

Unit 4, Justice for All

Meeting 1, Get the Principle

Meeting Summary

This unit is comprised of 3 meetings.

In this first meeting about interpersonal justice, students interview one another to learn about the “laws” of friendship. Students conclude by defining justice and considering why justice systems exist - in friendships, families, and societies.

Key Points

- ★ Rules are created in social settings (among friends, in school, in families and society) to help people get along and to serve greater goals and purposes.
- ★ Some rules are written down and codified, such as federal, state and town laws, as well as school rules. Other rules are tacitly understood and obeyed, such as the “rules” among friends.
- ★ Justice systems exist among all groups of people - in families, in schools, even among friends.

Preparation and Materials

- ★ Photocopy one [Among Friends - A Peer Survey](#) for each student.

Vocabulary

Tacit agreement

Justice

Justice System

Activities

Friendship Survey

- ★ Review **Among Friends: A Survey**. Ask a student to read the directions aloud. Answer any questions.
- ★ Allow students 15 minutes to interview one another.
- ★ Ask students to report on the results of their surveys. Review questions (1) and (2) only at this point in time.
- ★ Compile a list of answers to question (1) on the board: “What is it totally not okay to do in a friendship?” Ask students to provide details; e.g., “What would disrespect look like?”
- ★ Compile a list of answers to question (2) on the board: “How do you know that these behaviors are not okay?”

Teaching Point: If students offer examples of felonious behaviors such as stealing property or physical harm, point out that these are not only violations of the codes of friendship, but are also legal violations.

- ★ Example of student answers:

What is it not okay to do in a friendship?	How do you know these things are not okay?
Lie	Past experiences
Talk behind back	How I’d feel if this was done to me
Steal boy/girlfriend	Negative effects (argument, etc.)
Rat on friend	Hurt feelings
Take friend for granted	Feel guilty, conscience
Break a promise	Inner moral compass
Cheat in a game	Lose friend’s trust and respect

- ★ Discussion questions:
 - 1) Can anyone explain what’s meant by a tacit agreement?
 - 2) What’s the ultimate goal of these friendship “laws?”
 - 3) How long will a friendship last if a friend lies or [name examples of “not okay” behaviors from the list on the board]?
- ★ Discussion points:
 - 1) Laws, rules or codes of “getting along” exist in every social situation - in a school, family, town, among friends - whether you write these down or not.

- 2) Tacit means silent or quiet. A tacit agreement is a silent agreement; everyone knows the rules without saying them.
- 3) The unspoken rules among friends help ensure that a friendship is strong and lasting.
- 4) The unwritten rules of friendship are as important in helping us to get along as any written law.

Justice: A Brainstorm

- ★ The Pledge of Allegiance ends with the phrase: “...with liberty and justice for all.” What does liberty mean? The second term is more challenging: What is meant by justice? Brainstorm with the students and come up with as many ideas as possible.
- ★ Write the word justice in the middle of a circle on the board or newsprint. Record student answers on the strands of a web around the circle.
- ★ Wrap up with the Merriam-Webster Dictionary® definition of justice:
 - 1) The establishment or determination of rights according to the rules of law or equity
 - 2) The quality of being just, impartial, or fair
 - 3) The principle or ideal of just dealing or right action
 - 4) Conformity to truth, fact, or reason, CORRECTNESS
- ★ When is it important to you to be treated fairly? Point out that it’s not only in our dealings with the legal system that we care about fair treatment. We care about fair treatment with our friends, in our families, in classrooms as well.

Unit 4, Meeting 1 – Student Handout

Among Friends: A Survey

How do you know what is okay and not okay to do or say with your friends? Does a new friend hand you a list of laws? When a friend breaks your trust or steals one of your belongings, do you consult a “Friendship Lawbook” to learn what to do next? These ideas are obviously ridiculous. The laws of friendship are unwritten and unspoken. Still, friends somehow figure what these are, and what should happen when someone steps over a line.

Interview three people in the group to learn more about the “laws” of friendship. Ask each person three questions and write down his or her answers in the space provided. No names are necessary.

Interview Questions

- 1) What is one thing that it is totally not okay to do in a friendship?
- 2) How do you know this isn’t okay?
- 3) What typically happens when someone does this? What do you think the consequences should be?

Person 1

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Person 2

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Person 3

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Unit 4, Justice for All

Meeting 2, Own the Principle

Meeting Summary

This second justice meeting focuses on lawmaking and “community justice.” Working in small committees, students create rules for a hypothetical new school, compare these to actual school rules, and briefly debate which rules best support learning.

Key Points

- ★ In a democracy, you get to have a voice in creating and changing rules. In other systems, you don’t have a voice. Students often aren’t as connected to rulemaking in schools as citizens are to lawmaking in a town or state.
- ★ Laws are debated before they get adopted.
- ★ It’s easier to follow a rule when you understand the greater purpose it is meant to support.
- ★ If, upon close consideration, a rule appears to serve no good purpose, it’s reasonable to question the rule and ask that it be amended or repealed.

Preparation and Materials

- ★ Photocopy the [School from Scratch](#) handout. Students will work in committees of five. Each committee needs one handout.

Vocabulary

Lawmaking

Amendment

Rules

Rationale

Debate

Activities

Lawmaking: School Rules from Scratch

- ★ Shift the focus to lawmaking in school:

In our last group, we talked about rules between friends that are informal and tacitly understood. Why don't we have the same kind of informal rules in schools? Why can't we have unspoken agreements about how to behave and treat each other? Why are rules formally written down in school handbooks?

- ★ Divide students into committees of three to five members, and give one **School from Scratch** handout to each committee.
- ★ Pose the following question to frame the activity: "What is the purpose of school?" Write down answers on the board; e.g., "To learn and get an education."
- ★ Review the directions in the **School From Scratch** handout, and reinforce guidelines:
 - 1) Your rules have to support the overarching purpose of the school. What rules will help kids learn?
 - 2) You can include existing rules in your school, change existing rules, or make up brand new rules.
 - 3) Your rules can't break or contradict the law. For instance, you can't allow kids to bring knives to school.
 - 4) Think carefully about how you'll explain the reason for the rules to your peers. How will you convince them that each rule is necessary?
- ★ Allow students 10 minutes to complete assignment. Go from group to group, reminding kids that their rules need to support learning and education.
- ★ Committees report. Pose the following questions to facilitate the reports:
 - 1) Raise your hand if you have any rules that are different than the existing rules in your school.
 - 2) Let's hear from one group at a time. What's one rule you'd like to propose that is different than your existing school rules? Ask students to explain clearly the reasons for their rule. Record rules and rationales on the board.
 - 3) Does anyone agree with this rule, and why?
 - 4) Does anyone disagree with this new rule, and why? Would you like to propose an amendment? Point out that, in a democracy, proposed rules and laws are debated before they are adopted.

- ★ After students propose a new rule, discuss any related (or contradictory) rules currently enforced in their school and why these might exist.

Changing the Law

- ★ Discussion questions:

- 1) How are rules made in your school?
- 2) Do the same rules hold in every classroom? Why do teachers have different sets of classroom rules? Do you think this is fair?
- 3) Should school rules apply equally to everyone? For instance, should a “no hat” rule apply to everyone? What if a student is undergoing chemotherapy? What if other students want to wear hats to show their solidarity with him or her?
- 4) Is there a school or classroom rule in your school that you think should be changed, and that will not negatively affect learning? Why?
- 5) If you disagree with a school or classroom rule, can you get it changed? How?

- ★ Discussion points:

- 1) Students often aren’t as connected to rulemaking in schools as citizens are to lawmaking in a town or state. You typically don’t sit on committees or get to vote for the principal, teachers, or administration.
- 2) There are some behaviors that most people agree are wrong. Murder is wrong. Bank robbery is wrong. Stealing from someone’s locker is wrong. So it’s easy to make rules prohibiting these actions. There are other behaviors that are less clear-cut and more open to debate, like the rationale for dress codes in school.

- ★ Concluding point:

Rules are important and necessary in every social setting to help people get along and achieve greater goals, like the goal of fun in friendship or the goal of learning in school. In some situations, you get to have a say in making the rules; in other situations, you don’t. Either way, it’s easier to accept and follow a rule when you understand the purpose for the rule and why the rule was put in place.

If you take a close look at a rule and it seems to serve no good purpose, it’s reasonable to question the rule and ask that it be amended or repealed. This is what social activists have done throughout American history – all of those people we read about in our last session – from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Martin Luther King, Jr.

Unit 4, Meeting 2 – Student Handout

School from Scratch

Your town has decided to launch an experiment. They're opening a new high school in which students get a major say in how things are run. You are selected to sit on a student committee in charge of coming up with school rules. This is your first committee meeting and your goal is to come up with five rules to present to the rest of the student body at an all-school meeting next week.

Your assignment:

- 1) Brainstorm a list of possible rules that support the purpose of school: learning.
- 2) You can include rules that already exist in your school, amend existing rules, or make up brand-new rules.
- 3) Which five rules do you think are most important? Write these down.
- 4) Write down how you'll explain the reason for each rule to your peers.

Proposed Rule 1: _____

Reason for the rule: _____

Proposed Rule 2: _____

Reason for the rule: _____

Proposed Rule 3: _____

Reason for the rule: _____

Proposed Rule 4: _____

Reason for the rule: _____

Proposed Rule 5: _____

Reason for the rule: _____

Unit 4, Justice for All

Meeting 3, Act on the Principle

Meeting Summary

This meeting concerns consequences for rule-breaking behavior. Students serve on a “discipline committee” at their hypothetical schools, review cases and determine fair consequences for their peers.

Key Points

- ★ Consequences aren’t about being mean or singling people out. Consequences are meted out for reasons. For example: to deter you or others from wrongdoing in the future; to repair a wrong; to help you learn from your mistake; etc.

Preparation and Materials

- ★ Photocopy the four **Consequence Case Studies** in **Addendum III**. Different student groups will review each case.

Vocabulary

Consequences

Deterrence

Rehabilitation

Restitution

Activities

Experimental School: The “Consequence” Committee

Teaching Point: In the last **Justice For All** meeting, students proposed rules for a hypothetical new high school in town. In this activity, students return to that school and consider how to handle discipline.

- ★ Divide students into four groups, remind them of the new school they designed and attended in the last meeting, and explain the activity:

The town’s experimental high school is successfully underway! Students are doing a great job helping to run the school. You are all members of the **Student Discipline Committee** in charge of figuring out what the consequences should be for students who break the rules. Today you have four cases to review.

- ★ Distribute one **Consequence Case Study** to each group. (There are four separate cases. Each student group will consider a different case.) Allow students several minutes to discuss and answer the questions.
- ★ Groups present cases to the class. Invite students to comment on each other’s cases and consequences. Optional questions to pose after each case presentation:
 - 1) Can you explain the connection between the punishment and the crime?
 - 2) What is the purpose of your consequences? What are you hoping the outcome will be? (Review terms: **deterrence**, **restitution**, **rehabilitation**. See **Teaching Point** below for definitions.)
 - 3) Is this enough of a deterrence? Enough rehabilitation for wrongdoers? Enough restitution for the victim?
 - 4) If the guilty party (or parties) had previous offenses, would this affect the consequences? What if this was a first offense?
 - 5) What if the guilty party were a close friend of yours? Would this affect the severity of the consequences? Is your judicial system impartial?
 - 6) What would happen in your school if someone actually did this?

Teaching Point: Write the following terms on the board. Do students know the meaning of each? As students describe their consequences, write these down under the appropriate term.

Deterrence - the goal of specific deterrence is to make sure an offender “learns a lesson” and doesn’t commit the crime again. The goal of general deterrence is to send a message to and set an example for others. If you get punished for cheating, for instance, would you be more or less likely to cheat again? What effect would this have on others in the class?

Restitution - To make restitution is to take action to make things right. For instance, if you steal money, you repay it. If you knock down your little brother's blocks, you help build them back up.

Rehabilitation - This includes education, counseling or therapy to help the perpetrator of a crime mend his or her ways (and any psychological problems) and learn how to become a better citizen.

★ As time allows, read aloud an added twist after each case:

- 1) **Case 1, Weapons.** When you explain the consequences to the 11th grader, he offers your committee this defense: "My history teacher gave me permission to bring this in as a demonstration for a project." Do you decide to change the consequences? Why or why not?
- 2) **Case 2, Graffiti.** When you explain the consequences to the girls, they say: "Some senior girls made us do it. They said our reputations would be ruined if we didn't." Do you change the consequences? Why or why not?
- 3) **Case 3, Stolen Property.** When you ask the boy about his role, he says: "It was just a joke; we were just hiding the iPod and cell phone. We were going to give them back at the end of the day." Do you change the consequences? Why or why not?
- 4) **Case 4, Fighting.** When you talk to the group of senior guys, they say: "The kid threatened one of our girlfriends. We just wanted to scare him so that he'd stop messing with her." Does this affect your decision? Why or why not?

Unit 4, Meeting 3 – Student Handout

“Consequence” Case Studies

Below find four case studies. Please see [Addendum III](#) for each case study listed on its own page, suitable for photocopying and distributing around the room.

Case Study 1

At the start of the year, students on the Rule Committee decided to establish a rule against weapons. Guns, knives, and other potentially dangerous weapons are not allowed on school property under any circumstances.

Last Friday, a math teacher caught an 11th grade boy showing his dad’s survival knife to a friend out on the ball field. The teacher has sent the case to the Student Discipline Committee to handle.

- 1) Should there be a consequence? Why or why not?
- 2) If so, brainstorm a list of possible consequences.
- 3) Decide on the best consequence. Explain the reasons for your choice.

Case Study 2

At the start of the year, students on the Rule Committee decided to establish a rule against graffiti and tagging in the new high school.

Late yesterday afternoon, after the varsity basketball game, a coach caught two girls spraying graffiti on the side of the gymnasium building. The coach yelled at the girls and gave them a lecture. This morning he handed the case over to the Student Discipline Committee to determine what should be done next.

- 1) Should there be consequences? Why or why not?
- 2) If so, brainstorm a list of possible consequences.
- 3) Decide on the best consequence. Explain the reasons for your choice.

Case Study 3

At the start of the year, students on the Rule Committee decided to establish a rule against stealing.

Yesterday after lunch, a 9th grade girl discovered that someone had broken into her locker and stolen her cell phone and iPod. Later in the day, a 10th grade girl was caught with the stolen goods in her backpack. She claims that another boy gave her

the goods and that she had nothing to do with the robbery. The case has been sent to the Student Discipline Committee to handle.

- 1) Should there be consequences? Why or why not?
- 2) If so, brainstorm a list of possible consequences.
- 3) Decide on the best consequence. Explain the reasons for your choice.

Case Study 4

At the start of the year, students on the Rule Committee decided to establish a rule against fighting.

After lunch today, a 10th grader came to a member of the Student Discipline Committee and reported that he overheard a group of senior guys talking about jumping a sophomore after school. He names names and says he's afraid the sophomore is going to be badly hurt.

You call an emergency Committee meeting to discuss what to do.

- 1) Should there be consequences? Why or why not?
- 2) If so, brainstorm a list of possible consequences.
- 3) Decide on the best consequence. Explain the reasons for your choice.