

What's In A Name?

Children need to see your face light up when they walk into the room. Hellos are important. It feels good to be acknowledged. It puts a child at ease. It makes him feel like he matters. Hello is acceptance, a feeling of being included and part of the group. "Hello," is powerful because feeling welcomed allows for more engaged learning. Your greeting to each child sets the tone for the day. Each day. Every day. Even if some of your children arrive before you do, or you are the second teacher in the classroom and scheduled to arrive later in the day, remember the importance of a face-to-face, look 'em in the eyes "I'm so glad you are here" hello.

When you
Enter this
Little room,
Consider yourself
One of
Many special people who
Enjoy learning, laughing and playing together.



Name Games for Morning Circle Time

Say Your Name - The children chant: "Say your name and when you do, we will say it back to you!" Then the first child says his or her name aloud: "Melanie!" The children repeat the name in unison: "Melanie!" This pattern continues all the way around the circle until everyone has had the chance to be recognized by name. Variations: Have the class say the refrain only after every third child. Children can choose what kind of voice they would like to use to say their name—a soft voice, a deep voice, a high-pitched voice, a friendly voice, a spooky voice, etc. - which the children then echo. Or try singing it as a rap or adding hand-clapping and thigh-patting. Children can also clap out the number of syllables in the names. Finally, children may enjoy adding a movement or a gesture to go with their name which everyone mimics, too.

The Wake Up Game - The children sit in a circle and everyone closes their eyes. The teacher begins the game by saying, "Good morning, [child's name]!" That child opens his/her eyes and says, "Good morning, [child's name]!" to anyone in the circle who has their eyes closed. When the person being greeted hears his/her name, s/he opens his/her eyes, returns the greeting, and then greets someone else whose eyes are still closed. This continues until everyone has been greeted.

2-4-6-8! - Here's a loud and rowdy greeting game. Everyone stands in a circle and together the group claps and chants, "2-4-6-8! Who do we appreciate? Mary! Mary! Yaaaaaaaaay - Mary!" While the group chants "Yaaaaaaaaay," Mary walks quickly around the inside of the circle giving everyone a high 5. The children should be ready with their high 5 hand up in the air so Mary can easily move around the circle and get back to her spot before the "Yaaaaaaaaay" is over. When Mary gets back to her spot, the other children finish the chant by calling out her name and perhaps even raising their arms high above their heads as in a cheer. Continue in this way around the circle until everyone has been "appreciated."

Round the Circle Hello - The children stand in a circle and one child is chosen to be the first greeter. The greeter walks (or uses any movement that has been agreed on) around the outside of the circle clockwise and chooses a child by tapping him/her on the shoulder. The tapped child leaves his/her spot and travels (walks, hops, skips, tip-toes, etc.) around the outside of the circle counterclockwise. When the two children meet, they stop and greet each other (using the greeting that has been agreed on—a handshake, High 5, bow, say "Howdy," greet in a different language, etc.). The child who was tapped now becomes the greeter and the other child returns to his/her seat. This continues until everyone has been greeted.

Hit the Floor! - Everyone stands in a circle and chants, "1-2-3-4! Come on, [child's name], and hit the floor! We're so glad you're here today, Hooray, hooray, hooray!" Once a child's name is called, he/she jumps out into the middle of the circle and dances throughout the end of the chant.

Snowball Fight - When the recycle bin is full of paper, this is a fun greeting to try. Give each child a piece of paper (or newspaper) and have them write their name on it. Then have them crumple the paper into a ball (i.e.- "snowball"). Separate the kids into 2 groups on opposite sides. Say, "Go!" and give them 1 minute to have a "snow ball fight" throwing the paper wads back and forth across the line. When it's over, have each child pick up a piece of paper and greet the child whose name is written on it.

Remember, our names are like music to our ears! Don't let the children in your classroom hear their names only when they are in trouble! Greeting children by name makes them feel known, seen, valued and loved.