



The Society for Safe & Caring Schools & Communities
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Supporting a Safe and Caring School— Assembly Script 1 for Secondary Schools

Creating a Safe and Caring School



Note to Principals:

These scripts are designed to be used in assemblies as introduction to the topics in the Safe and Caring Schools Program. The Principal takes a key role in delivering the message in the assembly.

Please read over each script before implementing. You are welcome to adapt the script to suit your school audience.

Assembly Script 1—Topic 1A

Creating a Safe and Caring School

Objectives

This assembly script has the following outcomes:

- to introduce the concept of a Safe and Caring School
- to introduce the ATA Safe and Caring Schools’ mascot and the underlying philosophy
- to help students become aware of the issue of violence
- to develop in students an understanding of the characteristics of a safe and caring school

Materials Required

- a sound system for a CD of music (optional)
- a brightly coloured ball of wool or yarn for the web activity
- an overhead projector and screen

Optional Materials

- Copies of *Supporting A Safe and Caring School: Common Attributes* —for staff members and to send home to parents
- Copies of *Media Violence: The Children are watching* —for staff members or parents
- Copies of *Safe and Caring Schools: Havens for the Mind* —for school staff
- Handouts and balls of yarn for the classroom activities (see attachment)

Introduction

As students gather for the assembly an appropriate song may be played to introduce today’s topic. The Principal should welcome and greet the students as usual for assemblies.

Introduce the concept of the ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools project. Explain that throughout the year, the school will have activities that will focus on the goals of the Safe and Caring Schools project, and teachers will be integrating the ideas into their classroom instruction as well. In your introduction, be sure to touch on the following:

- **the Safe and Caring Schools project was formed because teachers realized that students needed help to learn behaviours that were respectful and responsible. These are behaviours that will serve a student well as they move on in school, graduate and become contributing members of society**
- **teachers realize that students learn better when they feel they are safe, cared about and in a place where their rights are respected.**
- **in a safe and caring school, all the staff members are committed to helping students develop respectful and responsible behaviours —this includes the secretaries, caretakers, teacher assistants, volunteers and anyone who works in the school**
- **these are the topics we will be looking at this year to help us develop a safe and caring school for everyone:**

(Note: **OH 1** can be used here.)

Topics

Creating a Safe and Caring School

Respect

Developing Self-Confidence

Building Self-Esteem in Others

Respecting Diversity

Preventing Prejudice

Managing Anger

Preventing and Dealing With Bullying

Resolving Conflicts Peacefully

Explain here how these topics will be incorporated into the school environment. Some approaches may include: school assemblies, displays in the halls, integrated activities in the classrooms, reminders in daily or weekly bulletins, etc. These activities should be planned by the individual school according to its facility and personnel.

Say: The Alberta Teachers Association created the Safe and Caring Schools project in conjunction with community groups. As a mascot, for the project, they chose a Canada Goose, named “Niska”.

(Display the logo with Niska —OH 2 on the overhead).

Say: There was a reason for choosing a Canada goose as the mascot for this project.

(Read the following story. It’s a well known story used in many organizations to encourage team work.) It might be useful to have two people read the script. One person reads the “fact” and the other reads the “message”. This may help students perceive the underlying meaning of the story.

When you see geese heading south for the winter, or almost anytime they are flying a distance, you know that they travel in a “V” formation. Science has learned why geese fly that way.

As each bird in formation flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird following it. By flying in a V, the whole flock can fly at least 71% faster than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction can get where they are going more quickly and easily if they work together.

When a goose falls out of formation, it feels the resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of flying with the flock.

If we have as much sense as a goose, we will work with others who are going the same way as we are.

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing formation, and another goose takes up the lead position.

It just makes sense to share the hard jobs in a group.

As the geese fly, they honk from behind to encourage those up front.

What do we say when we “honk from behind”?

Finally, and this is important, when a goose weakens, or is hurt or wounded and falls out of formation, two geese also fall out and follow the wounded goose to the ground. They stay with the goose, helping and protecting it, until it is able to fly. Then, they set out on their own or with another formation until they catch up with the group.

If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that.

The Issue of Violence

Say: One of the most important issues for building a safe, cooperative and caring environment in a school is understanding the concept of violence. We all have our own understanding or definition of violence, and it usually involves some form of physical attack. However, the Safe and Caring Schools project has a broader definition of violence.

(OH 3 can be used here)

They define violence as:

- **the actual OR THREATENED use of**
- **Physical, verbal, sexual or emotional power**
- **intimidation or harassment**
- **by an individual or group**
- **which is harmful to the physical, psychological or social well-being of an individual or group**

In other words, violence is not just physically hurting someone; it includes verbal put downs, insults, excluding others, cruel teasing, and racist and sexist comments. Unfortunately, violence is often portrayed as usual or appropriate and even humorous in the media. When someone is cruel or insulting on television, people laugh. But, when it happens in real life, in school or the community, it is cruel and hurtful.

Our main focus for this month will be to become aware of the less noticeable forms of violence in our school, and to put a stop to it.

In a safe and caring school, no one should feel intimidated, harassed or disrespected.

Activity

You will need a group of people for this activity. This could be staff members, or a combination of staff and students —particularly student leaders who might have a role in the safe and caring project. Eight to ten people will work. Be sure the students can see the activity and hear the statements from the participants —if necessary, have someone walk around the circle to each person with a microphone.

It might be a good idea to give your volunteers prep time to think about and even practice this activity before presenting it at the assembly.

This activity is meant to give a visual image of a cooperative web that is formed when people have a common vision.

Say: We're going to have a demonstration now of our vision of a safe and caring school. If we are going to work together for this goal, we need to be clear as to what we are working toward. Listen and watch as these members of your school community talk about and show what a safe and caring community looks like, sounds like and feels like.

Instructions for the Activity

Participants stand in a circle and one person holds the ball of yarn.

The first person winds a bit of yarn around his/her finger. Then the person says what they believe a safe and caring school LOOKS like (e.g. students helping to pick up garbage in the halls), SOUNDS like (people saying “thank you”), or FEELS like (a place where I can be myself). They then call another person’s name across the circle, and throw the ball of yarn to him/her —being sure to hang on to the end of the yarn! This continues (each person is careful to hold onto their piece of yarn) until everyone in the circle has a chance. A “web” of yarn results.

Say: This web shows us that a safe and caring school requires everyone to work together. If one person drops their part of the web, the entire web is weakened. If one side pulls harder than another, tension is created and the web could break. In other words, we are all interconnected, and our actions have an effect on everyone else in the community.

Closure

Say: Today, we are asking you, the students, to join with the school staff in recognizing and responding to violence in our school. I ask you to think about your own words and actions, and whether they can be hurtful or intimidating to someone else. If you see violence taking place, in any form, tell someone who can help —a teacher, support staff or parent.

If the teachers and student council are going to have classroom or school activities or displays that address this month’s topic, mention this as well so that students understand that this is a focus of the month.

Follow-up Activities for the Classroom

1. Have teachers go over the definition of violence again in their classroom with students. Lead a discussion with students about specific examples of violence they have witnessed in the school. Ask students to suggest solutions to these examples.

Teachers should have access to OH 3 for this activity.

In addition, teachers could go over with their students the Root Causes of Violence, to help students understand the underlying reasons for violent behaviour. OH 4 can be used here to guide the discussion.

2. Teachers could ask classes to share their own thoughts on what a safe and caring school Looks like, Sounds like and Feels like. These ideas could be used to create a school vision that would be displayed in the school hallway. Posters could also be created to display in individual classrooms.
3. Teachers could do the web activity in their classrooms (they will need a ball of yarn). The comments students make could be recorded and submitted to the student leadership for inclusion on the poster of the school.
4. Handout #1 could be used in the classroom to explore examples of violence in the media and discuss more realistic consequences than those portrayed on television.
5. The website www.media-awareness.ca has lesson plans for all grade levels on the topic of violence. To find the lessons follow these instructions:
 - go to the site—www.media-awareness.ca
 - click on “English”
 - click on the “For Teachers” at the top of the page
 - on the sidebar, find the section that asks for Grade level and topics. If you click on the arrow for “topics” a list will appear. Scroll down until you find “Violence”. You may see other topics as well that would apply to this month’s topic.
6. Another excellent source for lesson plans is the ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools project website. Go to <http://ata.iomer.com> Enter. Click on “Unit and lesson Plans”. Click on “Topics and Concepts” and go to the “Living Respectfully” topic.

Ideas for Student Leadership Groups

- Create for display in a main area of the school, a “Safe and Caring Vision” poster like the one below. In the circles, write examples of behaviours that characterize a safe and caring school. Teachers could ask for suggestions from their classes (as suggested in “Activities for Classrooms”.) Another adaptation for this idea is to have student leadership members take photographs of students showing safe and caring characteristics, and place these on the “Vision” poster.

- The student leadership group could sponsor a “Catch Someone Doing Good” activity. When a teacher or student sees someone behaving in a safe and caring manner, they could submit that student’s name to the office. Students could be recognized on a weekly basis with names posted for display and receive a small gift (a safe and caring pen or pencil, for example). There could also be weekly draws from all names submitted for a larger gift —a gift certificate to a community business or a larger Safe and Caring prize.

Our Monthly Topics

Creating a Safe and Caring School

Respect

Developing Self-Confidence

Building Self-esteem in Others

Respecting Diversity

Preventing Prejudice

Managing Anger

Preventing and Dealing with Bullying

Resolving Conflicts Peacefully

***Niska* the Safe and Caring Schools Mascot**



What is Violence?

- **The actual or threatened use of**
- **Physical, verbal, sexual or emotional power**
- **Intimidation or harassment**
- **By an individual or group**
- **Causing harm to the physical, psychological, or social well being of an individual or group**

What are the root causes of violence?

- **the absence of healthy, human bonding—lack of good relationships with others**
- **A society that sends mixed messages about our tolerance of violence**
-violence is often glamorized in the media
- **Lack of a personal value system based on respect and responsibility**
- **Poorly managed stress and conflict**
- **Biological or neurological factors**

Activity- Happily Ever After

This activity is found on the media awareness network—www.media-awareness.ca

TV and video games don't tell the whole story. Violent events occur and then everyone seems to recover very quickly and live "happily ever after". What do you think would *really* happen in the following situations?

In a video game...

When you hit someone so they bleed, you get points and win the game.

In real life...

On TV...

When you have a car chase, cars crash and sometimes explode. But no one ever goes back to remove the crashed cars or take care of injured people. Often those in the crash get out and continue the chase on foot.

In real life...

In a rock video...

Kids have a party and wreck the house. No one has to clean up the mess or pay for the damages.

In real life...

In a movie...

The hero can destroy property and kill people, but never has to go to jail or pay for what was destroyed. In fact, people admire the hero even though this has happened.

In real life...