

Authority versus Power

by
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Lesson Description: This formative lesson focuses on developing an understanding of the concept of authority. Students will identify and role play scenarios in which people are acting with power and in which they are acting with authority. The essential questions are what is authority and how does it differ from power.

Grade Level: 2nd

End of Cluster Expectation (Benchmark) Addressed: Civics 1: Students will understand that positions of authority, whether elected, appointed, or familial, carry responsibilities and should be respected.

Focus Question: What is authority? What is the difference between authority and power?

Assessment: The assessment will be ongoing and embedded in each day's lesson. The students will be informally assessed by their participation in group discussions, the way they interact with their classmates, and in the way they respond in their journal after *The Cat in the Hat* book is read. Formal DSTP styled assessments are attached to the lesson.

Objectives:

- The students will identify scenarios in which people are using power.
- The students will act out skits in which people are acting with power and with authority.
- The students will identify the differences between power and authority.

Prior Knowledge or Skills Needed: At this point, students should be able to identify people who have responsibilities and to identify what those responsibilities are. They also have learned about leaders in their home (parents), school (teachers, principals), and in their communities (police officers, firemen,). This forms a bridge of knowledge into the concepts of power and authority.

Time to Complete: Three 45 minute periods

Materials Needed:

- Note cards for scenarios and role playing
- Journals
- Pencils
- *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss

Procedures:

Day One

1. Write the word POWER on the board. Tell the students that today you are going to talk about power and how people use it. Tell them that sometimes people have a right to tell others what to do and sometimes they don't. Write on the board a definition of the word power: if one person makes another do something, that person is using power.
2. Tell the children you are going to play the “thumbs up, thumbs down” game. Write the scenarios below on note cards. Have a child come to the front of the room and pick a note card and read it. If the scenario shows a person acting on his/her own the class should put their thumbs up. If the scenario shows a person acting because someone had power over him/her, the class should put their thumbs down. Stop and discuss each scenario.

Scenarios

- a. John is going swimming after school.
- b. Julia's mother made her wait an hour after eating before going in the pool.
- c. Rich could not watch the baseball game because his brother kept changing the channel.
- d. Tommy gave a dollar to her friend to buy a snack
- e. Taylor's father said she could not go outside to play until her homework was finished.
- f. Ashley wrote a letter to her friend in Florida.
- g. Sean and Steve are going to the park to play football.
- h. Brian demanded Susan's lunch money so he could buy his lunch.

3. Have the students turn and talk to a partner about the scenarios in which someone acted on his/her own and when the person acted because someone had power over him/her. Next, have them respond to these two questions in their journals:
 - Describe a time that you acted on your own when you made a choice.
 - Describe a time when you acted because someone had power over you.

If time permits, have students share their responses with the class or partner.

Day 2

1. Begin this phase of the lesson by reviewing yesterday's lesson. Ask students to define POWER and have the student's describe a scenario in which someone acts on their own and a scenario in which someone acts because someone has power over them. Tell the students that today they are going to learn a new word -

- “**AUTHORITY.**” Write the word on the board. Ask the students if they know what the word means. List any reasonable answers on the board. Next, write the definition of **AUTHORITY**: *The right to use power to influence or control the behavior of others.* Emphasize the difference between *power* and *authority*. Authority involves the right to tell others what to do. Ask the children to identify people in different contexts who they believe have authority. Begin with the *home* (e.g. parents). Next, ask students to identify people at *school* who have authority (e.g. teachers, principals). Finally, ask about people in their *communities* who have authority (e.g. police officers, crossing guards).
2. Assess conceptual understanding informally. Ask students “how is authority different from power?”
 3. Tell the students that they are going to act out scenarios with a small group that show people acting with either *power or authority*. After the skits, the other students in the class will have to describe whether the skit illustrated the use of power or authority and explain their reasoning.
 4. Split children up into small groups of either three or four members. Give each group a skit scenario written on a note card. Allow several minutes to plan and practice skits. Circulate around the room and provide assistance when needed.
 5. Have each group take turns performing their skits. After each skit ask a non-actor to decide if the skit shows the concept of *power or authority* and explain why.
 6. As a wrap-up, have each student turn and talk to a partner about a scenario in which someone uses power and a scenario in which someone uses authority.

Skit Scenarios

- a. A teacher assigning homework/class work to his/her class.
- b. A parent telling children to do their chores.
- c. A bully forcing children to leave the playground.
- d. A student demanding money for snack from another student.
- e. A police officer giving someone a ticket.
- f. A thief robbing a bank.
- g. A principal telling students to eat quietly in the cafeteria.

Day 3

1. Before beginning today’s lesson, review the concepts of power and authority that were taught in the previous days’ lessons. Tell the student’s that they are going to listen to a familiar story and that they need to be thinking about the concepts of *power and authority* as you read the story.

2. Read the story The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss. When you are finished the story, tell the students that they are going to be writing in their journals. On one page in their journals have them draw and write about the character who is using power without authority (the cat in the hat). Then on another page in their journal have them write about the character who is using authority (the mother). Have the students share their responses with a partner and then have several share their responses with the class. Collect the journals to check for understanding.

Tips for the Teacher: When writing the skits/scenarios, use names of the students in your classroom. They get very excited. Also, when choosing a book for the lesson on day 3, keep your eyes open for other books that show the concept of authority vs. power. I chose *The Cat in the Hat* but I'm sure many other books lend themselves well to this activity and these key concepts.

Extensions:

1. For students to “master” Civics 1 at the grades K-3 cluster they must extend their understanding of authority to the context of government. The expectations embedded within Civics 1 at the K-3 grade cluster anticipate that students will be able to explain why authority is needed and why it is important to know the difference between authority and power. Once students demonstrate an understanding of the concept of authority, lead the students toward the “big idea” of Civics 1 by engaging them in a discussion of two essential questions:

- Why is authority needed?
- Why is it important to know the difference between authority and power?

2. Search the library or the web for children’s books that can be shared with the themes of power/authority.

3. Give the students opportunities to come up with their own skit ideas and have them perform their skits.

4. Have students make a collage using pictures from magazines that show power/authority.

Citations:

Lesson adapted from: Authority - Foundations of Democracy. Center for Civic Education, 1997.

Assessment 1: Extended Response

Benchmark Statement: Students will understand that positions of authority, whether elected, appointed, or familial, carry responsibilities and should be respected.

Data



Scene A



Scene B

Scene C

Extended Response Prompt:

In which scene is the person using power without authority? Explain your answer.

Desired Response

There will be three pictures in the data box: a teacher, a police officer and a bully. The students should identify the bully as the person using power without authority. The explanation should include the ideas that the bully is making someone do something but he doesn't have the right to.

Rubric

- 2 = This response chooses the picture of the bully with an accurate and relevant explanation of why he is showing power without authority.
- 1 = This response chooses the picture of the bully with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no explanation of why he is showing power without authority.
- 0 = Inaccurate response.

Assessment 2: Selected Response

Benchmark Statement: Students will understand that positions of authority, whether elected, appointed, or familial, carry responsibilities and should be respected.

Selected Response Prompt:

In which of the following situations is the person using power without authority?

- a. a teacher assigning daily homework
- b. a student taking someone's lunch money
- c. a police officer giving a speeding ticket
- d. a bus driver telling students to sit in their seats

Desired Response = B