

Community Problem Solving Role Play – Shopping Centre Nuisance

BACKGROUND: The incident happened as follows:

At the small local shopping centre close to the school, there has been an ongoing problem involving a group of between six to eight students hanging around during school lunch break times. They tend to sit on the low walls along the path leading to the shops.

An elderly shopper, a shopkeeper and a local resident have made complaints to the school separately with little improvement being made and when it has it has only been for a short time anyway. They have now asked that they all meet the school Head Teacher together to sort this out once and for all.

The students conduct ranges from spitting and swearing through to verbal abuse, particularly towards the elderly residents visiting the shops. Despite litter bins in the vicinity, they also dump their food wrappers and empty drink bottles in the flower beds, making them look a mess and requiring regular clean ups.

The shopkeeper says they have suffered a substantial reduction in takings over the period the students are hanging around. All the complainants say they get nothing but verbal abuse when they have confronted the students about their conduct.

The elderly resident says they and their friends have stopped going to the shops over the lunch period through fear of abuse and insults, which is really inconvenient as they used to meet up for lunch in the local café at times. Although nobody has been subject to any physical attack, they do feel threatened by this group.

The students have not been identified, but it is clear that they are from the school which is only about 500 metres away from the shops.

This whole thing is beginning to cause a real drain on the school's time so the Head Teacher has decided to call this meeting to try to address the issues and solve the problems.

Meeting Participants:

1. **Mr/Mrs Johnston** - 72-year-old Resident who lives nearby
2. **Mr/Mrs Marshall** – Super-mart manager and owner
3. **Mr/Mrs O'Connor** – A middle aged concerned local resident and support person for Mr/Mrs Johnston
4. **Mr/Mrs Phillips** – Head Teacher

SHEET 1

Mr/Mrs Johnston

See background overleaf

Mr/Mrs Johnston – 72-year-old Resident who lives nearby

(Use your own gender for the role):

You are angry and make this very clear when **you strongly express your emotions**. You say that you and your friends now avoid going to the shops and café at lunch times because the students (mainly boys) are always rude and abusive to you all when you pass them. **You do tone them down when asked to by the facilitator.**

You think that some young people today have no respect for their elders and their parents don't care either. If you were rude to an adult when you were a kid, you would get a slap round the ear and another from your father if he found out what you had been up to.

You also have sympathy with the problems this is causing to the shopkeepers and their loss of earnings.

You believe that the school are not taking ownership of the problem and that this needs to be positively addressed if this unacceptable situation is going to be resolved.

You listen to the views of others and move along with the consensus of the group, as you want things to improve.

Please do not exaggerate your role and make it difficult for the facilitator to conduct the circle. Most such meetings run fairly smoothly without extreme behaviours.

SHEET 2

Mr/Mrs Marshall

See background overleaf

Mr/Mrs Marshall – *Super-Mart manager and owner*

(Use your own gender for the role):

You are at your wits end and really hope the meeting is going to help. Although your loss of earnings isn't as bad as some (especially the Café), you have been adversely affected and feel sad for those it impacts upon the most.

You are fairly sure that all of the parents of the group of students are probably your customers too, and that if they knew about their child's behaviour they would be upset.

You want to sort things out for the sake of everyone and set about trying to help reach some kind of agreement with the Head Teacher that will hopefully put an end to it all.

Please do not exaggerate your role and make it difficult for the facilitator to conduct the circle. Most such meetings run fairly smoothly without extreme behaviours.

SHEET 3

Mr/Mrs O'Connor

See background overleaf

Mr/Mrs O'Connor – A middle aged concerned local resident and support person for Mr/Mrs Johnston

(Use your own gender for the role):

You have a lot of sympathy about the upset and distress being caused to the elderly residents and shopkeepers.

You are here to both support Mr/Mrs Johnston and to also help to find a way of solving this problem, which you feel simply cannot be allowed to continue.

You are one of the local residents who carry out the regular clean-up of litter from the flower beds, which used to be so pretty. They are now being ruined when the students often trample them while messing around together.

You think the school needs to take full responsibility and maybe ban them from gathering there and instead provide an area away from the shops where these students can gather at lunch times and have some level of supervision.

You hope this unacceptable behaviour by the students will now be addressed urgently and positively by the Head Teacher and bring it to an end for the sake of all affected.

Please do not exaggerate your role and make it difficult for the facilitator to conduct the circle. Most such meetings run fairly smoothly without extreme behaviours.

See background overleaf

SHEET 4

Mr/Mrs Phillips

Mr/Mrs Phillips – Head Teacher

(Use your own gender for the role):

You readily agreed to hold this meeting despite feeling a little tense about it. You have asked a trained member of staff to run the meeting in the form of a 'Community Problem Solving' circle, to leave you free to participate fully.

You understand that this problem needs to be addressed urgently and decisively by the school and accept that these are your students on lunch break from the school. So, **you do not hesitate to take full responsibility**, saying this is why you agreed to hold this meeting.

Having already given a lot of thought to this problem prior to attending, and after listening to the views of the other participants, you tell them you will do the following:

1. Allocate a member of staff to attend the area each lunch break for the next two weeks to both identify the students involved and inform them that they must no longer gather there.
2. Provide a benched seating area on the school grounds where students will be encouraged to gather at lunch times and can be supervised.
3. Instruct the students to just make their purchases from the shops and immediately return to the school with them.
4. Arrange for ad-hoc checks on the area for the following two weeks beyond those above.
5. Re-convene this meeting in about six weeks time, to review how things are going and if necessary take any further steps.

Please do not exaggerate your role and make it difficult for the facilitator to conduct the circle. Most such meetings run fairly smoothly without extreme behaviours.

FACILITATOR SHEET

See background overleaf

Your Head Teacher has decided to call this meeting to try to address the issues outlined overleaf and solve the problems. **He has asked you as a trained member of staff to facilitate the meeting as a 'Community Problem Solving' circle.**

You understand how important it is to **stay entirely neutral** in your role as a facilitator and **not to express your own opinion or make any judgements.**

You have spoken to and invited the following meeting participants:

1. **Mr/Mrs Johnston** - 72-year-old Resident who lives nearby

Is angry and made this clear when you contacted him about the meeting. Tells you that they and their friends now avoid going to the shops and café at lunch times because the students (mainly boys), who are always rude and abusive to them all when you pass them. He desperately wants things to improve.

2. **Mr/Mrs Marshall** – Super-mart manager and owner

At their wits end and really hope the meeting is going to help. Although their loss of earnings isn't as bad as some (especially the Café), they have been adversely affected and feel sad for those it impacts upon the most.

3. **Mr/Mrs O'Connor** – A middle aged concerned local resident and support person for Mr/Mrs Johnston

They have a lot of sympathy about the upset and distress being caused to the elderly residents and shopkeepers. Attending to both support Mr/Mrs Johnston and to also help to find a way of solving this problem, which they feel simply cannot be allowed to continue. Thinks the school needs to take full responsibility.

4. **Mr/Mrs Phillips** – Head Teacher

Feeling a little tense about the meeting and asked you to run the meeting to leave themselves free to participate fully. Understands that this problem needs to be addressed urgently and decisively by the school and accepts that these are your students on lunch break from the school. Says they will not hesitate to take full responsibility, saying this is why they agreed to hold this meeting.

Mr/Mrs
Johnston
Elderly Resident

Mr/Mrs
Marshal
Shop Owner

Mr/Mrs
O'Connor
Concerned
Resident

Mr/Mrs
Phillips
Head Teacher

Mr/Mrs
Johnston
Elderly Resident

Mr/Mrs
Marshal
Shop Owner

Mr/Mrs
O'Connor
Concerned
Resident

Mr/Mrs
Phillips
Head Teacher