UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

TEACHING ABOUT REFUGEES

AGES 6-9 | PRIMARY CURRICULUM

Find more materials at: unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A note about inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in lesson-planning



Before undertaking any activities on the topic of refugees, asylum, nationality and migrants please take some time to think about the students in your class. Are some of them refugees, in the process of seeking asylum, or are they stateless? If so, think about talking to them and their parents depending on their age.

If possible include ideas and feedback from parents and the children in sessions and refer to them to answer questions if and only if they have expressly explained that they are interested in answering questions or speaking about these issues.

Stateless persons do not have the nationality of any country. Statelessness can occur in many different situations. For example, certain ethnic or religious groups may be not recognized under national laws as citizens of that country, some children are born outside of the country of their parents' citizenship and are not able to obtain citizenship from their parents' country or the one they were born in. A number of countries globally have laws which do not allow mothers to pass their nationality to their children.

Stateless persons may have difficulty accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment, freedom of movement and others. Without these things, they often face obstacles and disappointment.

Be careful while using words such as "country" and "nationality" if you have any stateless children in your class. Instead you may use the words "your home" or "your culture".

OVERVIEW

This curriculum has four sections:

1. Building socio-emotional skills and facilitating peer relationships

This section aims to promote and build on children's ability to recognize different emotions in themselves and others. It also teaches them to respond accordingly when this occurs It goes further and encourages children to be empathetic to other's experiences of their classroom.

1.A Learning Objectives

Understand that each person in my class can be interesting to work with.

Understand that each person in the class has a name which reflects their own family and background..

1.B Learning Objectives

Understand my emotions and build a vocabulary that I can use to express them.
Begin to think more actively about my emotions.

2. Celebrating diversity

This section introduces cultures from around the world and encourages children to explore and play with the ideas, games, music, greetings and food that belong to these cultures. Children are encouraged to compare, contrast and rejoice in the similarities and differences between us.

Learning Objectives

Understand that people in different parts of the world have different ways of interacting and expressing themselves.

Understand that these differences are what makes our world diverse and rich.

Explore, discover and discuss new cultures in my home life.

3. Understanding new arrivals

This section focuses on the classroom experience of new arrivals in the classroom. It focuses on what it might be like to learn a new language, play new games, make new friends and experience a school day as a new arrival in school.

Learning Objectives

Understand the reasons why, when children are new in our school and classroom, it can be a scary and exciting experience.

Foster empathy for new children in the classroom.

4. Creating a peaceful environment

This section encourages children to develop and abide by a classroom code that keeps a peaceful classroom. It encourages children to reflect on their behavior and how it may impact other members of the class and also to cherish positive behavior in themselves and others.

Learning Objectives

Understand how feelings that arise in me on a daily basis in the classroom can cause me to react in different ways.

Understand how together our class can work to create a happier and improved experience for everyone.

Understand what can help to calm me down.

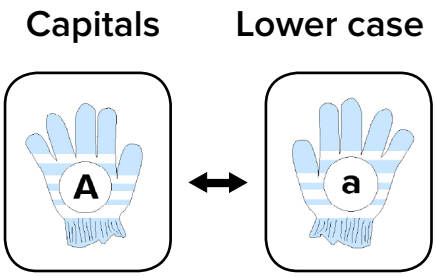
LOWER PRIMARY

1.A Activities to facilitate relationships between children and build inter-cultural awareness at the individual level

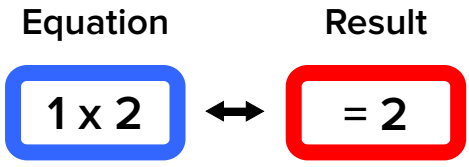
1.A.1 Facilitating relationships in the classroom

The sets of cards for these activities can be found in the activity sheets which you can download on UNHCR's Teaching About Refugees web page (link). There is a sheet with letter matching cards and a sheet with number matching cards.

Print and cut out the cards and hand them to the children in your class, making sure that matching cards are equally divided, so that each child can find a child with a matching card.



For the letter matching exercise, children need to find a partner that holds a glove card showing the same letter as the glove card they hold themselves.



For the number matching exercise, children need to find the times-table or number that matches.

Vocabulary cards are also possible. Make a set of vocabulary cards with words and matching descriptions. Each child gets a card and needs to find their match. At the end, children can express what they enjoyed about the activity.

1.A.2 Tell me about your name

Set a homework where each child goes home and asks what their own name, their siblings' name(s) or their parents' names mean, where they come from, and whether there are other people in their family with that name. If names are written in different scripts, ask parents to write them down in those scripts.

During circle-time or a partner activity children can ask the following questions to their partners or neighbours in the classroom:

"What is your name?"

"Where does it come from?"

"What does it mean?"

You could also introduce children's names in different languages (e.g. Pierre, Peter or Petteri) and ask the question if there are children in the same class, year group or school with a different name that has the same root.

As a group, the class could look at the names with different scripts and try and write them. Each child can draw a picture to represent their own name. Display the pictures around the classroom.

1.B Activities to build emotional intelligence and children's skill and ability in recognizing their own emotions and reading

1.B.1 Emotion recognition

A picture set for this activity can be found in the activity sheets which you can download on UNHCR's Teaching About Refugees web page: (link).



surprised



excited

Print and clip the sheets and show the children the different faces. Ask them to identify words to describe them, like happy, sad or angry.

You can also explain the emotion and ask children to demonstrate what facial expression they might have.

1.B.2 Emotion charades

Children can play in small groups or with partners. Ask them to mimic the emotions they have learned and others they know. Allow them to teach each other new words that are familiar in their own households and cultures or their native language.

This can be done both after activity 1.B.1 and then again after 1.B.3 once a more sophisticated vocabulary has been built.

1.B.3 Building emotional vocabulary

Introduce more complex and nuanced emotional vocabulary words by asking children if they know what these complex emotions are.

If they don't, use scenarios to explain the emotion and ask children to demonstrate what facial expression might be appropriate.

1.B.4 Expressing my feelings

Once children have a good idea of recognizing at least eight emotions in themselves (dependent on age), put up emotion boards in the classroom. These can be, for example, pin boards or sheets of magnetic laminated paper.

One emotion can be written at the top of each board. Children's photos or names can be placed in a basket below the board.

Children can take time out during the day to move their name to a certain board to let people know how they are feeling.

If you see a child struggling with a puzzle, you might recommend they choose a board to put their name on.

If you see someone very happy, you could do the same thing. Some choices might be: frustration, happy, angry, left out, excited, nervous.

2. Activities to learn about and cherish diversity from different cultures and countries

This is an opportunity to expand children's horizons and embrace the similarities and differences that exist in different cultures and countries.

Find an opportunity to speak with parents of the children in your class that come from different places and ask if they are willing to participate in activities described below.

In these activities, you may want to replace one of the activities or customs of one country or culture with activities of their country or culture if they are willing and have time to work with you. Take time to make sure the parents are comfortable with you teaching about this topic and invite them to join in the sessions that you do.

2.1 Different ways to greet

As a whole class activity, you can demonstrate greetings from different countries and cultures by choosing a child and interacting with him or her. Then ask the child to greet someone else in the same way.

Ask all the children to practice the greeting with each other. Do the same with other greetings. Ask the children what they found similar and different between the different greetings. Ask them if they had a favourite one.

See if the children can commit to greeting each other in one of the new ways every day for a week. Remind them before they leave the next day and be sure to greet the first student who arrives in that way in the morning.

At the end of the week discuss whether it was easy or hard to remember the greeting and why. Talk about how it would be to do a new greeting every day and ask if they know anyone who has moved to a new place and had to do this or whether they have ever had to do this.

2.2 Greetings on the map

Once you have established greetings, take a look at the world map with your class and look at where the greetings come from. Put a sticker on each place.

You could play a game where you point to a sticker and ask children to remember the greeting from that place or something about it.

2.3 Music from around the world

Put some music on and ask the children to draw it, describe it, tap a rhythm to it or dance to it. Ask them:

What emotions do they feel?

What colours do they hear?

If they were to imagine the music as an animal, what animal would it be?

Once you have listened to the music, ask the children to guess where the music comes from and then identify the right country or culture out of the places you have learned about so far. Continue this activity with the music from different places.

Children can choose their favourite piece and either write a poem, draw a picture or create a dance to express how they enjoyed it.

2.4 Food from around the world

Ask the children to talk about what they ate for breakfast, in a whole class, small groups or pairs. Ask one person to report back to a whole group conversation if they talked in small groups or pairs. Ask them to talk about other things they usually eat for breakfast. Make a list of the foods.

Introduce these popular breakfasts from the countries you have looked at already. If possible, set up a cooking class where children can cook the breakfast. The foods can be eaten at snack time.

2.5 Games from around the world

Introduce games from different countries and cultures to the children in small groups. Allow them 20 minutes to play the games of their choice and then change them around. If the games are outdoor games, see if you can go outdoors for 20 minutes before established break time and play the game together.

At some point, bring together the class in a group to re-cap the rules of the games and how you played.

Ask the children if these games are similar to others they have played before?

Ask them what their favourite and least favourite things about the games were.

In small groups or individually ask the children to write down or draw the rules of the games together and make a poster for the classroom. Alternatively, they could present a play in small groups to other classmates demonstrating the rules and how you can play the game of their choice.

3. Activities to help understand the experience of new arrivals in the country and classroom

3.1 Learning a new language

Bring the class into a group activity or circle time and begin speaking in nonsense or pretend words for 30 seconds. Then hand every child a sheet featuring two nonsense words or a nonsense paragraph. Ask them to write or draw answers to the nonsense words or paragraphs on their sheets of paper.

Bring the class into a group discussion about what happened and ask them how they felt. Together, choose some words that describe how they think a child who does not speak the language might feel the first days they come to school. Post these words up in the classroom and have an open board where children can volunteer things they could do to help ease that child's experience.

3.2 What have we learned?

Ask the children what things they have learned about different countries and cultures. These could include greetings, language, games, food and music.

Ask them how they might feel if all of these things were different for them because they travelled to a new place. Try and elicit as many descriptive emotions as possible. If you have undertaken your own activities, or if you used the socio-emotional skills activities described in this curriculum, encourage the children to use the boards and words previously learnt.

Finally, ask the children to break into small groups and make a play, write a song or poem, or draw a poster about how they can help someone who might be a newcomer to their country and classroom.

4 Activities to create a peaceful classroom and constructive learning environment for everyone

4.1 Creating peace in me

As a group, ask the children to reflect upon times that they felt sad, angry, annoyed or frustrated.

Look back on previous activities to explain language, scenarios, actions and reactions the children could have to such emotions.

Make a list of what types of things they can do themselves in order to calm and process these feelings. Put this list on the wall.

Encourage children to undertake these actions if you see any children expressing challenging behaviour during the day. Hand them a book, do deep breaths with them, re-direct to another calming activity, and congratulate them if you see them actively choosing to do these activities themselves if feeling upset.

4.2 Creating peace in my classroom

As an addition to 4.1 ask the children if they feel that having a calm space to process feelings or to calm down would be helpful.

Ask what activities could be set up in such a space. See if you can set up the space in the classroom.

You may create a separate space using a few baskets or cardboard boxes around the classroom. You can provide things to touch, manipulate or read in the calming space.

You might put up a hula-hoop or other shape that children can sit in if they need some quiet time or space.

Children themselves choose if they want to go there. If you have a bigger classroom, a space with a plant and something soft to sit on might help.

Children should never be relegated to this space as a punishment. They can be encouraged to spend time in the calming space if they feel they need it. It should be their decision to leave the space. In doing so, we encourage them to be self-aware about their own coping mechanisms.

4.3 Creating a set of classroom rules

Building on previous activities, as a whole or small group activity, ask children to create rules for the classroom.

Once each rule has been created, write it down on a large piece of paper and keep the rules up in the classroom all year long.

Refer to them and encourage the children to refer to them during the day.

Find more materials at: unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees

These educational materials were developed by Mialy Dermish
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