

# LESSON — Class Agreements

Unit: Identity and Belonging

Focus: Awareness

Grade Level: K–6

Subject(s): Reading and Language Arts, Art

## Overview

Working together to identify and agree on common expectations gives students a chance to create shared expectations and understanding of what is meant by respectful and welcoming behavior. Teachers who have already helped their class develop shared agreements can integrate these into the lesson. Additional activities help students think about expectations and agreements that are used in their home and community life. Ultimately, students should be able to recognize behaviors that demonstrate respect when working with classmates, family members and community members.

## Learning Objectives

- Create a culture of belonging and respect within the classroom and beyond.
- Use communication and group process to develop common agreements/expectations.
- Recognize behaviors that are expected and respectful in different settings.

## Standards

Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.

Students explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics under discussion.

Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

## Materials

- Rules Worksheet [older students].
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart and sticky notes.
- Paper, crayons and colored pens.
- Chalk, masking tape or objects to mark areas outdoors or in large indoor space.

**Time:** One or two class sessions with regular follow-up.

**Setting:** Large group discussion and small group activity with worksheets for older students

## Directions for Activity-Creating Class Agreements

**Lesson Preparation:** Review the suggestions listed below and prepare classroom materials as needed. If you and your class have already developed class agreements, you can incorporate these agreements into this lesson.

Think about visuals and space as you plan for the class activities. For example, it may be helpful to write each agreement in a contrasting color and students may find it helpful to have the positive behaviors listed in separate columns or marked with plus/minus signs, smiley/frowning images or thumbs up/down icons. The optional movement activity for Agreements on the Move requires a large open space where students can move around and enter a selected space.

**Lesson Implementation:** Tell students that we are going to create our own group expectations. Ask them to think about how they like to be treated. Remind students that only one student should talk at a time, that everyone's ideas are important and that we need to listen while each student speaks. As you review these rules, begin putting them up on the board or flip chart, using different colored pens/chalk for each rule. Ask the students for their ideas: What ways can they think of to be respectful and make the classroom and school feel welcoming, easy to learn in and safe? Have students take turns reading the rules aloud so they are heard as well as seen.

After students share their ideas and of positive ways to work together, ask whether there are any behaviors and practices that it is important NOT to do in class or at school.

If needed, prompt students to identify school rules (classroom, playground, cafeteria, etc.) to address the following issues:

- Sharing ideas without fear of criticism.

- Name-calling or physical/emotional bullying behavior.
- Listening when others are talking.
- Asking questions in a respectful manner.
- Respecting other people's opinions.
- Helping each other learn new skills through mentoring and peer tutoring.
- Respecting the confidentiality of other students.
- Sharing classroom resources (art supplies, etc.).
- Taking turns.

After students complete their list, review it and ask students to identify which rules also apply when they are at home or when they are in a community setting (store, restaurant, park, etc.). Ask if there are rules that are special for home, school, or community places and whether there are rules that work in all three.

## Supplemental Activities

**Art Activity:** If time allows or on another day, give students paper and pens or paints and ask them to choose one of the class rules and draw or paint a picture to go with it. After they are done making their pictures, students can bring them to a sharing circle and talk about the rule they chose and show their art. The pictures can be displayed in the classroom. Posted together on a wall, they become a shared paper quilt of class expectations/rules.

**Group Agreements on the Move:** Older (middle-school) students can further explore the relationship between home, school and community expectations and shared agreements: Using a copy of the Venn diagram or a simple chart, have students work individually or break into small groups (with a recorder and reporter for each group) to identify examples of home and community agreements or expectations. Recorders can each write on sticky notes and the group can decide where they are most often used (home, school, community) and stick them on the appropriate spot. The groups can then come back together to present and post their examples on a large version of the Venn diagram, made on the board or on a large sheet of paper. During class discussion, the location of specific rules may be relocated on the diagram to reflect group consensus.

Instead of using the writing activity, three large areas (representing home, community and both home and community) can be marked out on the asphalt in the playground area outdoors or marked with masking tape or other boundaries on a large floor space. The teacher can read each class rule and ask a student to move to the circle where the rule is also used.

## Lesson Wrapup/Follow-up

The class agreements can be posted on the wall as a reminder of shared agreements. They can also be kept in a class rules notebook. Students with computer skills can also design a digital version of the class rules with related arts and graphics.

Review the commitments that students made to treat each other respectfully and how that relates to how we talk with and about our classmates and others at school or in the community. Ask students to talk about how the rules are working for them and share examples of successes. This lesson lays the groundwork for future discussions on respecting and welcoming human differences and for activities and lesson plans relating to disability and other diversity issues. For example, there are many different and wonderful ways that language, behavior and rules are used to show respect and appreciation in families and other cultural groups and there are ways to plan for children with disabilities and learning differences so that the rules include and work for all students. Examples are offered in other Include! activities.

## Resources

Many teachers find the Responsive Classroom materials helpful for working on trust and shared expectations in the classroom:

[Responsive Classroom/ first-six-weeks-school](#)

If this lesson brings up experiences with bullying, the Pacer Center has some good youth resources at [Pacers National Bullying Prevention Center](#). Videos and other information for youth action against bullying are also available on the [Youth Organizing! Disabled and Proud](#) website.

Downloadable anti-bullying activities and skits, including one from Yo! Disabled & Proud, are posted at: [E-books pdf.org -Anti-bullying Skits Activities](#).