

Creating Agreements



Relationship Building

Grade(s): K–8

learning objective/s or description

- Co-create community agreements and classroom norms between teacher and students.

materials needed:

- Chart paper or butcher paper
- Markers and pens
- A wall or visible space to display the final agreements all year

Any tips or important information

- This is a foundational lesson — ideally run in the first week with a new group, and revisited throughout the year.
- Watch your language. Agreements = community; rules = control, power, punishment. Frame the activity as a shared invitation, not a list of dos and don'ts.
- Try to get a response from every student. Even quiet students can offer one word — "kind," "safe," "fun" — and feel included.
- Reframe rather than reject. If a student says "no one is mean," help them turn it into a positive: "we treat each other kindly."
- When everyone signs the chart, the agreement becomes shared ownership, not a teacher mandate.
- Revisit regularly — agreements only stay alive if they're referenced often.

lesson structure:

Opening Circle

Facilitation (5 minutes)

1. Everyone sits or stands in a circle.

2. Welcome everyone and review agreements (talking piece = one mic, calm bodies = listening).
3. Share the prompt/question and clarify any questions.
4. Pass the talking piece around for everyone to share.
5. End the circle by thanking everyone and giving the direction for the next activity.

Sample Prompts (Elementary & Middle)

- Elementary: What do you like about school?
- Elementary: What is one thing you are good at?
- Elementary: What are ways to show respect?
- Middle: Who is a positive role model in your life?
- Middle: What's special about your family?
- Middle: What's something you hope to accomplish?

Lesson Hook

- Today we're going to build our class agreements together — the ways we promise to treat each other so everyone feels safe and supported.

Community Builders

Facilitation

- Assess your group dynamic: how are people feeling? Is everyone emotionally regulated? Is anyone triggered? Is this community builder still appropriate based on the emotional risk of the activity?
- Explain the activity: state the goal and how it will bring the community together. Keep your explanation clear and concise, and include examples or modeling of behavior. If students should expect to struggle, explain how you want them to work through it together.
- Do the activity: participate alongside the group when appropriate (remember, you're part of this community too). Monitor the activity and reassess how people are feeling.
 - If the activity escalates: STOP → REGULATE EMOTIONS → CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS.

Activity: Creating Agreements

1. Tell students that you are going to create class agreements because it's important to think about how we want to treat each other so everyone feels safe and supported.
2. If students are unclear about agreements, explain what they are and how they are different from rules. Agreements = community; rules = control, power, punishment.
3. Ask students one of the following prompts to get the conversation started.
 - What would help us work best together in the classroom?
 - How do you want to feel when you're in our class?
 - What would it look like or sound like in a class that was safe and fun?
1. Chart student answers and help with reframing any responses. Try to get a response from every student so they all feel included.
2. Work with students to categorize the responses into community agreements or norms for the classroom.
3. Once the list is complete, review it with students. Ask them to show they agree and commit by signing their name somewhere on the chart paper.
4. Display the agreements for the remainder of the school year and review them with students on a regular basis.

Closing Reflection

- At the end of the activity, have a discussion with students using these prompts:
 - What worked well in this activity?
 - What classroom norms did we follow?
 - What could we do better next time?
- Have students share appreciations — invite a few volunteers to thank classmates for something specific they did during the activity.

Closing Circle

Facilitation (10 minutes max)

- Consider before facilitating: What key ideas do I want students to leave with? How do I want them to feel walking away? Will each student share with the whole group, will a few students share, or will students share with a partner?

Sample Prompts (Elementary & Middle)

- Elementary: What did you like about today?
- Elementary: Share an appreciation with someone in the group.
- Middle: What was something challenging today?
- Middle: What's something you're proud of?

Closing Ritual

- Thank the group, name what you noticed, and send students off with a clear next step or appreciation.

Resource from R.O.C.K.