

A Sample First Day School Lesson:

Looking Back, Looking Forward, and Being Present

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Adapted from a lesson on silence by Beth Collea, NEYM

Materials:

Medium-sized mixing bowl, unbreakable and clear may be best

What Does It Mean to Be Present? by Rana Diorio

Paper cut into pieces which will fit easily into the bowl (blank index cards work well)

Crayons and/or markers

Themes: Quaker Worship, Community

Opening

- Invite the children to sit in a circle with you and go around the circle making introductions. Welcome anyone new to the group.

- Hand out two pieces of paper/index cards to each child, and ask them to write or draw:

(1) something they want to remember from their summer

(2) something they are looking forward to this year at meeting (or at home, school)

- Invite anyone who would like to share with the group their summer memory and/or hope for the year. Let this be voluntary, and encourage listening to one another.

Exploring the idea of Gathering in the Meeting

These words are for the adult facilitator to share. They are meant as a guide, and you may find your own way to express their meaning —

In our Quaker meeting community, we help each other to hold our experiences, joys and sorrows, big feelings and wonderings by working and worshipping together. We gather for worship. Silence is a tool we use to help us all come together in the Spirit.



[Bring out the bowl. Hold it up and touch the inside surface and the outside surface.]

Our worshipful Silence is like this bowl. When we come to worship, all the Friends add their special inner listening to hold the bowl of Silence together. It is a very strong bowl!

We can put any strong feelings or any problems or any big wonderings into the bowl.

In worship, we invite the Light, the divine presence, God, Spirit, to work on everything we all brought and put into our worshipful bowl.

We listen together in the silence. In the silence, all our experiences, needs, feelings and hopes are held in the Light. None is bigger than another, or more important.

The meeting has room for them all, and holds them all.

Let's add our reflections on the past and hopes for the future to the bowl.

Invite the children to fold their papers and add to the bowl in the center of the circle.

Read the Story: “What Does It Mean to Be Present?”

*We've looked back, and forward — we bring our memories and our hopes into the silence of worship, and with us to this community — But I wonder what it means to be **present**.*

Wonder Together (after the story):

“I wonder what part of the story you liked best?”

“I wonder if you could find yourself in the story?”

“I wonder if there was a part we could leave out and have all the story we need?”

Being Present Together

Give the children each a third paper/card, and invite them to write on it how they are feeling right now, in this moment.

Settle into silence in your circle, and pay attention to how it feels. Listen inside, and write or draw what you are feeling.

Add them to the bowl. Settle back into silence for a few minutes.

Afterward

Make space for the children to share anything they wanted to from those last additions to the bowl — if they choose to do so. This is like joys and sorrows at the end of worship. What is on your heart?

Take the bowl into meeting with you, settle it somewhere in the room, and explain at the rise of meeting.