



Relationship Skills

ABOUT CENTER FOR THE COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

The Caring School Community (CSC) program is a nationally recognized, research-based program for grades K–6 that builds classroom and schoolwide community while developing students' social and emotional (SEL) skills and competencies.

Generating Norms

By: The Caring School Community

Generating Norms

ABOUT NORMS VERSUS RULES

The Caring School Community program relies on a positive classroom climate that enhances student interaction. An important step in creating this climate is generating norms for the class. Unlike rules, which are set by the teacher for classroom safety and efficiency, norms arise from the students' own feelings about how they want to be treated by others. Norms are agreements among the members of the community about how they will treat one another. Over the year, the norms help the students to be accountable to the community and to act on the prosocial values of responsibility, respect, fairness, caring, and helpfulness. In an environment in which students live by norms of their own creation, they have many opportunities to take responsibility for their own behavior.

Both norms and rules are necessary in any classroom. Examples of each are shown in the diagram to the right. Rules should be established by the teacher on the first day of school. Phrasing the rules using a positive tone contributes to the sense of a caring community.

The class sets norms after the students have had time to get to know one another and to learn the classroom's rules and procedures. This week, they explore how they are acting on prosocial values, and how they want to be treated and to treat others this year. Then they will



NORMS	RULES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will talk nicely to one another. • We will treat one another with respect. • We will include one another. • We will help one another. • We will solve problems fairly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always walk in the classroom. • One person speaks at a time. • Use indoor voices when in the classroom.

Lesson Purpose

Students:

- Practice "Turn to Your Partner"
- Generate and discuss ideas for norms
- Explain their thinking

Materials

- "Class Meeting Rules" chart
- Paper and pencils

BEGINNING-OF-YEAR LESSON



This lesson may take more than one class period. You may want to do steps 3 through 5 at another time during the day.



This visualization helps the students imagine a situation in which they would like some understanding and support from their classmates and extend this to how they might act in response.



Turn to Your Partner

The Lesson

1 VISUALIZE HOW WE WANT TO BE TREATED AND HOW WE WANT TO TREAT OTHERS

Randomly assign partners and have partners sit together at their desks. Remind the students that this year they are building a caring classroom community, and that they contribute to the community every time they are fair, helpful, caring, and respectful and take responsibility for their own learning and behavior. Over the next few days, they will develop classroom norms—agreements about how they will treat one another this year.

Have the students close their eyes and visualize as you describe the following scenario. Explain that the visualization will help them imagine the kind of classroom community they would like.

One night, the power goes out in your neighborhood. All the electric alarm clocks stop working, and in the morning everyone in your house oversleeps. In your rush to catch the bus, you don't have time to eat breakfast. You run out of the house without your coat and realize that it's pouring rain. Your best friend, who's in your class, is also late. You catch the bus just in time. As you and your friend talk, you realize that both of you left your lunches at home and neither of you has any money. When you walk into your classroom, how do you want to be treated by your classmates? [Pause.] How do you want your classmates to treat your friend? [Pause.] How would you act if your classmates treated you this way?

Reread the scenario, then have the students open their eyes. First in pairs and then as a class, discuss the three questions. Give the students time to discuss each question fully. Encourage them to listen carefully and explain their thinking clearly and completely.

Students might say:

"I'd want people to ask us if we are OK and not tease us about being wet. It helps me to know that people care about how I feel."

"I'd want to say thanks to the people who were nice to me. I'd want to do the same for them if something like this happened to them."

Explain that the students have described a class that is a safe and caring place to be. Have them think specifically about the classroom community and how they will treat one another this year, using questions such as:

Class Meeting Lessons

- Q** Someone is teasing a classmate, and the teacher is not around. What might you do?
- Q** You've lost your favorite pencil. One of your classmates has one that happens to look just like it. You're wondering if she took your pencil. How will you talk to her?
- Q** A classmate stretches his leg out right when you're walking by his desk, and you trip. You're not sure whether he tripped you on purpose or by accident. How will you react?
- Q** What are some other ways you will treat other people in the class this year?

2 WRITE IDEAS INDIVIDUALLY

Distribute paper and explain that you would like each student to write down three ways he wants to treat others this year, using the prompts "I want to ___" and "I don't want to ____." Write these two prompts where everyone can see them and model writing several examples for the class. (For example, "I want to talk nicely to other people" and "I don't want to tease people.")

Give the students several minutes to record their own statements. Remind them to write their name on the paper.

3 GATHER FOR A CLASS MEETING

Ask the students to bring their written ideas with them and have them move into a circle with partners sitting together. Briefly review the class meeting rules.

4 SHARE AND DISCUSS "I WANT TO/I DON'T WANT TO" STATEMENTS

Remind the students that the purpose of this class meeting is to share with the class some ways they want to treat others this year. Have each student choose one statement to share with the class. Go around the circle and have each student read a statement aloud.



If you notice the students having difficulty writing statements that reflect caring, responsible ways to treat others, stop them and model writing several more statements for the class. You might find that the prompts "I will ___" and "I will not ___" are more accessible to your students.

For Grades 2–3

If writing is challenging, you might have the students record one or two ideas instead of three. Another idea is to write the students' statements on chart paper and discuss each one as a class.

Students might say:

“I want to take turns with people.”

“I don’t want to make fun of people’s ideas.”

“I want to talk nicely to people, even if I disagree with them.”

As the students share, follow up with questions such as:

Q What comments or questions do you have for [Jane] about her thinking?

Q How do you think your classmates will feel when you treat them that way?

After all the students have shared their statements, ask and discuss:

Q How might it help us as learners to come to a class every day where we are treated in these ways?

Collect the students’ statements and explain that you will read them all and combine the students’ ideas to create a list of class norms for them to review at their next class meeting.

5 REFLECT AND ADJOURN THE MEETING

Have the students briefly discuss how they did explaining their thinking and what they can do to be more explicit.

Review the procedure for returning to their seats and adjourn the meeting.

After the Lesson

Prior to the second norm-setting meeting, review the students’ “I want to ____” and “I don’t want to ____” statements. Based on their ideas, create a list of four or five norms that represent the ways the students want to treat one another this year. Record these as “We will ____” statements on a sheet of chart paper labeled “Our Class Norms.” State the norms positively.