



Home Link

Dear Family:

This year our class is using the *Open Circle Curriculum*, a comprehensive social and emotional learning program that supports elementary school children in developing the skills needed to be good learners and to form healthy, positive relationships with people throughout their lives.

Twice each week during the whole school year, the class will meet in a circle for about 15 minutes. Lesson topics will include listening well, including one another, cooperating, understanding feelings, teasing, recognizing differences among people, getting calm, problem solving, positive self-talk, and more. The goals of the lessons are to create a cooperative classroom environment and to give children the skills they need to solve interpersonal problems and to build positive relationships.

Sometimes your child will have a homework assignment from Open Circle that might require your participation. You can help your child develop the skills we are working on in Open Circle by discussing and practicing them at home. You might ask your child to tell you what we talked about in the last Open Circle Meeting.

You will receive *Open Circle Home Links* periodically to keep you informed. They will include new vocabulary words and suggestions for some children's books that relate to Open Circle lesson topics. You might want to check one or two of these books out of the library to read with your child. For more information about Open Circle, please visit www.open-circle.org.

The *Open Circle Curriculum* was developed by Open Circle at the Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, and is available for all elementary grades. At each grade level, Open Circle addresses the same core concepts and skills in ways that are specifically designed to be developmentally appropriate for students at that age. All teachers who use Open Circle have received special training to implement the *Curriculum* in their classrooms.

If you have any questions about Open Circle, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,



Home Link

Dear Family:

During our first Open Circle Meetings, the class practiced taking their chairs and getting into a circle quietly, safely, and cooperatively. We form a circle so that everyone can see everyone else and be heard. We always leave one space open in case another person would like to join the circle. Everyone is welcome, and no one is ever left out. The Open Circle symbolizes the idea of an inclusive classroom community. Ask your child to tell you how the class gets into a circle.

Students worked on getting to know each other's names in one Open Circle. In order to be able to work well together, they need to know each other's names and how to pronounce them correctly. Ask your child to say the names of as many people in the class as he/she can remember.

In another Open Circle, we discussed and developed some classroom rules that will help to keep our classroom safe, make it a place where students feel cared about, and make it a place where we can do our best learning. Students also learned that some rules are **nonnegotiable**. This means "no choice." They may ask to have these rules explained, and they may ask questions about them, but they cannot be changed. Ask your child to share with you some of the classroom rules that we developed. Ask for an example of a nonnegotiable rule in our classroom. Talk to your child about the rules in your home for mealtimes, bedtimes, and chores.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Henkes, Kevin. *Chrysanthemum*. Greenwillow Books, 1991.

Chrysanthemum loves her name until she starts going to school and the other children make fun of it. A teacher's gentle intervention sheds light on the importance of respecting people and their names.

Henkes, Kevin. *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. Greenwillow Books, 1996.

Lilly learns the hard way that she has to follow the classroom rules and wait for "sharing time" to talk about her new purse.

Shannon, David. *David Goes to School*. Blue Sky Press, 1999.

It takes David a while to adjust to the rules at school.

Swanson, Susan Marie. *The First Thing My Mama Told Me*. Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

A young girl learns to recognize her name when she sees it on labels, cakes, signs, cards, and school cubbies.

Yolen, Jane. *How Do Dinosaurs Go to School*. Blue Sky Press, 2007.

A very unusual student has to learn some basic classroom rules.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In several recent Open Circle lessons, we talked about what it feels like to **be calm** and **how to get calm** when we are upset. When we are being calm, we are also breathing slowly and calmly. Sometimes at school and at other places, it is important to get calm when we are feeling upset, anxious, too excited, or not listening or behaving well. We learned two calm breathing exercises to help us get calm. One is called calm breathing:

- Breathe in slowly and deeply, filling your belly with air like a balloon.
- Breathe out slowly.

A second calm breathing exercise is called flower breathing*:

- Breathe in through your nose, imagining the fragrance of a sweet-smelling flower.
- Breathe out with an “ahhh” sound.

Each person has his/her own way of calming down. However, when strong feelings and signals in our body tell us that we’re losing control, the first thing to do is to stop and take some calm breaths.

Ask your child to teach you the two calm breathing techniques he/she learned in school. Practice them together. Share with your child some times when you might want to use one of the calm breathing techniques. Talk about times he/she might want to use them to calm down. Make a habit of using calm breathing yourself, and encourage your child to use one of the exercises whenever he/she needs to calm down.

Yours truly,

*The flower breathing technique is from the book *Two Flower Breaths: The Art of Teaching Yoga to Children* by Sally L. Cheney.

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Bang, Molly. *When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry*. Blue Sky Press, 1999.

When Sophie and her sister argue, Sophie gets so angry that she feels like a volcano that is about to explode. She runs, she cries, and then she tries to calm down by going to places that soothe her.

MacLean, Kerry Lee. *Peaceful Piggy Meditation*. Albert Whitman, 2004.

Humorous pig characters demonstrate how important it is to use calm breathing in order to think clearly during stressful situations.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle, we have been getting to know each other better. In order for students to become friends and work well together, it is important for them to learn about each other. We played the “Stand Up/Sit Down” game to find out what we have in common, such as how many like to draw, have a sister, like to play with blocks, or know how to swim. Ask your child to tell you what he/she learned from the “Up/Down” game about what the students in the class have in common. You might encourage your child to get to know a classmate they do not know very well during recess or lunchtime.

We also practiced our listening skills and learned the **school listening look**. The school listening look refers to expectations for listening at school. The school listening look means that we:

- sit still.
- sit up.
- look at the person who is speaking.
- pay attention.

It is important to everyone in the class — students, teachers, and visitors — to be listened to when they speak. At home, ask your child to show you the **school listening look** and teach it to you. Practice it by listening to your child. This is a very important lifelong skill, not only for children to develop but also for adults to learn and practice. You might want to encourage all members of your family to become better listeners.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Cummins, Julie. *Country Kid, City Kid*. Henry Holt Books for Young Readers, 2002.

Even though Ben lives on a farm in the country, and Jody lives in an apartment in the city, they have many things in common, including the camp they attend in the summer.

Lester, Helen. *Listen Buddy*. Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

Buddy's poor listening habits get him into big trouble. After his encounter with the dreaded Scruffy Varmint, Buddy tries harder to pay attention to what his parents say.

Walsh, Melanie. *My Nose, Your Nose*. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

In very simple language, the author points out that, although people have many differences, they have many things in common.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle recently, we talked about **nonverbal signals**. A nonverbal signal is a way of communicating without using words. We tried out many nonverbal signals that we already know, such as the signals for *okay*, *no*, *great job*, and *let's be quiet*. We talked about why it might be helpful to have some nonverbal signals in the classroom that everyone agrees to and is clear about instead of using words. The class chose several nonverbal signals that we agreed to use this year in the classroom. Ask your child to demonstrate these signals. Ask your child to demonstrate some other nonverbal signals and have you guess what they mean. You and your child might want to develop your own nonverbal signals to use at home.

At another Open Circle Meeting, we talked about giving and receiving **compliments**. A compliment is saying something good about someone, such as something they do well or something they did that was helpful. Giving compliments in a classroom community is important because it makes others feel noticed and appreciated. Getting a compliment is similar to getting a gift. We learned that when you receive a compliment, you should say, "Thank you!" Each student in the class was given a compliment and practiced responding. At home, be sure to compliment your child often for doing good deeds, being thoughtful, and doing things well. If your child gives you a compliment at home, be sure to say, "Thank you!"

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Aliki. *Manners*. Greenwillow Books, 1990.

Short cartoon-format "essays" discuss manners, giving examples of good and bad manners.

Cheng, Andrea. *Grandfather Counts*. Lee & Low Books, 2003.

Helen and her grandfather use nonverbal signals to communicate with each other until they learn each other's languages.

Curtis, Jamie Lee. *I'm Gonna Like Me: Letting off a Little Self-Esteem*. Joanna Cotler Books, 2002. A little girl gives herself compliments for all the things she does, or tries to do! This book gives children good examples of the behaviors and traits that they might observe and compliment in themselves or in other people.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In a recent Open Circle Meeting, we talked about **additional calming-down activities**. We learned some new strategies to help us calm down when we need to. We discussed straw breathing, blowing bubbles, counting backward, giving yourself a time out, and focusing on something else. Ask your child what strategy helps them calm down and share your own strategies with your child. Knowing how to calm down when necessary is a valuable lifelong skill.

Positive self-talk was the topic of another Open Circle lesson. Positive self-talk is saying encouraging things to yourself. Positive self-talk helps us to try harder and not give up. We can all do things that seem hard at first if we remind ourselves to keep trying and not give up. At school, we can use positive self-talk to encourage ourselves to do our best on a test or in a game, or to try something new.

At home, ask your child to explain to you what self-talk is and give you an example. Encourage your child to use positive self-talk when he/she seems discouraged about learning or trying something.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here is a book that relates to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check it out at the library and read with your child:

Piper, Watty. *The Little Engine That Could*. Scholastic, Inc., 1979.

Positive thinking and persistence result in overcoming a seemingly impossible task. Original source of the familiar phrase, "I think I can, I think I can."



Home Link

Dear Family:

The topic of one of our recent Open Circle lessons was **including one another**. We talked about how it feels to be left out and why it is good to include others at recess, during free play time at school, and in the classroom. We did some role plays about finding ways to include others. Perhaps you could share with your child a time when you were left out and how it made you feel. Ask your child if he/she has ever been excluded or noticed that other children were left out. Encourage your child to find ways to include children who want to join in an activity or a group at play.

In another Open Circle, we talked about **cooperating**, or working together to get something done. We discussed what we can do to cooperate in the classroom, on the playground, in the lunchroom, and at other times during the day at school. We also talked about why it is important to cooperate and what can be hard about cooperating. Ask your child what he/she does to cooperate with his/her classmates at school. Find opportunities at home for your child to cooperate to get something done, and compliment him/her on good cooperation. Encourage your child to cooperate with other children in activities and groups outside of school.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Bloom, Suzanne. *What About Bear?* Boyds Mill Press, 2010.

Bear feels left out when Fox comes along and occupies Goose's attention. Goose thinks of things they can all do together.

Cohen, Miriam. *Will I Have a Friend?* Star Bright Books, 2009.

A little boy worries about connecting to at least one classmate on the first day of school. He finds out how good it feels to be included by others.

Costello, David. *I Can Help.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

A monkey helps a little duck who has lost his way home. Then the monkey gets help

from a giraffe, and the cycle continues. Friends helping friends makes life a little easier.

Davis, Aubrey. *The Enormous Potato*. Kids Can Press, 1998.

A farmer grows an enormous potato that is too large for one person to pull out of the ground. The farmer asks his wife, his daughter, his dog, and his cat to help him harvest the potato. With cooperative tugging, the potato comes out!

Forest, Heather. *The Little Red Hen: An Old Fable*. August House, 2006.

Red Hen would like some help with her baking. When she asks who will pitch in, she hears "Not I!" from Dog, Cat, and Mouse, who are all too busy to participate in the baking project.

Robbins, Jacqui. *The New Girl...and Me*. Atheneum Books, 2006.

The new girl in school has a tough time fitting in, until a classmate takes a chance and makes the first move toward building a friendship.

Scott, Ann Herbert. *On Mother's Lap*. Sandpiper, 1992.

Michael learns that it is a good thing to include his new sibling on his mother's lap.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle we learned about **speaking up**. In order to be able to say what we think or feel and express our ideas and opinions, it's important to be able to speak up. We learned four steps to help us speak up:

- Look at the person or group.
- Speak slowly.
- Speak clearly.
- Say it loudly enough so that everyone can hear.

At home, ask your child to use the speaking-up steps to tell you about his/her day in school. Compliment your child on using the new skills. Encourage your child to use these skills not only at home and in school but in other places as well.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Button, Lana. *Willow's Whispers*. Kids Can Press, Ltd., 2010.

Willow has trouble speaking up in school, which leads to one misunderstanding after another. Ultimately she finds a way to make herself heard.

Lester, Helen. *Hooway for Wodney Wat*. Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Rodney Rat speaks up once he gains some confidence.



Home Link

Dear Family:

Our recent Open Circle lessons have focused on helping students to understand the situations in school that require the help of a teacher or another responsible adult. We learned to identify **Double D behaviors**. These are behaviors that are **dangerous** (someone might get hurt) or **destructive** (something might get broken, damaged, or destroyed; mean teasing or bullying). It is always important for a student to tell a teacher or other adult when they observe a Double D behavior in school. For example, when a classmate is not listening to the teacher read a story, this is not a Double D behavior. However, when a child tosses a pair of scissors across the classroom to another child, that is a Double D behavior and students who observe this action should tell an adult right away.

We also talked about some ways students themselves can begin to deal with situations in response to behavior that is annoying but not a Double D behavior. One way is to **use words**. For example, a student might say, "I was playing with that toy. Please give it back to me." Or, "I don't like it when you make humming noises because I can't hear the teacher. Please stop." Students were assured that they can always come to an adult for help if they cannot deal with a situation on their own.

At home, try to begin identifying behaviors or situations in terms of Double D's. Ask your child, "Is that a Double D behavior?" If it is, compliment him/her on telling an adult. If it is not a Double D behavior, help your child figure out how to handle the situation with words. You also might work with your child to identify responsible adults at places he/she frequently goes outside of school and home whom he/she would be able to tell about a Double D behavior.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Elliott, Laura Malone. *Hunter's Best Friend at School*. HarperCollins, 2002.

Hunter and Stripe are best friends, but sometimes Stripe's behavior is annoying. Hunter tries to help Stripe be "his best self" by suggesting and modeling positive behavior.

Rathmann, Peggy. *Ruby the Copycat*. Scholastic, 2006.

Angela feels annoyed when Ruby starts copying everything Angela wears, says, and does. Ruby finally discovers her own special talent, and students start to copy her.

Shannon, David. *David Goes to School*. Blue Sky Press, 1999.

When David first goes to school, he has trouble following all the new rules. Sometimes his behavior is annoying to others, and other times it is dangerous and destructive.



Home Link

Dear Family:

Dealing with **teasing** was the topic of a recent Open Circle lesson. We talked about how it feels to be teased and how to help someone who is being teased. If you do not like to be teased, one way to try to stop a classmate from teasing is to use words to tell the person to stop. Students were reminded that mean teasing and bullying are Double D behaviors and are not acceptable. Students were encouraged not to tease others if they can see that the person being teased does not like it.

At home, talk to your child about being teased and teasing others. Share with your child a time you were teased and it was okay. Share a time you did not like being teased. Discuss some ways your child can help people who are being teased. Encourage your child to be sensitive to the feelings of other children.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Henkes, Kevin. *Chrysanthemum*. Greenwillow Books, 1991.

Chrysanthemum loves her name, until she starts going to school and the other children make fun of it.

Waber, Bernard. *Ira Sleeps Over*. Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

Ira's older sister teases Ira about bringing his teddy bear to his first away-from-home sleep over.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In a recent Open Circle, we learned that there are both inside and outside **differences in people**. We can see outside differences, such as hair color or height. But we cannot tell just by looking at someone what their interests, skills, feelings, and talents are. To find out what a person is really like, you have to get to know him/her.

At home, have a conversation with your child about the differences in people that we can see and cannot see by just looking at them. What are some things that people wouldn't know about you by merely looking at you? Talk about some ways your child can get to know other people in school.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Lionni, Leo. *Frederick*. Dragonfly, 1973.

Frederick isn't like other mice. Instead of working to prepare for Winter, he likes to write poetry. Others are grateful for his talent when Winter comes and Frederick shares his poems about Spring.

Rotner, Shelley. *Shades of People*. Holiday House, 2009.

A diverse group of children celebrate the fact that, "Our skin is just our covering, like wrapping paper. And, you can't tell what someone is like from the color of their skin."



Home Link

Dear Family:

In a recent Open Circle Meeting, we talked about **feeling words**. Everyone has feelings, and all feelings are okay — even though some feelings make us feel better than others. Feelings are inside us, but sometimes we can tell how someone is feeling by how they look or what they do. We made a list of many feeling words, such as excited, happy, sad, surprised, calm, and upset.

Ask your child to name as many feeling words as he/she can remember. Look at a magazine or newspaper with your child and try to identify the feelings people pictured in articles or ads might have. Use feeling words at home to name how you and other family members are feeling.

Body language was the topic of another recent Open Circle lesson. Body language is a way of communicating with our faces, bodies, or hands instead of using words. We practiced using body language to communicate with each other by using facial expressions and gestures to show that we were cold, afraid, or feeling great. Body language helps us to understand how people are feeling even if they are not telling us with words.

Make a game of noticing body language when you are out with your child. Try to guess how people might be feeling from their gestures, facial expressions, and other body language. You might also watch a television show or look at a magazine with your child and take turns pointing out the examples of body language that you see.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Cain, Janan. *The Way I Feel*. Parenting Press, 2000.

Through art and rhyme, the author describes a range of feelings, from anger and sadness to frustration and fear.

Evans, Lezlie. *Sometimes I Feel Like a Storm*. Mondo Publishing, 2007.

This book describes all kinds of feelings from proud to sad to angry.

Kachenmeister, Cheryl. *On Monday When it Rained*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Different scenarios illustrated by photographs describe one boy's different emotions over a period of seven days.

Menchin, Scott. *Taking a Bath with a Dog*. Candlewick, 2007.

A little girl asks a variety of characters what makes them happy, and then she comes up with her own list of positive thoughts.

Raschka, Chris. *Yo! Yes?* Scholastic, Inc., 1993.

Two boys communicate using body language and very few words.

Rotner, Shelley. *Lots of Feelings*. Millbrook Press, 2003.

Close-up photographs of children's faces illustrate a range of emotions.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle recently we talked about **expressing anger appropriately**. We made a list of some things that make us angry. Anger is an important feeling. Everyone feels angry at times. We all need to learn to control our angry feelings and decide what to do with them. One way to deal with anger is to first calm down and then use words instead of actions to express angry feelings.

At home, talk to your child about dealing with angry feelings. Share with your child some situations that make you angry and some ways you handle anger. Ask your child how he/she expresses anger. Encourage your child to always use words rather than actions to express his/her anger.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Haan, Amanda. *I Call My Hand Gentle*. Viking, 2003.

Hands can do many things, including protect, hug, throw, build. Most importantly, hands can be gentle, even when you feel upset.

Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. HarperCollins, 1962.

Max manages his temper and urge for independence by imagining a wild rebellion.

Vail, Rachel. *Sometimes I'm Bombaloo*. Scholastic Press, 2001.

Katie describes how scary it is to feel "Bombaloo," or not listening or behaving well.

Wells, Rosemary. *Noisy Nora*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 1973.

Feeling neglected, Nora attempts to attract her parents' attention.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle this week, we began a multi-lesson unit on **problem solving**. In the coming weeks, we will be learning to use a three-step process for solving people problems. We began by talking about what a problem is. A problem is something that goes wrong, makes us feel worried or upset, or is a situation in which we need to decide what to do. We all have problems at school — in the classroom and on the playground. We even have problems as a whole class.

To help us learn and remember the problem-solving steps, we use the colors of a traffic signal: Red = Stop. Yellow = Think. Green = Go. In problem solving, we do the same three things that a traffic signal tells us:

RED LIGHT:

- First, we have to **STOP**.
In problem solving, that means we have to calm down. Then we tell ourselves the problem and how we feel.

YELLOW LIGHT;

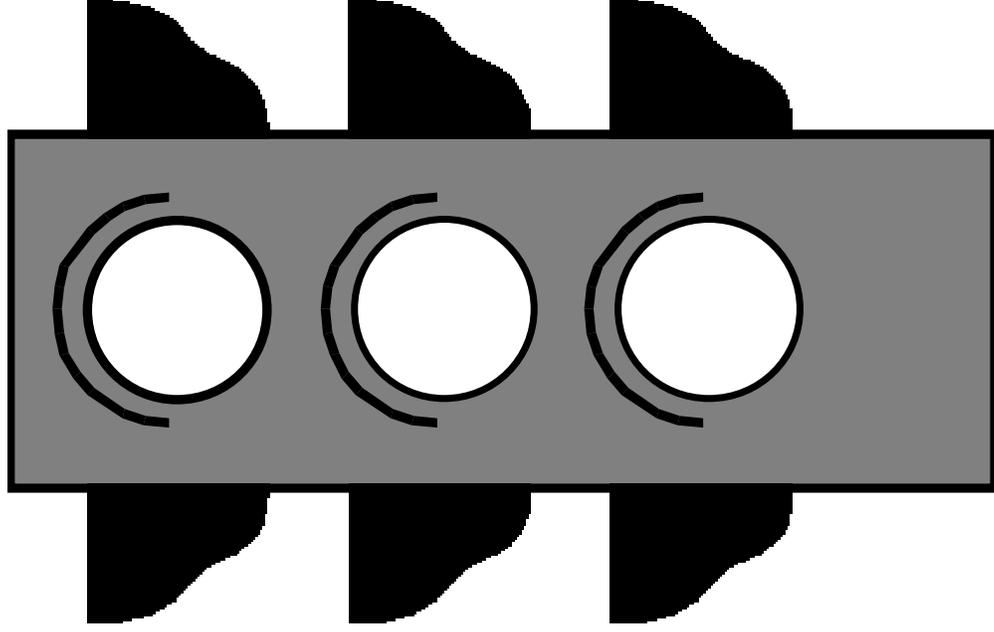
- Second, we have to **THINK**.
In problem solving, that means we have to be careful and think of many different ways to solve the problem and what would happen if we tried them.

GREEN LIGHT:

- Third, we can **GO**.
In problem solving, that means we make a plan and try it.

The problem-solving traffic signal is printed on the back of this sheet. Please post it on your refrigerator or someplace in your home where you can see it often as a reminder to both you and your child to use the problem-solving process to solve problems that come up outside of school. Problem solving is an important skill that your child can use throughout life, not only in school but later on in the workplace and the community.

Yours truly,



RED = STOP

Calm down.

Tell yourself the problem and how you feel.

YELLOW = THINK

Think of many ways to solve the problem and what would happen if you tried them.

GREEN = GO

Make a plan and try it.

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LESSONS 23-24



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle, we are continuing to learn and practice the problem-solving steps that correspond to a traffic signal. Red = Stop. Yellow = Think. Green = Go.

Recently we talked about the red light steps. First, before we can solve a problem, we need to **calm down**. We discussed several ways to calm down, such as deep breathing, counting to 10, going to another place, or asking an adult to help. Then we discussed the importance of being able to **use words to say how you feel and what the problem is**. One way to put a problem into words is to say, "I feel _____ because _____." For example, "I feel frustrated because I cannot cut a circle out of construction paper." Or, "I feel upset because someone knocked over the block tower I was building." Saying how you feel and what the problem is helps you to solve the problem.

Following is a list of books that deal with problem solving. You might want to get a few from the library and read them with your child. While you're reading, talk with your child about how the characters in the books solve their problems. Do they follow the problem-solving steps that we use in Open Circle? Have your child suggest other ways that the character could have solved the problem. Continue to use problem solving at home.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Costello, David. *I Can Help*. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010.

Animal friends deal with a variety of problems.

Elliott, Laura Malone. *Hunter's Best Friend at School*. HarperCollins, 2002.

Hunter figures out how to help his best friend, Stripe, who is annoying everyone at school.

Havill, Juanita. *Jamaica's Find*. Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

When Jamaica finds a stuffed bear on the playground, she must decide whether to keep it or find its rightful owner.



Home Link

Dear Family:

We're continuing to learn and practice the steps of problem solving in Open Circle. The problem-solving steps correspond to the lights on a traffic signal. Red = Stop. Yellow = Think. Green = Go.

We talked about the yellow light steps. First, **think of many different ways to solve a problem**. This is called **brainstorming**. When we brainstorm in class, we think of as many ideas as we can, and we do not say if we like an idea or if it is a good or bad idea until all the ideas have been said.

After we have brainstormed many ways to solve the problem, we go on to the next problem-solving step: **Think of what might happen next if you tried the solution**. For each possible solution, we need to ask if it would be safe and fair. In our discussion, we discovered that there are often several solutions to a problem.

At home, continue to use the problem-solving process with your child. You might also get a few of the following books on problem solving from the library to read with your child. As you read, discuss how the characters solve their problems. Do they think of many possible solutions? Do they think about what might happen next if they tried each solution?

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Howe, James. *Horace and Morris, but Mostly Dolores*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1999.

Three friends solve the problem of finding a club to which they can all belong.

Jones, Rebecca C. *Matthew and Tilly*. Dutton Children's Books, 1991.

Matthew and Tilly are good friends who sometimes experience conflicts.

Masurel, Claire. *A Cat and a Dog*. North South Books, 2003.

When Dog's ball gets stuck in a tree, Cat offers a solution to the problem.

Rankin, Laura. *Ruthie and the (Not so) Teeny Tiny Lie*. Bloomsbury USA Publishers, 2007.
When Ruthie keeps a toy that does not belong to her, she can't stand the strain of telling a lie.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle, we are learning and practicing more problem-solving steps. The problem-solving steps correspond to the lights on a traffic signal. Red = Stop. Yellow = Think. Green = Go.

Recently, we talked about the green light step: **Make a plan and try it.** After we calm down, say the problem in words, think of many different ways to solve it, and think of what might happen next if we tried each solution, then it's time to try out one of the solutions.

We talked about what might happen if we try a solution and it doesn't work. We could try a different solution, try to figure out why it didn't work, or ask for help. In problem solving, it's important not to give up.

At home, use the problem-solving process with your child as often as you can. You might also check out a few of the following books on problem solving from the library to read with your child.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Katz, Avner. *Tortoise Solves a Problem*. Willa Perlman Books, 1993.

Tortoise follows the problem-solving steps to figure out how to design a house for his fellow-tortoises.

Keller, Holly. *That's Mine, Horace*. Greenwillow Books, 2000.

Horace finds and keeps a toy racing car, and then he feels terrible about it. His friend, the owner of the toy car, helps Horace do the right thing.

Kelley, True. *Blabber Mouse*. Dutton Children's Books, 2001.

When a mouse can't stop gossiping, his friends come up with a way to solve the "Blabber Mouse" problem.



Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle, we concluded our unit on solving people problems by creating a problem box for our classroom. Any time that someone would like to suggest a school problem they would like the class to help them solve or that they think the class as a whole needs to work on, he/she can put the problem in the box by drawing a picture of the problem or writing the problem in words.

We also reviewed the problem-solving steps:

RED LIGHT = STOP

- Calm down.
- Tell yourself the problem and how you feel. ("I feel _____ because _____.")

YELLOW LIGHT = THINK

- Think of many ways to solve the problem.
- Think of what would happen if you tried each one.

GREEN LIGHT = GO

- Make a plan and try it.

At home, try to use the problem-solving process with your child often so that it becomes automatic and a habit. Be a role model for your child by using the steps to solve your own everyday problems that come up at home. Compliment your child whenever he/she uses the problem-solving steps.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to problem solving. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Lionni, Leo. *Swimmy*. Pantheon Books, 1963.

A school of red fish has a problem, and a little black fish has a way to solve it.

Waber, Bernard. *Ira Sleeps Over*. Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

Ira is invited to spend the night at a friend's house. Should he bring his teddy bear?
Will others tease him about it?



Home Link

Dear Family:

In our final Open Circle Meeting of the year, we took time to reflect on this school year and share our feelings about Open Circle. We talked about what we liked most about school this year and some things we have learned. We also talked about the skills we have learned in Open Circle and how they have helped us in the classroom, on the playground, and in other places.

Ask your child what he/she has liked best about coming together in Open Circle this year. Ask what he/she has learned in Open Circle that has helped him/her the most. During the summer and beyond, continue to use the vocabulary and skills your child has learned in Open Circle. Keep the problem-solving steps close by, and continue to practice them with your child. Thank you for the support you have given to Open Circle this year by reinforcing at home what your child has learned at school.

Yours truly,