

The Front Page

Purpose:

To increase counseling awareness through an activity that demonstrates how counseling can be effective in helping people deal appropriately with rumors, gossip, and damaged reputations.

Materials:

Five varying headlines and pictorial cover pages from assorted tabloids laminated on to the front of five standard file folders. Makes sure the pictures and headlines are appropriate for classroom use or discussion. Inside the primary folder (your copy) there should be two sets of written materials. The first set contains a list of questions which ask students to define the following words: News, Rumors, Gossip, and Reputation. The second set of written materials are comprised of "Head line" statements (see below.)

Time: 20-25 Minutes.

Procedure:

Ia. Introduce/re-introduce yourself to the students. Briefly describe your role as school counselor and that you're in their room today to help them better understand why kids and grown-ups sometimes go and talk to counselors for help .

b. Call on volunteers to define the word: "News." Call on volunteers to define the word: "Rumors." No need to necessarily correct anyone at this point, just solicit and listen for a variety of responses.

c. Walk around the aisles and one at a time, show each folder cover to the class. Instruct students to raise their LEFT hand if the headline and matching cover looks like/sounds like its News, RIGHT hand if it looks like/sounds like its a Rumor, or BOTH hands if they're not sure. Go through all five covers.

(Assorted Responses will be offered)

After all folders have been presented, state something like this: "Since not everyone can agree, let me try reading some head lines from a recent paper I've read. Same rules for raising your hands will apply. Raise your LEFT hand if the statement sounds like a rumor, RIGHT hand if the statement sounds like a rumor, or raise BOTH hands if you're just not sure."

(Head line Statements)

1. Mr. Crab (owner of the Crusty Crab) has a crush on Sandy.
2. At one time, President Obama had been on food stamps.
3. Oprah cannot be trusted.

Fifth Grade Lesson #1

4. Mylie Cyrus sings to a pre-recorded sound track.
5. The Jonas brothers are not really brothers.
6. Zach & Cody are actually the same kid.
7. Justin Timberlake's father is a recovering alcoholic.
8. Michael Jackson stole songs from his brothers.
9. Tom Cruise cheated off of a fifth grade spelling test.
10. Simon (American Idol) was heard criticizing his best friend.

Having read these statements (or similar ones) will cause great discussion and reaction with the students. Be sure to listen for words/statements the kids will use as they sort through the materials. Often kids will say things like "Oh that's definitely true! or That's so False!" Note that kids will often endorse headlines as being news if he/she believes the information to be true.

II a. (This is where we start to make the activity a bit more personal.) Let the student's know that it is hard to tell the difference between News and Rumors and that many boys and girls have a hard time telling the difference especially those kids in middle and high school.

b. Next, tell students you have discovered a way that might be useful in helping them learn to tell the difference between the two. Ask if they'd be interested in learning how BUT you'll need some volunteers to help you.

c. Call on the first volunteer to stand up from where he/she were sitting and tell the student that "just for fun" you're going to switch out the celeb's name with the student's name. For example say:

~Who wants to hear about...."Sam"? He has a crush on Sandy!

(Get a new volunteer to stand up)

~Who wants to hear about...."Cynthia"? She stole a song from her brothers!

(Get a new volunteer to stand up)

~Who wants to hear about...."William"? He sings to a pre-recorded sound track!

*(keep all of these statements relatively harmless)

(The kids will become very excited to hear all this information largely because the names are those of people known to them.)

Now, who wants to hear about ...Dr. Nick (YOUR NAME HERE)???? Ex. His dad died in prison (or something else that would be considered personal and none of any one's business.)

(Before their eyes pop completely out of their heads and their jaws drop to the floor...)

Fifth Grade Lesson #1

Announce:

~You can't always tell what is news or rumors. Sometimes people will say that if something sounds true it must be news and if it sounds false it must be rumor...but do you really know? (NO.)

Ask:

~How many of you, once you'd heard about my Dad (insert your information,) thought/felt that you didn't really need to know that about me or my dad?

III a. Call on a handful of volunteers to define the word "Gossip." (Sharing information...THAT USUALLY DOES NOT CONCERN YOU! ie MYOB.)

Inform your students that talking, writing notes, adding to notebooks (slam books,) texting, posting information on websites, voice mail, making phone calls, and leaving messages can be all forms of gossiping.

b. Share with students that when they get to middle school and when they're out walking the field, cruising around at lunch or break, walking from class to class or especially sitting on the bus ride home or walking home from school, that many of their friends will approach them with all sorts of "information." Most likely though the information WILL NOT BE YOUR/THEIR CONCERN.

Inform your students that while in Middle School kids get disciplined for gossiping whether you're the person sharing the information, passing the information, or receiving the information. Discipline might include detentions, suspensions, or even Saturday school! (see negative reputation below)

When your friends ask you: "Do you want to hear what I've just heard?" It's ok to say something like: "I probably don't need to know and if that person needs me to know, he or she can tell me."

This will be very challenging when you start to hear the names of your friends being used by others and nearly impossible to ignore if it's about your enemies!

IV a. Call on volunteers to define the word "Reputation." (What other people hear of you or how other people think they know you based on what they're told or hear)

Gather responses.

State that many boys & girls in MS/HS are very concerned about their reputations. Student's who are known as "Gossipers" (someone who without discretion constantly spreads information that does not affect him/her) often want help from their counselor in fixing his/her reputation.

Fifth Grade Lesson #1

*Share that perhaps the only time that you want to pass along information (rumors) is if it sounds like there might be a safety issue involved: running away from home, using drugs, thinking of hurting self or others.

b. Close session by reminding your students that counselors can help kids figure out the difference between news & rumors largely by first not participating in gossip and secondly by learning how to control their curiosities for other people's business. Counselors can also help restore people's reputations.

Show cover folders again and make a statement about how headlines are made to catch people's attention but if they're people you know, sharing those head lines may ruin YOUR reputation.