

Creating a Kimochis™ Classroom



The Kimochis™ Classroom



In addition to using the Feeling Lessons as the primary way to teach social-emotional learning in your classroom, there are many other ways to use Kimochis™ as a teaching tool. We have included some fun ideas to help you create a safe and caring classroom where everyone feels welcome and included. Here are some ideas ... we're sure you will have more!

CLASS COMMUNICATION GOAL

Early Childhood Set a simple goal that your students will understand and can easily express (e.g., "We'll listen for 20 kind words!"). "Catch" students when they make an effort to do the behavior. Keep track on a simple chart (checks on a whiteboard, marks on a chart). Have a classwide celebration when they meet the goal.

Elementary Work with your students to create a communication intention or goal that deserves a class celebration when reached. For example, students have been including more classmates in their games, so they can have 10 extra minutes of recess. Help students to clarify:

- What is the communication goal?
- When will they practice this behavior?
- How will they know they reached the goal?
- How will they celebrate success?

CLASS COMMUNICATOR

Early Childhood/Elementary Most teachers assign classroom jobs. Add "class communicator" to your job list. (In early childhood classes, this may be a job that is more appropriate for an older child.) Some suggestions for the role of the class communicator are:

- Note positive observations made about the way people treat one another.

- Choose a feeling that he would like the class to work on.
- Display the Kimochis™ character of his choice on his desk or allow him to take it home.
- Open a Feeling Lesson by discovering which feeling is tucked inside the Kimochis™ pouch.
- Offer the first solution if the class has a problem that needs to be solved. Naturally, this student can pass on this.
- Be the cameraperson when videotaping lessons or Kimochis™ moments.

KIMOCHIS™ CORNER

Early Childhood/Elementary Create a new learning center that is a cozy spot where the Kimochis™ characters and feelings live and where children can practice their new positive habits. This is a place full of learning opportunities where active learning can take place. Some suggestions for the Kimochis™ Corner are:

- Include active learning opportunities that will encourage children to explore the social-emotional world.
- Show the students the items in the Kimochis™ Corner and have them share ways to use them.
- When individual students or small groups are having emotional moments, ask them to work out the difficulties in the Kimochis™ Corner (initially with your help).
- Be clear that the the Kimochis™ Corner is not a time-out spot or a place where a child "has" to go for misbehaving. It is a "time-away" place that promotes self-regulation, reflection, relaxation, gentle play, emotional literacy, quiet time, rethinking choices and behaviors, and conflict resolution.

Suggested materials for the Kimochis™ Corner (choose items that are appropriate for the age level of your students):

- Bug, Cat, Cloud, Hugtopus, and Lovey Dove
- Kimochis™ feeling pillows and other soft objects: pillows, beanbags, soft chairs
- Kimochis™ Mailboxes (see page 49).
- Recommended, topic-specific literature (see pages 265–270), along with some of your own favorite children's books
- Crayons, markers, and other writing and drawing tools
- Chalkboard, easel, or other large writing and drawing tools
- Sensory tools: sand tray and dragging tools, soft squeeze balls, stress balls, Play-Doh, pipe cleaners or wax-covered string, soft pieces of material
- Music focused on feelings and emotions, CD player, headphones
- Basket full of small, unbreakable mirrors, so students can see their faces in emotion (or hang one in the space)
- An album or wall display of photographs of children expressing different emotions
- Kimochis™ Journals (see page 50).
- A simple photo album of each child in the class, adding pictures throughout the year to document how they learn and grow
- A family photo album: ask families to send in a family photo at the start of the year to compile into a group book

KIMOCHIS™ CHARACTERS AND FEELINGS

Students can use the characters and feeling pillows as puppets throughout the day to talk about their feelings. It can be a helpful first step for students to talk through puppets rather than to talk face-to-face (a giant emotional step for many elementary-age students!). Students can choose pillows to match how they are feeling. Blank make-your-own feeling pillows and washable pens are provided in the Kimochis™

Classroom Kit if a student wants to add a feeling to the collection.

The Kimochis™ characters are also a great way to celebrate success in the classroom. Anytime you observe one of the following, grab one or more of the characters to give a Kimochis™ “Hooray!” to acknowledge positive actions:

- A student makes a kind, helpful choice
- A student who has been struggling with a new skill shows success
- The classroom is cooperative and shows a team effort
- Any individual or group success

FUN WAYS TO PLAY WITH THE FEELINGS

- Hide the feeling pillows around your classroom. Ask finders to share one memory or thought about the feeling they find.
- Tuck a feeling in a cubby or desk. This is a playful, secret way to communicate and connect with students.
- Lend a feeling: Allow students to hold on to or tuck a feeling into their pocket to provide them with a tangible object they can touch and squeeze when they have to communicate a difficult emotional message.

KIMOCHIS™ PHOTOGRAPHS

Early Childhood/Elementary Photographs can be used in the Kimochis™ Corner and other ways around the classroom to reinforce SEL and the Kimochis™ Way:

- Take a photo of a child holding a Kimochis™ character when they make a positive choice (like a photo with Bug after a child makes a brave move). Send the photo home so families become familiar with the new positive social-emotional habits.
- Take photos of individual children or groups of children demonstrating a positive feeling behavior. Display photos on a bulletin board that expands as students' skills develop.

- Integrate photos of Kimochis™ characters in the daily schedule. Every time the teacher refers to the schedule, students are reminded of the Kimochis™ Way.

TAKE A KIMOCHIS™ MOMENT (TKM)

Early Childhood/Elementary Taking a Kimochis™ Moment is a signal that says, “I need time to check in with my thoughts, feelings, or behavior choices.” This is a shame-free tool for both teachers and children. Teach children how to Take a Kimochis™ Moment:

- Teach the signal for TKM. Use both hands to make a T-shape as for “time-out.” This is a cue that “I need to TAKE A MOMENT to regroup.”
- Give examples of how everyone needs to take a moment now and then.
- Younger children will need more prompting to know when TKM is appropriate.
- Teach children how to use a self-regulation strategy to help them through uncomfortable moments. Children will need prompting until they learn what works for them. Be patient and remain calm to send the message that you are confident they can do it!

When a child gives you the TKM signal, acknowledge it with a nod of your head. If needed, prompt the child to use one of the self-regulation strategies listed below. Encourage the child to take a moment in the Kimochis corner. Verbally reinforce children when they practice TKM.

Self-regulation strategies could include:

- Say, “One, two, three; I’m in control of ME!”
- Count to 10.
- Take deep breaths to get oxygen to the brain for clearer thinking. Prompt young children to imitate smelling a flower, then blowing out a candle.
- Hug a Kimochis™ character.
- Talk through uncomfortable feelings with an adult or friend.

- Draw or use another form of creative expression.
- Fish a feeling pillow out of the Kimochis™ Bowl (see page 52) to hold or put in a pocket.
- Say, “I just need a little alone time.”
-

TKM can become a wonderful classroom management tool to quietly redirect behavior without unintentionally shaming children.

KIMOCHIS™ MAILBOXES

Use a pocket chart or make mailboxes to keep in the Kimochis™ Corner. Place the name and a picture of each child on the pockets or mailboxes. Be sure to include a mailbox for yourself and other adults who work with the children.

Early Childhood Encourage children to write or draw Kimochis™ Notes to their friends and teachers (see page 275 for a fun template!). Younger children can dictate the note to an adult. Teaching children to use writing and drawing as forms of self-expression is a powerful positive habit to instill in the early years. Adults can also send notes to children to acknowledge positive actions, words, or efforts. Notes can be used to say:

- “I missed you.”
- “Sorry. Can I have a do-over?”
- “I like you.”
- “I want to play with you.”
- “I am happy we are friends.”
- “I am feeling _____ today.”

Elementary Encourage students to use Kimochis™ Notes to write short acknowledgements to their peers and adults in the classroom (see page 275 for a fun template!). These notes can be reports about positive actions, words, or efforts.

Suggest that students use the Kimochis™ Mailboxes when resolving hurt feelings. Students can write to one another about how they are feeling and ask for what they need or want. Some students

will need your help putting their thoughts and feelings into written words. Putting feelings in writing provides time for emotions to cool down and gives students a chance to reflect and problem-solve. The mailboxes are a nonthreatening way to deliver messages and can be a safe way for children to communicate. Teaching children to use writing as a form of self-expression is a powerful life lesson.

KIMOCHIS™ HELP! NOTES

Elementary The Kimochis™ HELP! Notes provide a way for students to anonymously ask for help with feelings. Read the Kimochis™ HELP! Notes at your Class Meetings and ask classmates to share helpful ways to make a situation better (see page 275 for a fun template!). Students can also create skits to demonstrate tricks and tips that work for them.

KIMOCHIS™ JOURNALS

Early Childhood Ask families to bring in a spiral notebook or staple several sheets of paper together. Let the children decorate the cover. Place the journals in the Kimochis™ Corner and encourage children to draw their feelings. After the children have drawn something, ask them to tell you about their feelings and record their thoughts. If the feelings are negative, coach the children through their uncomfortable emotions. When children want to use their journals to record positive thoughts or feelings, celebrate by acknowledging their positive habits. Additional applications for the Kimochis™ Journals:

- Use the journal during family conferences to show a child's social, emotional, and behavioral progress.
- Send the journal home and ask families to write notes to share during Kimochis™ Circle Time. Ask families to identify specific behaviors their child displayed. For example, "Casey was patient while I was feeding Samuel." Send a letter home describing

what kinds of behaviors you would like parents to record. Go to www.kimochis.com for a sample letter to send home with the Kimochis™ Journal.

- Use the journal to observe and record your own observations about a child's social, emotional, and behavioral growth and to note who might need additional assistance.

Elementary During the first weeks of school, have students create Kimochis™ Journals—several sheets of paper folded and stapled will do the trick! In it, students can record thoughts, feelings, and commitments to act with character. Reassure students that you will never make them read their entries aloud unless they want to. This is a private tool for students to explore thoughts and feelings. Throughout the school year, you can use the Kimochis™ Journals:

To create a feeling book: Have students dedicate a few pages to each feeling. For example, students might write "I feel sad" at the top of a page. Students can then write about things that make them feel sad there. They can draw pictures or add photos. Extra pages for each feeling provide a safe place for students to scribble, write, draw, and be with their feelings.

To connect individually with your students: Use it as a back-and-forth, nonverbal tool. Start the "conversation" with a sentence mentioning a concern or celebrating a success. For example, "Dear Joe, I notice you have been raising your hand more in spelling. I'm glad to see you pushing yourself. I know you don't always feel comfortable speaking in class. Please write back. Mrs. Dodge."

To assist in parent conferences: Ask your students to choose a section of their journal you can share with their parent(s) at their conference. If you know a parent has been concerned about a social and

emotional area of their child's life, see if you can create a class assignment on this topic so you can explore how the child is doing. Help your students understand how journaling can lead to getting the help they need from grown-ups.

To create family connections: Students can do back-and-forth journaling with family members by starting a written conversation. Suggest a prompt, such as, "What is your least favorite feeling and why? How do you manage this feeling?" or "What one feeling would you most like to improve how you communicate? How would that change your life?" Have students write one of the prompts in their journal and take it home to share with a family member. Suggest that they keep the written "conversation" going for at least five minutes without talking.

To notice and admire character traits: Have students write observations about people they admire. Ask them to pinpoint what they admire and to write about how they might emulate one of the character traits. You might give a prompt, such as, "Think about who in your life makes people feel comfortable or good about being themselves. Write about why you think this person sets people at ease and how you might develop this quality."

To explore an emotion: Ask students to write about what they observe that seems to help (or not help) people when in a strong, upset emotion. For example, give students the writing prompt, "I notice that when people feel mad, it helps to ...". You can also describe a worrisome situation and have your students write their reaction to it. Do they share your concerns? Why? What is one thing they could say or do to make the situation better?

To check on friendships and feelings at school: Periodically have students write one positive

thought along with a wish. This helps students think about what is working in their lives as well as what they would like to change. You will no doubt see a pattern in the wishes. Discuss them at a Class Meeting. Here are some suggested writing prompts:

"It is going well with my friends because ..."

"I wish ..."

"School work is going well because ..."

"I wish ..."

"I like that my teacher ..."

"I wish ..."

"One thing I like about my school day is ..."

"..."

"I wish ..."

To help friends problem-solve or heal hurt feelings: Suggest that two students use the back-and-forth journaling technique. Have one begin the written conversation with the question "What are you feeling?" The only reminder your students will need is to be brave and kind. Working in the Kimochis™ Corner can give students privacy, which tends to open up communication. You will be surprised how far and deep students can go when you change how they communicate. Reassure students that their written exchange is between them only and does not have to be read by you. Some students may choose to show you what they wrote or may be interested in reading it at a Class Meeting.

To share at Class Meetings: Students can choose to share any section of their journal at a Class Meeting. Some people are more comfortable sharing when their words are written. You might use the Kimochis™ Bowl of Feelings to provide visual aids for students to consider how they feel about what they hear. For example, "I feel sad that I didn't know you were feeling left out at recess."

KIMOCHIS™ BOWL OF FEELINGS

Early Childhood Place all of the Kimochis™ feelings pillows in a bowl in the Kimochis™ Corner. Fun ways to use the Kimochis™ Bowl of Feelings:

- Build emotional literacy by pulling feelings out of the bowl and talking about their meaning.
- When someone has a feeling story, invite them to pick the feeling from the bowl.
- When a child is upset, invite that child to find a feeling in the bowl that can make her feel better.
- When a shy child is feeling left out, help the child find the Shy or Left Out feeling from the bowl. Find the Friendly and Brave feelings and ask to trade. Coach the child through the shy or left-out feelings and help her move to the new feelings of friendliness and bravery.
- Place one feeling (for example, Grateful) in the bowl and pass it around during Circle Time. Have children name things that they are grateful for, such as family, friends, school, home, food. Encourage them to move away from naming material possessions so they begin to develop an “attitude of gratitude.”
- When children have hurt feelings or a conflict, bring them together and help them find the Kimochis™ feeling(s) they are experiencing. Coach them to let go of the negative feelings and come out on the other side with positive feelings and forgiveness. Discuss what they have learned and what positive choice they might make next time.
- Encourage children to share personal stories and pick the feelings from the bowl that might have resulted from those experiences. For example, a new brother or sister may elicit happy, loved, jealous, or left-out feelings. Coach children through those feelings.
- Share your ideas at www.kimochis.com.

Elementary Put all the feelings pillows in the Kimochis™ Bowl in a special place in your classroom to help build “feeling” vocabulary, invite spontaneous conversations about feelings, and work through conflicts. There are many ways to use the Kimochis™ Bowl of Feelings. Here are some ideas to get you started:

During Class Meetings, you can use the feelings in the bowl as prompts to start conversations.

- Talk about upsetting situations. “Who would like to share a feeling that you would like some tips from friends on how to handle better?” Ask volunteers to describe a situation that is upsetting. Have classmates talk about the way they might choose to handle the emotional moments.
- Talk about how feelings affect relationships and school performance. “If you could learn to communicate one feeling calmly and nicely, which would you pick? How would it help you with your friendships? In school? At home?” Have students create shows to demonstrate the way they manage this feeling.
- Share a personal success story. “Raise your hand if you want to share an emotional moment you handled well or are proud of.”
- Share admiration for others. “Does anyone admire someone for handling an upset feeling with character? Who wants to share?”
- Invite a student to apologize for how an upset feeling was communicated. Offer the student a chance to redo the moment.
- Express gratitude for a compassionate and kind action and point out related feelings.

Use the Kimochis™ Bowl to resolve conflicts:

- Place the bowl between the students involved in the conflict. Have each student choose the feeling(s) that best describes how the conflict makes them feel.
- Students do not need to verbalize but can simply show their friend(s) the feeling. Often this simple visual of giving a feeling rather than saying what they feel makes children feel safe and more inclined to apologize and move on.
- Guide the problem-solving by naming the feeling and then asking, “I know you were feeling both mad and sad, but is there anything you wish you had done differently?”
- After each student has a turn to explore his own feelings and has reflected on his words and actions, suggest that the students redo the moment in a way that will make them both proud.
- For many students, it's best if you do not watch; instead, casually check in later to see if everything worked out.

During independent or small group work, use the Kimochis™ Bowl to predict what feelings might get in the way of working cooperatively and responsibly:

- “We might get mad if everyone thinks their idea is the best and no one will give in.”
- Ask students to create shows to act out their best ideas for handling mad feelings.

The Kimochis™ Bowl can serve as a prelude to unstructured play to help students prepare for emotional moments:

- This is the favorite time of day for many students, but it can also be a challenging time. So get them talking and thinking about feelings before they have free time.
- Allow a few minutes after unstructured playtime for students to identify feelings they had during play. Ask students to share how they handled those emotional moments.

Similarly, the Kimochis™ Bowl can introduce structured classroom activities or learning units:

- Use the bowl of feelings to predict what emotions might challenge the learning or make the lessons less fun.
- Decide as a class what to say and do should these emotions arise.

