



## LESSON PLAN: IT'S ALL IN A NAME

**OVERVIEW:** This lesson focuses on what names are, why they are important to us, and what the differences are between names that feel good to hear, and names that feel bad to hear (Put-ups vs. Put-downs). It provides students the opportunity to define for themselves what they like and don't like to be called.

### OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to describe what their name means to them.
- Students will be able to describe how it feels when names are used as Put-ups or Put-downs.
- Students will be able to identify/assert what they do and do not want to be called in the classroom.
- Students will be able to use names that make others feel good.

**AGE/EXPERIENCE LEVEL:** Adaptable for K-5 (see suggestions in Adaptations section below)

**TIME:** 1-2 class sessions, 30-45 minutes each

**MATERIALS:** *Put-ups vs. Put-downs T-Chart*, copied as needed; chart paper and markers; *"I want to be called/I don't want to be called" Handout*, copied as needed; pencils

### PROCEDURE:

#### Part 1 – Think-Pair-Share (10-15 minutes)

Ask the students as a group to take a minute to think about the following questions:

- Who gave you your name?
- Do you know why it was chosen to be your name?
- What do you especially like about your name?
- Do you have any nicknames that you like to be called?



Students then pair up and take about five minutes per student to share their answers to the four questions with their partner. When both students have shared with one another, the whole group comes back together and each student introduces their partner and shares some highlights of what they learned about their partner's name.

**Part 2 – Group Discussion (5-10 minutes)**

Following the think-pair-share activity, lead a group discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- What did you learn about your classmates today that you didn't know before? What were some similarities or differences in people's answers to the questions?
- Why do you think most people have a story about their own name and where it came from?

Point out to students that even when we don't know the exact history of our name, often we know at least some information about how or why it was chosen. Suggest to students that names are very important to people because often that is one of the first things people know about us, and it is something that stays with us our whole life.

Follow up the discussion with two more questions:

- Can you remember a time when someone called you the wrong name or said your name incorrectly?
- How did that feel and what did you do?

**Part 3 – T-Chart (10-15 minutes)**

When students have had the chance to think about and answer the last question, introduce to students the terms Put-up and Put-down and ask them to think about what those words might mean. Lead students in filling out the *Put-ups vs. Put-downs T-Chart* (attached) that has qualities of Put-ups on one side and qualities of Put-downs on the other. Encourage students not only to think of examples of Put-ups and Put-downs, but also to include information on the chart about how those words make us feel or act when we hear them. The chart can be done as a large group or individually, or a combination of both.

Upon completion of the chart, review with students that when someone uses a name we like, or says something kind to us, they are using a Put-up because we end up feeling good afterwards. Tell students that when someone uses a name we don't like, or says something unkind, they are using a Put-down because the result is that we feel bad afterwards.



#### Part 4 – Handout (10-15 minutes)

Inform students that it is important to work together to help people feel good about themselves because it makes the classroom a nicer place for everyone to be. Let students know that they can help one another feel good by only using names and words that are put-ups, and that people want to be called.

Distribute the “*I want to be called/I do not want to be called*” Handout (attached), and ask students to identify the names and words that feel good to them (for example, their own name, a nickname they like, “champ” or “buddy”), and the names and words that don’t feel good (for example, their name mispronounced, a nickname they don’t like, “loser” or “jerk”).

Students’ preferences should then be displayed in the room for everyone to see, and can be added to or changed as students think of more names/words they like or do not like to be called.

#### ADAPTATIONS:

**For lower grade levels:** Send home a pre-lesson dialogue sheet for parents/guardians to use in preparation for the Part 1 discussion of the origins of students’ names. Instructions could read, “In preparation for our lesson about the importance of names on (date), please talk to your child about where your child’s name comes from, and why it was chosen.”

Students can talk about their names in groups of 3 or 4 instead of in pairs, or Part 1 of the lesson can take place as a large group discussion so that the teacher can offer more support to students by asking the questions one at a time and helping create connections between students’ stories.

In Part 3 of the lesson, the teacher can define Put-up and Put-down for students prior to completion of the *Put-ups vs. Put-downs T-Chart*.

Completion of the *Put-ups vs. Put-downs T-Chart* can take place in a large group, with the teacher recording students’ ideas on chart paper

Part 4 can be done as a large group circle activity, with each student sharing one name they want to be called and one that they don’t, and the teacher recording the information on a large chart to be displayed in the room.

Part 4 can be sent home as homework, to be worked on with a parent/guardian.

**For higher grade levels:** In Part 1 students can write the answers to the four questions in a paragraph prior to engaging in the pairing and sharing part of the activity.



During the discussion in Part 2, ask students to brainstorm answers to the question, “Why are names so important to us?” and let them do the work of bridging the questions answered in Part 1 to the idea that names are powerful words that can be used both to boost up or bring down an individual.

Students can fill out the *Put-ups vs. Put-downs T-Chart* on their own first, and then the group can come back together and share their ideas.

When students fill out the “*I want to be called/I don’t want to be called*” *Handout*, ask them to write a brief reason why they do or do not like to be called each of the names/words that they come up with.

Students can write a persuasive paragraph about the importance of using put-up names, and why the class or the school might adopt a “Put-ups Only” policy.

**EXTENSION/ASSESSMENT:** Follow this lesson with an opportunity for students to each create their own “Put-up Bag,” which they can decorate and display somewhere in the room. Students are encouraged throughout the day to create Put-ups for one another that they can place (anonymously or not) in another person’s bag when they have something kind to say about them.

Use the discussion of the origins of our names as a starting point for students to begin writing an autobiography. Description of how they got their name can kick-off the story of their life; students can get creative and bring photos or draw illustrations to go along with their written work.

Literature suggested for extension of lesson themes (see attached literature supplement for book descriptions):

*Chrysanthemum*

by Kevin Henkes (PreK-2)

*My Name Is Maria Isabel*

by Alma Flor Ada (PreK-2, 3-5)

*Pinky and Rex and the Bully*

by James Howe (3-5)

*Funerals and Fly Fishing*

by Mary Bartek (3-5)



celebrate  
**KINDNESS**

NO NAME-CALLING WEEK  
**GLSEN**<sup>®</sup>

Put Ups

Put Downs



celebrate  
**KINDNESS**

NO NAME-CALLING WEEK  
**GLSEN**<sup>®</sup>

I Want To Be Called

I Don't Want To Be  
Called