



THE OJAI FOUNDATION'S
Council in Schools

Inspiring engaged, compassionate school communities

A Council on Effort

Grades K–8

Summary

Building a supportive, hardworking classroom requires that students acknowledge the individual efforts of themselves and their peers. This council can be used more than once during the year.

Objectives

- Build community through recognizing and acknowledging the efforts of self and peers.
- Develop empathy by naming and hearing each other's challenges.
- Recognize when we do and do not have control of situations and outcomes.
- Recognize effort over outcome.

Materials

- Ralph Tells A Story, by Abby Hanlon

Set context for a council on effort and choice

School has been in session for a few months now, and there are all the usual challenges up—with studies, with teachers, with friends, with family. Some are fun, some aren't so fun... some are easy, some are really hard. Take being in school all day! I don't have to tell you that school requires a lot of effort: effort to stay focused and learn, to figure out what's important, to get along with people, and to keep an open mind. Then after school there are more demands: homework, social media, sisters and brothers, helping out at home. It seems that every minute brings choices about where and how we are going to invest our efforts. And sometimes we give our best effort and it doesn't work out! And sometimes we don't give any effort at all.

Read

Ralph Tells A Story, by Abby Hanlon. I want to read you a book I truly like. In this story, Ralph is really suffering in class, and I especially connected with him. I wonder if anybody else will. Before I start, let me ask, "Has anyone ever suffered from a writing assignment?"

Open Council

Dedication

Speed Round

We just heard the story of Ralph trying really hard. Let's name some of the things that require effort from us. These can be small or big efforts. Maybe it's working harder in a challenging class, perhaps it's being more patient with your sister or brother, or maybe it's about chores at home. Let's hear them...

Story Round

Tell a story about a time you tried really hard, or a time when you didn't, and how it went.

Witness (Grades 3–8)

Share something that stuck with you or something you're taking away.

Witness (K–2)

Say something you heard that stayed with you.

Intention Setting *(if time)*

I'd like to invite each one of us to set an intention for the week, and if you want, you can ask the circle for something that would support you in reaching it. For example, "This week I intend to spend less time on my phone, and if you see me on my phone please remind me of my intention. Or, if you catch me off my phone, you could say, 'You're not on your phone ... good job!'" And if we'd like, we could all do a shout out together after we hear the intention stated out loud. This will give it some good energy. We could, for example, shout, "You can do it!" or "Right on!" Will you do this?

Close

Pass a "High Five" around the circle

Additional prompts *(perhaps for a different council)*

What stuck with you from the story? Why did that stick with you? Tell the story.

We encourage you to amend this plan in any ways that feel natural to you!

Contributed by Chris Elder and Julia Wasson.