

# Creating Class Rules: Establishing a Classroom Community

## Overview

The purpose of this lesson is to help educators establish strategies for effective classroom management and to lay a foundation for ongoing community-building in the classroom. It is crucial to engage students in a discussion about the process of learning and the needs of the classroom to have a productive and well-managed learning environment.

At the beginning of the year, students will be led through a class discussion that is designed to establish goals and needs that include everyone. By establishing the goals and needs of the classroom through the use of guiding questions, students will be able to form a list of ways they can accomplish these goals. Students and teachers will also be able to refer back to this list throughout the year to maintain consistency and a well-managed classroom.

## Materials

- Chart paper: use chart paper to write down a list of goals and/or behaviors that students come up with during class discussion
- Class read aloud about friendship, community building, or good behavior

## Steps

### PART 1

1. Gather students together for a discussion on the carpet area, floor, or at their seats. Choose a read-aloud that focuses on classroom management themes such as friendship, community building, working well with others, etc. Read the book aloud to students, pausing to prompt students if needed.
2. After reading, have students brainstorm ideas about their purpose for coming to school, and why they are here (i.e. "Why are we here? What is our purpose at school? How can we get the most out of our education?") On a piece of anchor chart paper, write down students reasons for coming to school.
3. At the end of the discussion, say: Next time we come back together, we are going to review our purpose in this classroom, and we will talk about ways we can achieve our goals.

## PART 2

1. Gather students together in the same place as before. Say: *Today we are going to review our purpose in this classroom, and we are going to come up with a list of things that will help us learn and succeed to our fullest potential.*
2. Refer back to what students brainstormed in the prior lesson. Students may have listed “to learn”, “to make friends”, or “to learn how to read”. Ask: *What do we need in order to learn, make friends, etc.? What will be needed to achieve these goals?*
3. Under the reasons that students brainstormed, create a t-chart with one side labeled “What (class or content area) looks like” and the other side “What (class or content area) sounds like”. Say: *Let’s talk about what it would look like if a visitor would come into our classroom. What would they see? What would they hear?* Be sure to address the social as well as the academic aspects of the classroom, such as peers interacting in inappropriate ways and learning with others.
4. Have students make a list of things that a visitor would see and hear that would be appropriate for their age level. For example, students would be talking in a soft voice in a small group (sounds like), and students would have their eyes on the teacher during a whole group discussion (looks like).
  - a. Avoid having a list that is too long and overly complex. A good list may have as many as ten items listed for each category on the t-chart.
  - b. If you teach a specific content area, you can adjust these guiding questions to fit your content area. For example, what does it look/sound like when students are reading independently? Working in a small group? Having a class discussion? Etc.
5. Wrap up by explaining to students what this chart will serve as throughout the year. Say: *This chart will hang in our classroom as a reminder of how we can achieve our goals by the end of the year. If you want to learn to your fullest potential, then you will know how to look or what to say.*
6. Post the completed chart in a visible area of the classroom where it can be easily referred to throughout the year.

## Example Anchor Chart

### **Why are we here? What is our purpose in this classroom?**

*Examples include: To learn how to read, to learn how to be a team, to learn how to multiply, to make friends, to be a community, etc.*

### **What does (class/content area/workstation) look like?**

*Examples include: Eyes on the teacher during whole group discussions, students' eyes in the books during independent reading, hands being raised to ask a question, etc.*

### **What does (class/content area/workstation) sound like?**

*Examples include: Students talking about specific topics during group work, students using kind words during whole group debates, whispering when completing work with a partner, etc.*