

Dear Family:

Including one another was the topic of one of our Open Circle lessons recently. We talked about how it feels to be left out and how it feels to be part of a group that excludes someone. We also discussed why people exclude others and talked about situations when it might be necessary to not let someone be included. As children get older, they have stronger opinions about who they want to be their friends and how they behave toward each other. Yet it is important in a caring classroom community to find ways to include each other so that we can learn to live and work together. 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 or any of his/her friends have ever felt hurt or angry by being excluded. Encourage your child to try to find ways to include classmates who are being left out on the playground and in after-school activities.

In another Open Circle, we talked about **cooperating**, or working together to get something done. We discussed why it is important to cooperate, and we brainstormed some skills needed for cooperation, such as sharing, taking turns, listening, letting someone organize the activity, and making sure that everyone gets to take part. We also talked about what works against cooperation. Ask your child to name some times during the school day when he/she has cooperated to get something done. Ask him/her to think of some times at home when he/she has cooperated with family members getting something done. Discuss what was helpful and what worked against cooperation at home. Encourage your child to cooperate with his/her friends in activities and groups outside of school.

Best,

Ms. Sullivan

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 them with your child.

Bulla, Clyde Robert, *Shoeshine Girl*, HarperTrophy, 1989

Determined to earn some money, 10-year-old Sarah Ida gets a job at a shoeshine stand and learns a great many things besides shining shoes.

Coy, John, Strong to the Hoop, Lee & Low Books, 1999

When he first gets to the playground with his older brother, James can't play basketball with the pickup team, because he is only 10. When an older player gets injured, James gets the call to play.

DiSalvo-Ryan, DyAnne, City Green, Morrow Junior Books, 1994

Marcy and her neighbor mobilize a community effort to build a cooperative urban garden.

Estes, Eleanor, The Hundred Dresses, Harcourt, Inc., 1974

The popular girls at school exclude Wanda Petronski.

Muth, Jon J., The Three Questions, Scholastic Press, 2002

A young boy asks three questions about how to be a good person. The answers include being compassionate and cooperative at every opportunity.