



Decision Making

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.

Agreement on Norms

By: The Caring School Community

Agreeing on Norms

Lesson Purpose

Students:

- Discuss, adjust, and agree on norms for their classroom community
- Take responsibility for themselves

The Lesson

1 GATHER FOR A CLASS MEETING AND INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

Review the procedure for forming a circle for a class meeting and have the students gather in a circle with partners sitting together. Remind the students that they discussed the type of classroom community they want and wrote statements about ways they personally want to treat others this year.

Explain that you have read all the statements and that, based on what they wrote, you drafted a list of classroom norms, or agreements, for how they will treat one another in the classroom this year. Explain that the purpose of this class meeting is to discuss and agree upon a list of norms that everyone can live by.

Ask and briefly discuss:

Q How will you act during today's class meeting that will help the meeting be successful?

Materials

- "Our Class Norms" chart, prepared ahead (see "After the Lesson" in Generating Norms)
- Students' written statements from Generating Norms



BEGINNING-OF-YEAR LESSON

OUR CLASS NORMS

- 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.

2 DISCUSS THE NORMS

Distribute the students' written statements; then direct their attention to the "Our Class Norms" chart. Read the first norm aloud and discuss it as a class using questions such as:

Q Look at the "I want to ___" and "I don't want to ___" statements you wrote. What is a statement you wrote that goes with this norm? How do the two go together?

Q If we were all treating one another this way, what would a visitor to our room see?

Students might say:

"I wrote 'I don't want to call people names this year.' I think that goes with 'We will talk nicely to each other.'"

"If we talk nicely to each other, you might see two people who are disagreeing, but they're not yelling or calling each other names. They're being respectful."

Continue to discuss the norms one at a time, using the questions above. Encourage the students to give examples of each norm, both from their written statements and from their own thoughts and experiences.

3 REACH AGREEMENT ON CLASSROOM NORMS

Remind the students that the purpose of the norms is to help them create a safe, caring community by agreeing to treat others as they would like to be treated. It is their responsibility to make the class a place where everyone can be part of a caring community. State your expectation that the students will try their best to act according to the norms not just in the classroom, but everywhere on the school campus.

Class Meeting Lessons

Ask:

Q Is there anything on the chart that you cannot agree to try to live by in the coming days? If so, what and why? How can we change what's on the chart so everyone can agree?

Explain that the "Our Class Norms" chart will be posted in the classroom for easy reference.



Continue the discussion until the students agree on the list. Encourage the students to explain their thinking clearly. This discussion may require an additional meeting. Reaching agreement may mean deleting, combining, or modifying ideas on the list. (For example, the norms "We will let people have their own opinion" and "We will disagree in a nice way" might be combined to say "We will respect each other's opinions, even if we disagree.")

4 REFLECT ON THE MEETING

Let the students know that you will check in with them throughout the year to see how they are doing acting on the class norms.

Help the students reflect on the class meeting by discussing questions such as:

Q How did our class meeting go today? Do you think it was successful? Why? What might we do to improve our meetings?

Q How did you take responsibility for your own behavior during today's class meeting? How did that contribute to the success of the meeting?

5 ADJOURN THE MEETING

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

Post the "Our Class Norms" chart where the students can refer to it throughout the year.



You may want to copy the norms onto a clean sheet of chart paper and have all the students sign the chart (and sign it yourself) before you post it. Throughout the year, remind the students of their commitment to act on the class norms and check in regularly at class meetings on how the students are doing. Keep in mind that the class may decide to add to or modify the norms.