

**TOPIC**

Acceptance & Belonging

LEVEL

Fourth Grade

THEME

Labels

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the lesson, the students are expected to:

- Explore labels they put on themselves and others.

MATERIALS

- Not a Stick by Antoinette Portis
- Index cards (10 per student)
- Markers
- Paper

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to “label” someone?
- Can labels be seen as positive, negative, both?
- Why do we label others?

CHECK-IN / WELCOME (5 MINUTES)

Say: “Today in Aavidum, we’re going to talk about labeling. Sometimes, people put labels on others like calling someone ‘shy,’ ‘funny,’ ‘smart,’ or even things that hurt feelings. Labels can be inaccurate and hurtful because they don’t tell the whole story of who a person is. None of us are just one word. We are all many things. In Aavidum, we say ‘I’ve got your back!’ and that means we don’t put people in boxes with labels. Instead, we take time to really see and understand who they are. Today we’ll learn how labels can affect people and practice using positive words that help others feel valued and seen.”

GUIDED DISCUSSION / TOPIC INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

Begin by selecting any labeled item you have handy (box of pencils/crayons, deck of cards, etc). Show the item to the students and ask them to point out the item’s label.

Ask: “What is the purpose of this label?”

(They will probably respond with something like, “to tell us what’s inside.”)

Discuss how labels, in this manner, can be useful and serve a purpose. Say: “In this way, labels can be helpful because they give us a clear idea of what to expect.”

Ask: “Do you know what it means to label a person?”

Take student responses.

Say: “Think about a time you were labeled. Maybe someone said you are quiet or not good at math. Or at home your sibling labeled you as a snitch or your adult said you are a good helper. Can everyone think of a label someone has given you?”

Say: “Now, in your mind, think about these questions:”

- “Do you agree with that label?”
- “How does the label make you feel?”

CONTINUED GUIDED DISCUSSION / TOPIC INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

Say: "You don't have to share the label, but tell me, is that label all that you are?"
Wait for responses. Guide students toward realizing they are much more than a single word.

Transition into a conversation where everyone shares how they are all many things.
Say: "Right! Of course not. None of us can be summed up in just one word or one label. We are all so many things."

Say: "Let's talk about it. I want everyone to think of three different words or phrases that describe who you are. It could be:

- Something you're good at
- A role you play (like a sister, brother, teammate, or friend)
- A personality trait (like funny, creative, kind)

I'll go first. I am:

- A teacher
- A mom
- Someone who loves music."

Point to a few students to share their three words/phrases aloud. Encourage variety and celebration of differences.

Say: "See how different and amazing we all are? One word can never tell the whole story about who you are. When we take the time to look closer, we see that everyone has many sides and that's what makes each of us unique and special. In Aavidum, when we say, 'I've got your back!' it means we look past labels and see the whole person. We accept and celebrate all the things that make someone who they are."

ACTIVITY: POSITIVE LABELS (20 MINUTES)

Read "It's Not A Stick."

Ask: "What did you notice about what the adult kept saying to the character?"
(Students: "They kept saying it's just a stick.")

Say: "Right! The adult kept labeling it as 'just a stick.' But what did the character keep saying back?"
(Students: "It's NOT a stick!")

Ask: "And why did he say that?"
(Students: "Because to him it was so many different things.")

Say: "Now, let's think about what was really happening. The adult put a label on the stick, just one label: 'It's a stick.' But the character showed us it was so much more. This is a lot like what happens with people. Sometimes, others put a simple label on us like 'quiet,' 'funny,' or 'troublemaker.' But are those labels all we are?"
(Students should say: "No.")

Ask: What are some ways we can make sure that we don't put labels on people and instead make sure that we try to see them for all that they are?

ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

Say: "In Aavidum, we say 'I've got your back!' That means we don't label people or see them in only one way. Instead, we look closer, we learn their story, and we accept all the amazing parts of who they are. Just like the stick wasn't only a stick, you are not only one thing. You are many things and that's what makes you special."

Say: "In Aavidum, we believe in using labels in a positive way. Instead of labeling someone in a way that hurts or limits them, we're going to focus on positive labels. These are words or sentences that lift people up and make them feel good about themselves."

Say: "Think about a time when someone said something kind about you. Maybe they called you a good friend, or told you that you were really smart or funny."

Ask:

- "How did that label make you feel?" (Take a couple student responses.)
- "Did it make you want to keep being that way?" (Students usually say yes.)

Say: "That's what positive labels do. They don't just feel good. They also help us see the best in ourselves. Today, we're going to spread that same feeling to others."

Say: "Here's what we'll do:

- You'll each get 5 to 10 index cards.
- On each card, write the name of someone at school and a positive label for them. It could be one word like 'kind' or 'funny,' or a short sentence like 'You're always willing to help others.'
- You can write these cards for classmates, teachers, or anyone else in our school.
- Over the next few days, you will give out these cards. You can hand them directly to the person, or leave them anonymously somewhere they will find it.
- If you're there when they read it, pay attention to their reaction when they read it. How does it make them feel? How does it make you feel?"

Show a quick example card: "To: Jayden: You are a great friend because you always include people at recess."

Pass out index cards and markers. Play music if desired.

While circulating, say: "Remember, think about what makes this person special. Maybe they are funny, brave, helpful, good at drawing, or always smile at people. Every positive label matters."

WRAP-UP (5 MINUTES)

Say: "Before we finish, let's remember: Labels are powerful. We can use them to build people up instead of tearing them down. Your challenge this week is to hand out your positive labels. Notice how the people react. Next time we meet, we'll talk about what happened, like how it made them feel, and how it made YOU feel to spread kindness."

(Optional: Have students share one label they wrote aloud before leaving, to inspire others.)