

Mr. Potato Head Guided Discussion
Respectful Learning/Active Listening
Grades K-5

As for many of you (and hopefully all of our teachers) my first lessons of the school year focus on pre-teaching expected classroom learning behaviors. We teach what it means to actively listen, how to stand in a line, how to transition between learning spaces, how we will call attention back to the speaker, and what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like to be respectful.

Thinking through how to make the discussion about which body parts are involved in being a respectful learner more engaging, I turned to our body parts expert to help, Mr. Potato Head! Instead of my typical anchor chart or verbal exchange that goes along with our Social Emotional Learning curriculum's respect lesson, this year students assembled Mr. Potato Head's body parts to create a poster for the classroom that labels our expectations. They loved it!

Supplies: 12 x 18 construction paper for backing; 8 x 10 construction paper in brown, white, black, pink, red, and additional colors desired; Glue stick; Marker (Note: for larger posters, use a large piece of poster board for the backing and 12 x 18 brown paper for the potato body shapes.)

Preparation: For K-3rd grade, cut out shapes including, potato body, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, mustache, shoes, hat, heart, arms, and optional flower or other fashion features. For 4th and 5th grades, cut out one potato body per table group and provide an assortment of colored construction paper.)

Discussion questions K-3rd grade:

1. Define what a prediction is and holding up the pre-cut brown potato shape, solicit predictions of what the shape is.
2. After revealing that it is indeed a potato *and* the body of Mr. Potato Head, have a student explain what our bodies look like when we are being respectful learners (active listeners/listening rules.) The student then glues body to the poster and counselor or teacher labels "body still."
3. Continue to encourage student ideas and in turn have students explain how each body part is used in being a respectful learner (active listening.)
4. For the youngest grades and our special education classroom, we only labeled the parts used in our school-wide "Give Me Five" expectations (cued by raising a hand in the air): Eyes Watching, Ears Listening, Voices Quiet, Body Still, Minds Thinking. For older grades we added a few more using student suggested language, such as hands in lap, raise hand to speak, and their favorite, "Mustache" questions.

Variation: Fourth and Fifth Graders were challenged to work collaboratively as table groups with 3-5 students to create their own potato head characters and labeling the parts of a respectful learner. Pre-teaching included the discussion above and expectations for collaboration.

1. Discuss design including everyone's ideas.
2. Decide who will make each body part and what colors of paper are needed.
3. Select one table leader to gather the materials.
4. Everyone cuts and creates part of the character.
5. Label the parts of the body and how they are used to be a respectful learner.

ASCA National Standards:

PS: A1.6 Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

PS: A1.8 Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it.