

# Transformative Talks

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

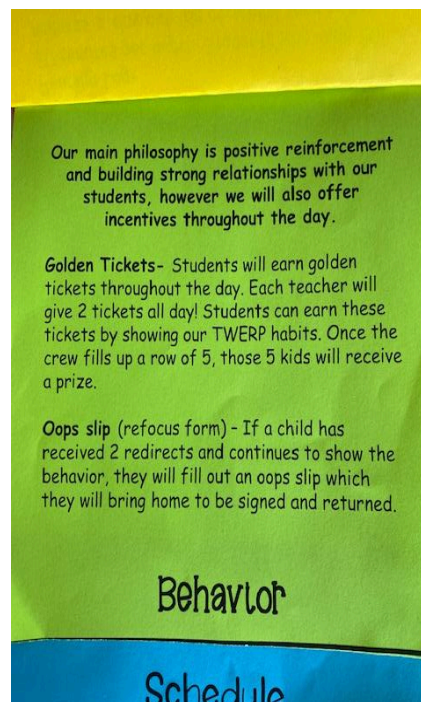
## Intention and Impact of Classroom Rules

We acknowledge the complexity of the role [rules](#) play in our lives. We understand rules vary and need to be adapted for different settings, ages, and situations. We also recognize the need to examine our biases as they relate to the *establishment* and *enforcement* of classroom rules that harm children.

Below are examples of classroom rules established during the COVID-19 pandemic by school districts and educators in the U.S. Can you see where the White Dominant culture is upheld? Can you see where inequity is perpetuated? Can you see your own biases?

Definition of White Dominant Culture: *The explicit to subtle ways that the norms, preferences and fears of white European descended people overwhelmingly shape how we organize our work and institutions, see ourselves and others, interact with one another and with time, and make decisions.* ([source](#))

- Student **MUST** have a quiet area- free of noise, no tv, no music during virtual learning.
- Students **CANNOT** have covers or blankets on their body.
- Students **CANNOT** wear hoodies or hats on their head.
- Students **MUST** have on a shirt with sleeves.
- Students **MUST** have shoes on their feet.
- Students **MUST** remain in the class from 8:15-3:00 each day to receive full credit for the day and a class participation grade.
- Students **MUST** show their faces (video on) on the screen.
- Students **MUST** stay on mute until the teacher advises them otherwise.
- Students should wear headphones while learning virtually to block out excess noise in their backaround.



- Attendance will be taken 10 minutes into class and will be reported in the Synergy system
- Students need to be ready for class, in uniform, breakfast completed before school starts
- If you have internet or accessibility issues, please message me ASAP so I can let admin know
- Students wearing headphones with video on so teachers can see their face

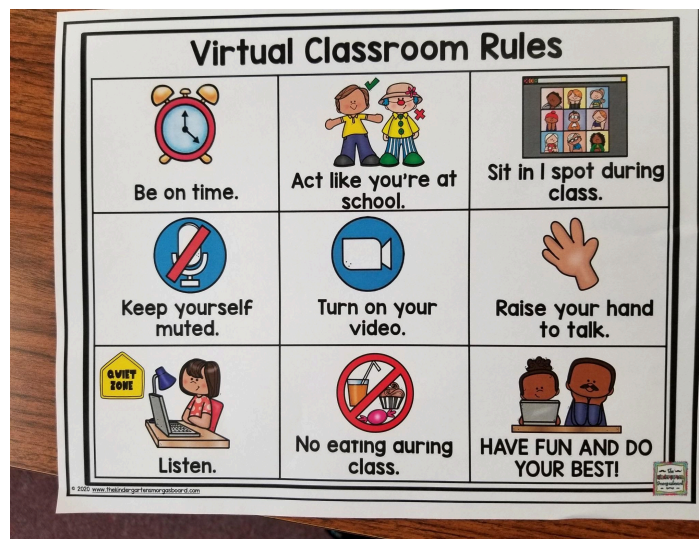
*\*Kinder students are new to Zoom, so it is understandable if they need a couple of days to adjust. If they can't last the whole time they may log off. You can gradually increase their time online until they are able to do the full day.*

*\*Parents- if you need time to get uniform shirts or headphones that is fine.*

This resource offers an example of how to examine classroom rules in terms of the extent to which they uphold the White Dominant culture, and how to take initial action to dismantle policies that cause harm to children.

As you make your way through this resource, we offer one of our community agreements based upon the work of Ijumaa Jordan and Megan Madison. That agreement is to **expect and accept a lack of closure**. As it relates to this resource that means it is offered not as the definitive voice on classroom rules, rather, as something to use as a catalyst for starting courageous conversations around *race*, *ability*, and *equity*.

By way of an example, we critiqued the following graphic as an illustration of how classroom rules uphold the White Dominant culture and harm and marginalize children of color and/or with various disabilities as an attribute.



**Critique of virtual classroom rules and examples of where the White Dominant culture is upheld** ([source](#) used for the critique):

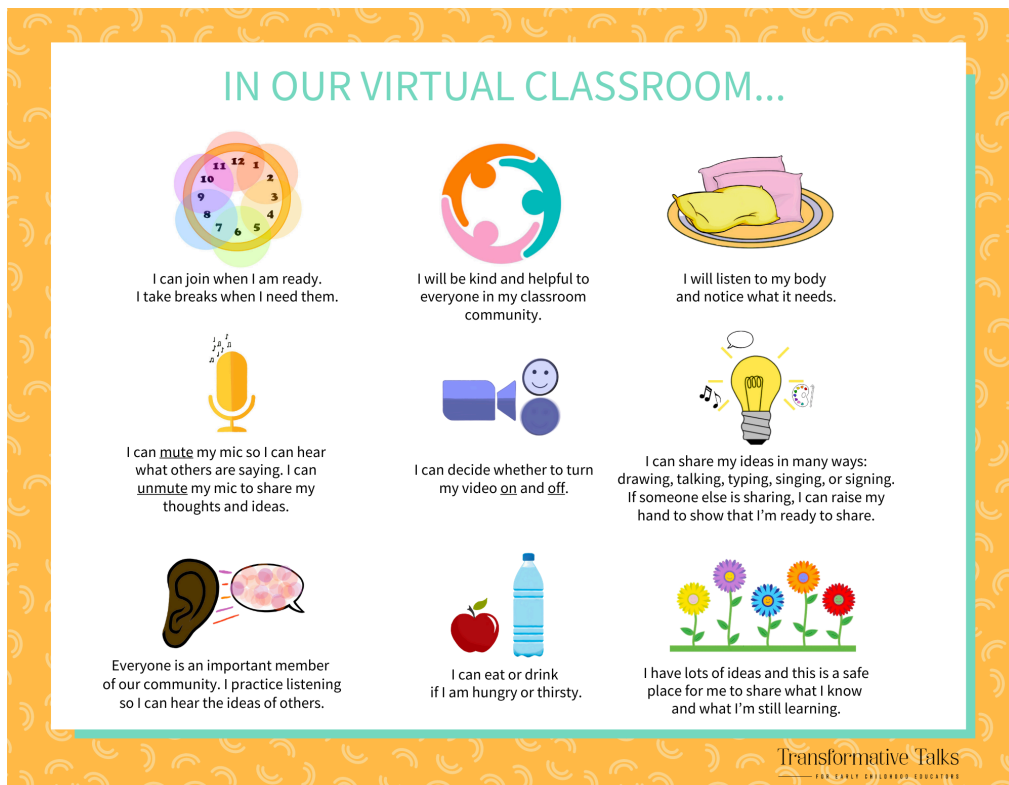
1. *Be on time* = either/or thinking (e.g., on time or late); sense of urgency; focus on being polite
2. *Act like you're at school* = paternalism (e.g., those in power make decisions for those who are not, restricting the freedom of others)
3. *Sit in 1 spot during class* = power hoarding; focus on individuals; paternalism
4. *Keep yourself muted* = individualism and separateness; fear of open conflict; focus on being polite
5. *Turn on your video* = belief in only one right way (e.g., measuring attention and engagement through staring at a camera); trying to simplify complex things
6. *Raise your hand to talk* = narrow valuation of intelligence; paternalism; power hoarding
7. *Listen* = paternalism; power hoarding; focus on being polite; only one right way
8. *No eating during class* = comfort is defined by whites (given that the clear majority of educators are white); aim to prevent abuse of power
9. *Have fun and do your best* = perfectionism; individualism - competition; linear thinking

Above are just a few examples of how the classroom rules uphold the White Dominant culture. More importantly is our increased awareness that by *upholding* and *policing* these norms we are contributing to the harm of children.

*So what action can we take?*

One action is to explore and examine which classroom rules you accept as norms of *authority*, which you are “ok” with *enforcing*, and those you find even you are *breaking*. In essence, we invite you to recognize and take action against classroom rules generated through the lens of the White Dominant culture.

A second action is to revise classroom rules based upon what you have learned. We offer the following as an example of a few revised virtual classroom rules based upon the original rules shared above.



For this downloadable makeover of original rules (click [here](#) and [here](#) for the Spanish version)  
Graphics credit: Ella Theoharis; Layout design credit: [Mayra Porrata](#)

We also offer the following variations of *virtual classroom rules*, which are based upon suggestions from our Transformative Talks' community members.

<p><b>Original: Be on time</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I will take time to create a comfy learning space, to notice how I feel, and to take breaks and naps when I need them.</p> <p>I can join the meeting when my family and I are ready.</p> <p>I can leave and come back (take breaks).</p>	<p><b>Original: Act like you are at school</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I will be kind to my friends.</p> <p>I will be thoughtful about my community.</p> <p>I will be kind and helpful to everyone in my classroom community (or school family).</p>	<p><b>Original: Sit in 1 spot during class</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>Sometimes I can sit in place, sometimes I can dance, sometimes I can move, sometimes I can snuggle up with someone at home or a favorite stuffy.</p> <p>I will dance spontaneously.</p> <p>I will move as much as possible all day long.</p> <p>I do not have to be in front of the screen to listen and/or participate. I can be on my parents'/guardians'/caregivers' lap, I can be across the room, I can be standing, I can be rocking, I can be bouncing...</p>
<p><b>Original: Keep yourself muted</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I can help my friends learn by being calm and quiet sometimes.</p> <p>I will lend my calm to others.</p> <p>I can help my friends learn by being calm and quiet sometimes.</p> <p>I will send side texts/chats to my friends or classmates to build my learning community relationships.</p>	<p><b>Original: Turn on your video</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I can turn my video on sometimes and off sometimes depending on what my body needs.</p> <p>I can turn off the audio or video if it's over-stimulating.</p> <p>When my camera is on, I will connect with others by using soft eyes, by waiving or sharing uplifting emojis, and by greeting others with welcoming sounds, gestures, signs, and/or words.</p> <p>I will turn my camera off when I need to step away, when it is overstimulating, and/or when my need to move might be distracting to others.</p> <p>If I can, I will switch my camera to hide my self view if I don't want to see myself on the screen.</p>	<p><b>Original: Raise your hand to talk</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I can share my ideas in many ways. I can draw, talk, type, sing, sign, listen, show and sometimes raise my hand.</p> <p>I will share my ideas in different ways (e.g., by talking, typing, signing, drawing, listing, gesturing, showing).</p>
<p><b>Original: Listen</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I can learn from listening to others ideas.</p> <p>I will listen for understanding.</p>	<p><b>Original: No eating during class</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I can eat or drink if I am hungry or thirsty. I will crunch when I need or sip when I want.</p> <p>I will tune into what my body needs and will eat when I feel hungry or low on energy. I will stay hydrated.</p>	<p><b>Original: Have fun and do your best</b></p> <p><i>Variations:</i></p> <p>I can relax and enjoy learning.</p> <p>I will do things that are novel and fun because that will ensure I'm engaged.</p>

