected to the class themes. Instruct students to create five-letter words with cut-out letters and form a group. For this lesson use: trust, thank, share, build, power, brave, heard.



Main Activity

Our Agreement

This activity requires everyone in the classroom to come together to create a socially and emotionally safe space. The class will construct an agreement, which is a tool used to hold everyone accountable for creating a safe and inclusive environment. This agreement should highlight qualities that align with the *Say Something* training.

Introduce the activity by having students think back to the *Say Something* training. Revisit the three steps:

1. Recognize the Signs
2. Act Immediately, Take it Seriously
3. "Say Something."

Provide students with 3–5 minutes to complete part one of the [Know the Signs Community Agreement Handout](#) independently, which reflects what they would like to see in their classroom.

Once students complete their individual reflections, place them into groups of four and assign them the task of working on Part 2 of the [Know the Signs Community Agreement Handout](#). Students will take the next 10 minutes to **brainstorm what an ideal class would be like** by writing a list of at least five qualities and expectations that they would like to see from their classmates and educator. Remind students that this classroom is a safe space for all. Allow students to get creative but also be realistic about this. Each member of the group will have different roles.

- **Facilitator** – gets the necessary supplies and relays instructions to the group
- **Speaker** – shares out and communicates the group's ideas to the whole class

- **Scribe** – will come up to write on the class agreement
- **Timekeeper** – keeps the group on task and ensures on-time project completion

Circle Up

Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Up Norms](#) and *Know the Signs* Community Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Handout](#), located in their workbooks. Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."
- Use a talking piece.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

Discussion

Discuss each group's ideas by having the **speaker** of each group share their top two ideas. If one idea was already named, have them choose another one from the list.

Now, it is time for the class to **vote** on which ideas they would like to implement in the *Know the Signs* Community Agreement. Then, the **scribe** of each group with an approved agreement will write each expectation or quality on the chart paper, labeled "Our Agreement". This will continue until every group adds an expectation or quality to the class agreement.

Closing

Encourage students to uphold this agreement by reading the agreement aloud as a class. Display the classroom agreement and keep it visible throughout the school year.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Give gratitude to the class for working thoughtfully and intentionally to become a true *Say Something* classroom where all students feel safe and included.

Promise Challenge

Start the school year with an activity that builds inclusivity and connectivity by participating in a buddy-up activity throughout the school year. Each advisory or homeroom can be paired up with another class and start a pen pal writing program. Each class will send their buddy class a letter introducing themselves. This can be done by pairing up lower classmen with upperclassmen.

Lesson Extension and Explore More

Explore More

[Check out the agreement that the staff at Sandy Hook Promise made!](#)

Family Engagement

Encourage families to incorporate the *Say Something* Program outside of school by handing out [this brochure](#) (Spanish version) or sending out a digital copy.



The Sandy Hook Promise

Our hearts are broken;

Our spirit is not.

And it is with this knowledge that we are able to move forward with purpose and strength.

This is a Promise. To truly honor the lives lost by turning our tragedy into a moment of transformation.

This is a Promise. To be open to all possibilities.

There is no agenda other than to make our community and our nation a safer, better place.

This is a Promise. To have the conversations on ALL the issues.

Conversations where listening is as important as speaking.

Conversations where even those with the most opposing views can debate in good will.

This is a Promise. To turn the conversation into actions.

Things must change. This is the time.

This is a Promise. We make to our precious children.

Because each child, every human life is filled with promise, and though we continue to be filled with unbearable pain we choose love, belief, and hope instead of anger.

This is a Promise. To do everything in our power to be remembered not as the town filled with grief and victims; but as the place where real change began.

Our hearts are broken; Our spirit is not.

This is our Promise. The Sandy Hook Promise.

Belonging Word Tree Introductory Lesson

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define belonging by working with their classmates to create a word tree.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competency

- Social Awareness

Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 7:** Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both alike and different from each other and from those in their identity groups.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Workbook](#)
- Crayons or colored pencils

Educators:

- Create individual signs for each of the following statements: strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree

Mindful Minute

Journal Time

Gratitude Jar

Write or draw one thing you are grateful for today in the Gratitude Jar. Revisit and add to the Gratitude Jar on a daily or weekly basis. If you are having a down day, reflect on the notes in this Gratitude Jar and remind yourself of all these things that make your life so wonderful.



Grades:

6-8

Estimated Time Needed

30-45 minutes

Notes

Student Connector

Agree or Disagree

As a class, define the terms and set up a continuum of agreement/disagreement in the classroom. At one side of the room post a paper with “Strongly Agree” and on the other side of the room post a paper with “Strongly Disagree.”

Project one of the following quotes and give students time to **Read-Think-Reflect-React**:

- “To love all children, we must struggle together to create the schools we are taught to believe are impossible. Schools built on justice, love, joy, and anti-racism.” — Bettina Love
- Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it.” — Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Remind students about the protocols for a **Read-Think-Reflect-React**:

Read: Quietly read the quote.

Think: Think about what the quote means to you.

Reflect: Draw a connection between your life and the meaning of the quote.

React: Be prepared to share your reflections by participating in Agree or Disagree.

Divide the quote up into sections and ask students to sit or stand where they feel about the statement on the continuum of agreement.

Once the activity is over, engage the class in a quick discussion about what the quote means and how it relates to belonging.



Main Activity

Journal Time

Give students time to **Think-Reflect-React** on the following prompt in their [workbook](#):

- Describe a time when someone made you feel included in an activity.

Remind students about the protocols for a **Think-Reflect-React**:

Think: Think about a time where someone made you feel included in an activity.

Reflect: Consider the emotions it made you feel.

React: Share or show your reflections in your journal.

Word Tree

Students will complete a word tree around the word “belonging.” Have students open their workbooks to the [Word Tree on Belonging Handout](#) or the worksheet. If the workbook or handout is unavailable, draw or project a sample tree and encourage students to draw their own tree using a full piece of paper and pencil/crayons/markers.

As a class, develop the definition together. Write the definition in the grass portion below the tree on the handout. Then, allow students to Think-Reflect-React with a partner on three ways they plan to embody the vocabulary term.



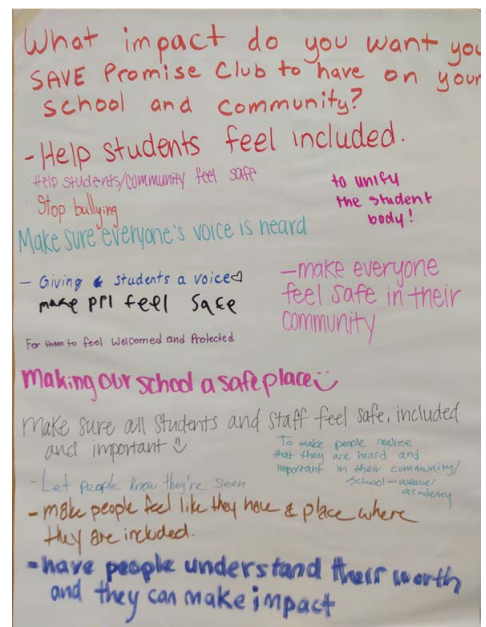
- **How will you make others feel like they belong?**

Students will draw images around the leaves and branches to represent their responses.

Once the class is finished, have pairs share out one way they plan to embody belonging. Let students know that they will be referencing this word tree later in this module.

Make a connection to the Sandy Hook Promise *Start With Hello* program. Tell students that one way they can embody or embrace belonging is by practicing the *Start With Hello* program steps along with the *Say Something* steps. The *Start With Hello* program is about building inclusive and kind classrooms and school cultures where all students feel like they belong. The steps are:

1. See someone alone
2. Reach out and help
3. "Start With Hello"





Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Give gratitude to students for working together as pairs and collaborating to complete their word tree.

Promise Challenge

Over the next unit, encourage students to observe their classmates and take note of the students who have made others feel included by creating a safe space. They will be nominating their peers for a [certificate](#) at the end of the unit.

Educators, please choose what method would work best for you on how you would like to receive the nominations.

Lesson Extension and Explore More

Invite students to join or start a SAVE Promise Club to help build a classroom or school culture where every student feels a sense of belonging. As a SAVE Promise Club student leader, youth get the opportunity to plan and implement activities and educate classmates about how to be inclusive and kind. SAVE Promise Clubs participants organize welcome committees, create safe spaces for students to voice safety concerns and solutions, and make sure students who may feel left out, feel a great sense of belonging.

[SAVE Promise Club – Sandy Hook Promise](#)

Who is My Trusted Adult

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify Trusted Adults in the school community by defining the term and expressing their gratitude towards them.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competency

- Responsible Decision-Making
- Relationship Skills
- Self-Management

Social Justice Standards

- **Action 20:** Students will plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and will evaluate what strategies are most effective.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Workbook](#)

The following resources are not located in the workbook. Handouts should be printed out for students so that they can pass them out to their Trusted Adults.

- [Trusted Adult Letter Handout](#)
- [Trusted Adult Letter Handout \(Spanish\)](#)

Mindful Minute

Encourage students to check in with the classroom emotions tool, such as the Mood Meter or Feelings Wheel. If you do not have an emotions chart or visual cue, provide [these feelings check-in ideas](#). Prompt students with questions to guide their



Grades:

6-8

Estimated Time Needed

30-45 minutes

Notes

self-assessment and emotions management. Allow for a quiet minute of reflection before moving to the student connector.

- Is there anything you'll need to do to be present and participate in today's lesson?
- If you're feeling happy, joyful, content, calm, peaceful, or enthusiastic, what led you to feel these feelings? How can you stay in this emotional space today?
- Are there any unpleasant feelings or emotions that you can let go of right now?

Student Connector

Before you begin the main activity, it is important to establish the definition of a Trusted Adult in the school. In groups of four, students will draft their own definition for the term by engaging in a group discussion and using the sentence starters below.

- An adult in our school who makes us feel...
- An adult in our school who treats us...
- An adult in our school who cares about...

Gather input from all the groups to help define it as a classroom community. Then, display this definition throughout the year. By having the term visible with a clear definition, it can act as a cue for students to always keep their Trusted Adults in mind when they see warning signs or threats. Some possible definitions for Trusted Adults include:

- An adult in our school who makes me feel comfortable and is a good listener.
- An adult in our school who makes safety a priority and is always willing to help.
- An adult in our school who treats students with the utmost respect and is available when issues/problems arise.
- An adult in our school who truly cares about our school community and culture.



Main Activity

Circle Up

Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the the [Circle Up Norms](#) and *Know the Signs* Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Handout](#), located in their workbooks. Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."

- Use a talking piece.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

Discussion

Engage the class in a discussion about Trusted Adults. Here are a few guiding questions:

- What special qualities do you look for in the Trusted Adult?
 - While the class is discussing, have a volunteer write the qualities that are discussed on the board. Remind students that the qualities written on the board together are very powerful.
- Why is it important for us to have Trusted Adults?
- Provide some examples of Trusted Adults at our school.

Some students may not have a Trusted Adult so this could be a good time to unpack why this may be. It could also be an opportunity to inform your students that you are a Trusted Adult. Let them know that you will not think differently about them if they approach you with a warning sign or threat.

Closing

To close the Circle Up, ask students to give a shoutout to one of their classmates who made a comment that resonates with them. Then, in unison, have the class exclaim their chant or cheer they previously created.

- I appreciate _____ for sharing with us today.
- Way to go _____ I like your idea.
- Thank you for sharing your opinion _____.
- Give finger snaps or air high-fives or fist bumps in place of verbal appreciation or affirmation.

Activity

Students will write a thank you letter using the [Trusted Adult Letter Handout \(Spanish version\)](#) to their Trusted Adult(s) to show their gratitude and why they trust them. Students can also include a code word they would like to use whenever they need to talk to their Trusted Adult about a warning sign or threat.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Thank students for engaging in a very important discussion and for taking the time to consider these extremely important qualities in a Trusted Adult.

Promise Challenge

Let your Trusted Adult from outside of school know that they are a person you feel comfortable going to in serious situations. Encourage students to write a letter to them, send a text message, or sit down and have a conversation.

Lesson Extension and Explore More

Lesson Extension

If you would like to continue this lesson, students can use the [Trusted Adult Triangle](#) to brainstorm their Trusted Adult possibilities.

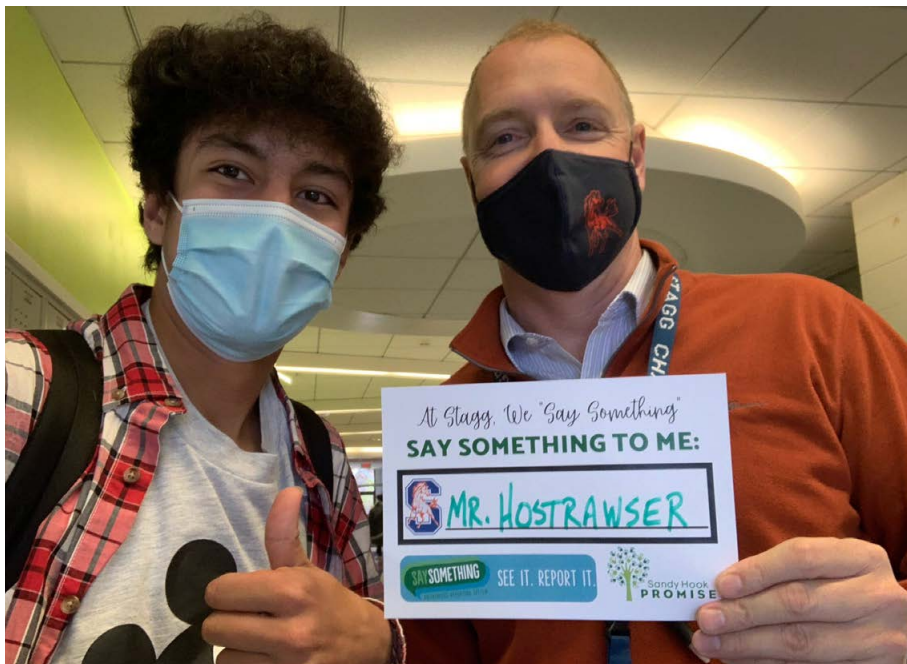
Explore More

Consider hosting a Trusted Adult workshop at school and invite families and local community members. Sandy Hook Promise has created a [Say Something Trusted Adult Workshop](#) that contains a virtual training and workbook.

Family Engagement

Encourage families to ask their children about who their Trusted Adults are inside and outside of school. This could be a great opportunity for families to connect and build a relationship with the Trusted Adults in school. Provide families with some of the questions below that can be asked during the commute to and from school or during a meal:

- *Who is your Trusted Adult at school?*
- *What qualities does this Trusted Adult have that make you feel comfortable?*
- *Who do you feel comfortable talking to about these things outside of school?*



Tapping into Trusted Adults

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify a Trusted Adult who meets the TAP criteria.
- Design a group poster for each TAP criteria.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competency

- Social Awareness

Materials and Resources

Students:

- Pen, pencil, crayons, and/or markers
- [Say Something Belonging Workbook](#)

Educators:

- A device and speakers to play music
- Poster paper, chart paper, newsprint, or butcher paper
- Tape, thumbtacks, or clothespins for hanging posters around the room
- Check out the Being a Trusted Adult Foundational workshop on the [Sandy Hook Promise Learning Center](#)

Mindful Minute

Safe Space Inventory

Encourage students to place learning materials (including electronic devices and cell phones) aside. Set a timer for one-minute and ask students to take that minute to breathe, stretch, rest, or do a quiet activity that is relaxing. Prior to the activity, model yourself doing a quick, quiet, centering activity. Encourage them to be creative and what feels right for them.



Grades:

6-8

Estimated Time Needed

45 minutes

Notes

Once the minute is over, inform students that they'll do a safe space inventory check. Students may refer to the [Safe Space Inventory Checklist](#) in their workbooks or reference the inventory checklist posted in a highly visible area of the classroom.

Inform students that the Safe Space Inventory allows them to check in with themselves and their environment to ensure that they have a lot of resources to help make them feel safe and be productive throughout the day. The [Safe Space Inventory](#) is a tool to help youth and Trusted Adults:

- Be mindful about the physical space surrounding them.
- Find simple ways to feel comforted.
- Identify easy strategies to get into a healthy head space.
- Use their voice and “I statements” to advocate for safety needs and wants.
- Create a healing-centered classroom environment with their classmates.

Student Connector

Cue up music. Use a song or playlist with positive song messages. Play the music during the Move-and-Meet-Up activity described below. Create the playlist with student input.

A few sample songs include:

- *I Ain't Worried* by One Republic
- *Try Everything* by Shakira
- *My Universe* by Coldplay and BTS
- *Over the Rainbow* by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole
- *Here Comes the Sun* by the Beatles
- *Stand by Me* by Ben E. King
- *The Best* by Tina Turner
- *La Vida Es Un Carnaval* by Celia Cruz
- *Skyscraper* by Demi Lovato
- *Perfect* by Pink

What would you put in your comfort den?

Animals create dens for storing food, sleeping, and resting. Very often, the animals bring in items of comfort to feel safe and secure, too.

Prompt students to quickly do a Move-and-Meet Up! A Move-and-Meet-Up is when you find a classmate who you haven't communicated with or socialized with that day or that week. Set a timer and instruct the Move-and-Meet Up pairs. As students meet up, play music from the positive song message and continue to play music throughout the student connector. Explain to the pairs that each student has two minutes to answer the following prompt:

- *What would you put in your den for food, rest, and comfort?*

After four minutes, invite the pairs to settle at their desks or tables for the main activity. Once

settled, ask the class if anyone paired with someone who had a similar den set up or an item in their den that was interesting or special.

Main Activity

Remind students about the importance of the third step in the *Say Something* program: “say something” to a Trusted Adult. Students were asked to identify at least one Trusted Adult during the initial training. Now, students will explore the qualities they value most in Trusted Adults using the TAP taxonomy developed by professors at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, United Kingdom. Explain to students that a taxonomy is a system to classify, categorize, and organize items. In this instance, it’s a way to group Trusted Adult qualities together in a way that is easier to remember, using the acronym T-A-P.

- **T** = Trustworthy, Time-generous
- **A** = Accessible, Approachable, Attentive, Authentic, Available Adult
- **P** = Provides Persuasive, Protective, Positive Examples and Promotes Positive Development
(Pringle et al., 2019)



Next, inform students that they’ll work in groups of three or four to create a poster for each of the qualities of Trusted Adults listed in the taxonomy. Groups will have 15 minutes to create the poster. Randomly assign students to groups and ask them to assign group roles, listed below. Display the 11 criteria words on a table and ask each group to select one of the criteria to allow for student choice.

- **Facilitator** – gets the necessary supplies and relays instructions to the group
- **Lead artist** – communicates the artistic vision of the poster and directs group members to support in the poster creation

- **Speaker** – shares out and communicates the group’s ideas and poster to the whole class
- **Timekeeper** – keeps the group on task and ensures on-time project completion

Group 1: Trustworthy

Group 7: Available

Group 2: Time-Generous

Group 8: Persuasive

Group 3: Accessible

Group 9: Protective

Group 4: Approachable

Group 10: Positive Example

Group 5: Attentive

Group 11: Promotes Positive Development

Group 6: Authentic

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Thank students for working together as groups and collaborating to complete their TAP into Trusted Adults posters. Remind students that Trusted Adults are people they can count on whenever they see a warning sign or threat.



Promise Challenge

Watch the [Tap In Video](#) and give students the Promise Challenge of writing and recording their own ‘Tap In’ song or video to convey how Trusted Adults can be a consistent safety net in their lives.



Lesson Extensions

Ask students to create their own Trusted Adult taxonomy, using an acronym that has personal significance or meaning.



Family Engagement

Teach a family member about the TAP taxonomy. Next, each take turns sharing special qualities and characteristics you value in each other using the same TAP acronym.

References

Pringle, J., McAteer, J., Whitehead, R., Scott, E., Milne, D., & Jepson, R. (2019). Developing a taxonomy to characterise trusted adult support in the lives of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 76(1), 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.08.004>

Difficult Conversations Role Playing

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Simulate a conversation with a Trusted Adult when a warning sign is recognized.
- Determine when initiating difficult violence prevention conversations with Trusted Adults is necessary.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competency

- Relationship Skills

Social Justice Standards

- **Action 17:** Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice, and injustice.
- **Action 18:** Students will speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Workbook](#)

Educators:

- [Trusted Adult Video](#)
- Create individual signs for each of the following statements: strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree.



Grades:

6–8

Estimated Time Needed

30–45 minutes

Notes

Mindful Minute

Take a moment to thank yourself and show gratitude towards yourself. Thank yourself for something you are good at.

For example:

- I am thankful that I make good choices.
- I am thankful that I trust myself to make good choices.
- I am thankful that I am a loyal friend.
- I am thankful that I am kind to my classmates.
- I am thankful for my musical talents.
- I am thankful that I am a caring person.
- I am grateful for my artistic talents.
- I am grateful that I appreciate nature.
- I am grateful that I am good at bike riding/skateboarding/skating.
- I am grateful that I know how to cook a delicious meal.

Student Connector

Four Corners About Trust

Set-up four corners of the classroom with signs that read:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Before starting the activity, review the **Know the Signs Agreement** with the class. Inform students that:

- *The following exercise requires you to be 'judgment free.' We want to establish a safe space where your classmates feel comfortable expressing thoughts and opinions. We also want to build understanding with one another.*

Ask student leaders to read the following statements aloud and write the statements on the board. Ensure that students re-read statements and take time for their classmates to Think-Reflect-React as they move and stand in the corner that expresses their level of agreement on the statement. After students are standing in their respective corners, ask if anyone wants to share why they decided to stand in that corner. Encourage students who are grouped in a corner together to recognize the similarities that they share. ***If someone is alone in a corner, do not draw attention to that student. Instead, bring up the feeling of empathy and that we never really understand someone else's experience or feelings***

- Trust is an important quality and character trait I seek in friendships.
- Trust must be earned.

- I have a Trusted Adult at school who I feel comfortable going to for help when I need it.
- I have a Trusted Adult at home who I can go to for help when I need it.
- I feel nervous going to adults about issues sometimes.
- I have seen warning signs and threats online before.
- I have reported warning signs and threats to adults in my school.



Main Activity Role Play

This activity focuses on how to communicate with a Trusted Adult. Remind students that they defined and identified Trusted Adults in their school in a previous lesson. In this lesson, students will practice having those difficult conversations developing their own scenarios and practicing having these difficult conversations.

Part 1: Initiating a Conversation with Your Trusted Adult

Have students follow along with their [Difficult Conversations Handout](#). Then, present the class with the following scenarios and have them **turn and talk** to their partner about how they would initiate a conversation with their Trusted Adult.

- One of your classmates seems depressed lately. He used to joke around with everyone and even sat with your group of friends at lunch. Now he's isolating himself. You can't quite put your finger on it, but something just isn't right.
- Two students that you recognize, but don't know very well, sit next to you at lunch. They both have their phones out, and instead of eating lunch, they're talking about a post. One of the students turns to you and says, "check this out, weird way to get attention, right?" You are surprised to see a post from a 7th grader making a direct threat that involves bringing a weapon to school. The bell rings and the two students rush out of the cafeteria to get to class.

After the turn and talk, state the following:

- *By going to your Trusted Adult about an issue, you are taking a very courageous and necessary step. Even if you may be unsure if you have recognized a warning sign or threat it's still important to communicate it to your Trusted Adult. This will take a lot of heaviness and weight off your shoulders! Let's begin a role-playing activity where we get to practice communicating with our Trusted Adults.*

Part 2: Brainstorm a Scenario

Place students into groups of four and ask them complete Parts 2 and 3 together.

For the first task, instruct the groups to **come up with a realistic scenario about a student who recognizes a warning sign**. Remind students that this is a dramatization and that the scenarios created should not be based on an actual situation that occurred.

- At this time, you may show this [video](#) of how Jayden approaches his Trusted Adult or simulate a difficult conversation with a Trusted Adult.



Part 3: Construct a Script and Role Play

Next, groups will construct a script between themselves and their Trusted Adult about their scenario. Ask groups to enact the scenario in a skit in front of the class. Be sure groups assign roles: a Trusted Adult, the concerned student(s), the student at-risk of harming themselves or others.

Display these sentence starters or have them reference the handout to approach and start a conversation with Trusted Adults. Feel to encourage students to create one that is more natural and comfortable:

- Hi Mr./Ms./Mx. _____. I came across something that I need to run by you. Do you have a minute?
- I have a serious topic to talk to you about.
- On a scale of 1-10, I need to talk to you about a level 7 issue.

Inform students that in the scenario, they need to apply the three steps to having a difficult conversation and use provided sentence starters if needed:

- 1. Be direct:** I must talk to you about or I need to talk to you about a level 8 out of 10 issue immediately.
- 2. Explain:** The student I am concerned about is showing warning signs of harming themselves (e.g., wanting to end their life, sharing details of an eating disorder, abusing drugs). I have a few text messages here to show you.
- 3. Next Steps:** I need your support now to get them help.

When it is time for the simulation, ask groups to go to the front of the classroom and set up the scenario. Describe the setting and introduce each group member's roles so the class is aware of the main players.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Conducting a simulation can bring up a lot of unpleasant and uncomfortable emotions. Thank students for being brave for participating in the dramatizations in front of the whole class. It is important we practice having these difficult conversations with our Trusted Adults so that we can feel comfortable enough to reach out.

Promise Challenge

Challenge students to do something nice for one of their Trusted Adults this week. It can be an educator in the building with something as simple as filling up their water bottle or maybe it's a Trusted Adult at home.

Lesson Extension and Explore More

Explore More

All adults in the building or on campus can come together to create a Trusted Adult bulletin board introducing yourselves. Educators can share the special qualities they possess that make them someone worthy of the youth's trust. This can be a great way for students to find an educator they can connect with, and Trusted Adults to find support amongst each other.



You Wouldn't Know by Looking at Me...

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Practice having difficult conversations by participating in an activity that requires vulnerability to learn about their classmates.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competency

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 6:** Students will express comfort with people who are both alike and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.
- **Diversity 7:** Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both alike and different from each other and others in their identity groups.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Workbook](#)

Educators:

- Review lesson beforehand
- Post sentence starters for everyone to see

Notes to educator: In order to complete today's main activity, the class must complete the student connector activity. Review the lesson beforehand and decide if you will need to select a few student facilitators. If so, share with them a copy of the lesson or let them know the structure of the activity.



Grades:

6-8

Estimated Time Needed

45-60 minutes

Notes

Mindful Minute

Close your eyes if you feel comfortable, and touch each finger. As you touch each finger, think of one thing you for which you are thankful.

Student Connector

The Circle Up activity shows students what they have in common with one another and helps them learn new facts about their classmates. It can help students open up and think about how well they know one another. It gets students warmed up to the idea of sharing personal or possibly more emotional information. Ultimately, this is what they will need to do when having a difficult conversation with Trusted Adults and peers.

Circle Up

Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Up Norms](#) and *Know the Signs* Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Handout](#), located in their workbooks. Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."
- Use a talking piece.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

This activity can be done in two ways:

1. If there is a significant amount of trust already built within the classroom community, you can sit in a circle format. Depending on the class size, you may choose to:
 - a. Ask the class to sit in one circle.
 - b. Divide up the classroom into 2 or 3 circles with one facilitator in each circle. Share this activity and a copy of the lesson plan with a student leader who will facilitate in the circle.
2. If this is with a newer group, use the snowball format in which students write down their statements anonymously on paper, crumple them up into snowballs, and throw the snowballs into the center of the classroom. Then, students pick up and read the snowballs to learn more about one another.

Discussion

Give students a set time and for the Circle Up discussion. This is a great opportunity to ask for a student volunteer to be timekeeper.

- Today, we will participate in a Circle Up discussion for 25–30 minutes.

Explain to students that this activity is to be taken seriously and that everything that is said in the circle stays in the circle. Let the facilitator start the activity by finishing the following statement:

“You wouldn’t know by looking at me...”

Example: “You wouldn’t know by looking at me, but my parents are divorced.”

Then, allow volunteers to go next or have the circle move in a clockwise motion, starting from the facilitator. One round is completed once everyone has a chance to go and share one fact about themselves. This activity works best when you start off on a lighter note with every round, statements get deeper. Some groups will naturally get deeper, other times the facilitator will have to model it. Aim for at least three circle rounds.

Closing

To close the Circle Up, students will connect to one another by letting each other know that they are not alone. The facilitator can start the next part by stating:

(Insert student’s name) I didn’t know just by looking at you that... but now that I do... I can relate/you’re not alone because...

Example: “Christina, I didn’t know just by looking at you that your parents were divorced. Now that I do, I would like to let you know that you are not alone, because my parents are also divorced.”



Main Activity

Journal Time

Give students time to **Think-Reflect-React** to the following prompt in their journals:

- Write a one-page reflection on today’s Circle Up activity. Consider answering the following questions.
 - Did you find it difficult to open up to your group? Why or why not?
 - How did it feel to be vulnerable?
 - Consider discussing the definition of vulnerability with the class. *When one is vulnerable, they are opening up and letting others in on their lives, and sometimes this can be challenging. Being vulnerable can produce some big emotions but understand that being vulnerable can help us grow.*
 - How can we get to know each other better?
 - Do we feel more comfortable with people in this classroom?

Remind students about the protocols for a **Think-Reflect-React**:

Think: *Think about today's circle up activity and if you found it difficult to participate.*

Reflect: *If you said yes, consider why it was so difficult.*

React: *Share or show your reflections in your journal.*

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Show appreciation to students for being vulnerable during this activity and remind them that difficult conversations can be uncomfortable which is why we practiced with today's activities.

Promise Challenge

Gather all nominations for this unit's theme, belonging. Recognize all students for creating a safe space and including others by presenting all of them with the [Certificate of Appreciation](#).

Lesson Extension and Explore More

Empower students to build a robust toolbox of feelings and emotions, words and terms. Ask students to use their journals to draw emojis that correspond to different feelings words that they may often use in school. Students can get ideas for pleasant and unpleasant feelings words from the Center for Nonviolent Communication's Feelings Inventory:

[Feelings Inventory | Center for Nonviolent Communication \(cnvc.org\)](#)

Explore more

Check out the following resources:

- Read about how Lena, a youth leader, embraces and celebrates diversity in this [blog post](#).
- Hear from youth on how to foster a more inclusive classroom by listening to the [Feltingoff Save Promise Club Podcast](#).



Sandy Hook
PROMISE

