



Creating Inclusive Classroom Communities that are welcoming and positive learning environments and represents shared vision and values for all



Target Audience: Older Elementary, Middle, High School

Shared Agreements

Shared agreements can create a classroom culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Students are given the power to establish expectations as a community. This will encourage peer accountability in the learning environment. Revisit the agreement routinely and display it in a visible or accessible location in the room. Prompt: What is needed to create a classroom where everyone feels safe, ready to learn and part of a community? Example: Listen with the intent to understand, respect, patience, curiosity etc.

For a deeper dive into community building, see Facing History: Making Meaning of Community.

[Link: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/back-school-2021-building-community-connection-and-learning/activities-first-days-school/making-meaning-community>]

SEL Targets: Relationship skills, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making.

Creating a Classroom Community through Shared Goals

From day one, you've got an agenda with lesson plans ready to go, of course. You've probably got standards to follow and routine projects you do every year. But that doesn't mean you can't take time early in the school year to find out what students really want to know. Post a few anchor charts around the room with the questions listed below. Have kids circulate and write their answers on the charts.

Then, look each one over as a class and talk about the responses. Try these:

- What do you think you'll learn in this class this year?
- What do you really want to learn in this class this year?
- How can your teacher help you learn and succeed?
- What are you least looking forward to in this class?
- What are you most looking forward to in this class?

SEL Targets: Relationship skills, social awareness, responsible decision making, responsible decision making.

Values Chain

Purpose: Work with your students to create a welcoming and positive learning environment

1. Ask students to identify their personal values or values that they think will help them be successful and contribute in a positive way to this class. Provide students with a list values and allow for time to define or explain any of the values.
2. Invite them to write each value (3-5) on a strip of paper
3. Have students stand (or sit) in a circle and read their values
4. Loop each value into a link to create a value chain

SEL Targets: Relationship skills, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making.

Creating Inclusive Spaces

Begin by gathering student responses and posting them on a large sheet of chart paper, or virtually on a shared, visible document. As ideas are repeated, place a checkmark or star beside them. For each suggestion, ask students to clarify what it would "look like, sound like, and feel like" in practice. This process may unfold over several days, allowing time for thoughtful reflection and refinement. Each day, students can review the agreements, discussing whether any items should be added, removed, or combined. Encourage students to take the list home, review it, and consider additional ways to fine-tune the agreements. Once finalized, have each student sign the document as a commitment to uphold these agreements while together. Display the final list in a visible location and refer to it regularly. Revisit the agreements monthly or as needed to make modifications that best serve the group's evolving needs.

SEL Targets: Relationship skills, social awareness, responsible decision making, responsible decision making.

School Year Bucket List

This may be a tough start to the school year. Sharing your bucket list and giving students time to create a school year bucket list is a great way to encourage them to dream and support them to take responsible risks. Ideally you give students time to create a bucket list for this school year- with ten items, one for each month. You will get to know your students and they will get to know you in new ways. On the last day (Friday) of each month, check in as a class and see who was able to cross something off of their list. Work together to action-plan for the next month (bucket list buddies, reminder e-mails, bucket list shared doc with inspiring quotes, etc.)

SEL Targets: Relationship skills, Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

School Year Play List

Music is meaningful to all of us, and the songs we love can be a window into our personalities and cultures. Ask each student to contribute one song choice to a class playlist, along with an explanation of why they love that song. Depending on students' ages, you can decide on parameters for lyrics and language. Create the list on Spotify so all students can listen to one another's songs or use the playlist in your classroom.

SEL Targets: Relationship skills, Self-Awareness, Social Awareness

Question Of The Day

Provide students with a daily question. Students can reflect independently through a journal entry, free write, in pairs, groups or whole class discussion. For some added fun, assign students to bring in a “question of the day” and or provide suggestions periodically throughout the year.

- What’s the name a movie, book or song that describes how you’re feeling today or feeling about returning to school?
- Finish the sentence: The best news I’ve had this summer is...
- Finish the sentence: When I was little, I thought I wanted to be...
- Name one skill you have that others may not know about.
- If you could be any other age, what would it be?
- If you had \$100 dollars in hand to spend it right now, what would you buy?
- If you could be any animal, what would you be? What animal would you not want to be?
- What is one thing that you would like to accomplish before your next birthday?
- If you could relive one event, what would it be?
- If you could give someone one piece of advice, what would it be?
- How would a friend or classmate describe you in two words?
- What are some traditions in your life?
- What makes you feel the most appreciated and understood?
- What was the hardest part of your week? And the best part?
- If you had to move and could only take three things from your house/apartment/room, what you take?
- I find it frustrating when teachers (peers/classmates/family/others)_____
- What are five things you’ve always wanted to do or try, but haven’t yet?
- What’s your top three songs or movies right now?
- If you had to thank one person in your life, who would that be and why?

As a physical alternative, write daily questions on a beach ball to be tossed around to students. Students must answer the question nearest their left hand, right thumb etc. You can also Write questions out on the white board or chart paper on the wall and have students toss a ball to tap one of the questions they wish to answer.

Mix it up even further by...

- Putting daily questions on sheets of paper and hide them around the room as a scavenger hunt. Students must find the question and discuss.
- Students work in pairs and take turns rolling the dice. Each number they land on corresponds to a different question. As students answer the questions, they will learn more about each other.
- Create a connection schedule in which you check-in with different students each day. Use the “Question of the day” to further the discussion and connect with them on non-academic tasks.

SEL Targets: Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills