
The New Player

Classroom Guide

Every team needs someone who sees the game with fresh eyes

CASEL Competency:	Relationship Skills
Grade Level:	Pre-K–4
Duration:	40–50 minutes
Category:	Sports & Teamwork

Learning Objectives

- Understand how it feels to be new and not yet belong
 - Learn that INCLUDING someone is one of the most powerful things you can do
 - Discover that new perspectives strengthen the group
 - Practice welcoming and including others proactively
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Overview & Preparation

Key Vocabulary

New • Include • Welcome • Belong • Team • Nervous • Invisible • Reach out • Role • Perspective

Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- Welcome card materials
- Name tags or team badges
- Paper and crayons
- Optional: team pennant materials

Before Reading

Connection Question

Remember a time when you were the new person. What helped you feel like you belonged? What made it harder?

Background Building

The hero joins a team where everyone already knows each other. They feel invisible — nobody passes to them, nobody explains the inside jokes. They try too hard, make a mistake, and want to disappear. Then ONE teammate reaches out — explains the plays, includes them in the huddle, passes them the ball. That one person changes everything. The hero finds their role — and the team is stronger because of their fresh perspective.

During Reading — Pause Points

- **When the hero feels invisible — nobody talks to them** — The hero is right there but nobody sees them. What does "invisible" feel like? Have you ever felt that way?
- **When one teammate reaches out and includes the hero** — ONE person made the difference! They didn't wait to be told — they just included the hero. Why is that so powerful?
- **When the hero finds their unique role on the team** — The hero found their spot! They brought something the team didn't have before. What do NEW people bring to a group?

Discussion Questions

1. The hero felt invisible when they first joined. What can WE do to make sure nobody in our class feels invisible?

↳ What's one specific thing you could do tomorrow?

2. ONE teammate changed everything by reaching out. Why does it only take one person to make someone feel like they belong?

↳ Have you ever been that one person for someone else?

3. The hero brought a fresh perspective that made the team better. Why is it good to have people who see things differently?

↳ What do new students bring to our classroom?

4. What's the difference between being ON a team and BELONGING to a team?

↳ How do you know when you truly belong somewhere?

Facilitation Tips

This story hits hard for children who are currently "new" or who have experienced exclusion. Be aware of classroom dynamics. After this lesson, create concrete inclusion rituals (welcome buddies, lunch partners, etc.) so the lesson becomes lived practice.

Emotional Payoff

The invisible new kid becomes a valued team member — not by changing who they are, but by finding their unique role. And the team discovers they were incomplete before, because every fresh perspective adds something the group didn't know it was missing.

After Reading Activities

Welcome Card Workshop

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Card stock, markers, stickers

Create welcome cards for hypothetical (or real!) new students: "Things I wish someone told me when I was new: ____." Include: one fun fact about the class, one tip, one kind message. Keep a stash for when new students arrive.

The Inclusion Circle

Duration: 10 min | Materials: None

Stand in a tight circle, arms linked. One child stands outside. The circle practices OPENING UP to let them in — making space, calling their name, shifting over. Discuss: how did it feel to be outside? How did it feel when the circle opened?

Fresh Eyes Walk

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Paper, pencils

Walk around the classroom as if you've never been here before. What do you notice that you usually ignore? Write 3 "fresh eyes" observations. Discuss: this is what new people bring — the ability to see what we've stopped noticing.

Writing Prompts

- Write a letter to a new student who will join our class. What do they need to know? What will they love?
- Draw the moment the hero went from feeling invisible to feeling like they belonged. What changed?
- Write about a time someone included you. How did that one moment change everything?

Home Connection

Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we read "The New Player," about joining a team where everyone already knows each other — and how ONE person including you changes everything. Your child practiced welcoming, including, and recognizing that new perspectives make groups stronger.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Ask your child: "Who is new at school right now? How could you include them this week?"
- Share a story about a time YOU were the new person and what helped
- Role-play: "What would you say to someone sitting alone at lunch?"

With warmth,

Your Child's Teacher

Related Books

- The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig
- Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson
- New Shoes by Susan Lynn Meyer
- The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi