

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.

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

I Am NOT!

This activity encourages students to think critically, increase self and social awareness, all while building relationships.

Ask students to “find something in the classroom (or building) that is “completely the opposite of yourself.” You may also provide this activity as homework on the first night of school. When students bring their items back to class, ask each to describe why the item is not like them. This can be done in pairs, small groups or as an independent free write. This activity offers an alternative to the traditional “Who Am I” activity.

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 had 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

Do You See What I See?

Provide students with an image, shape or design that is either obvious or abstract. Example: Peace sign, triangle, zigzag etc. Ask students to challenge their perspective by recreating the image. What once was a circle, triangle or zigzag can become the base of an ice cream cone or even an animal. You can offer this creative challenge as a daily welcoming ritual. This creative activity supports social awareness and relationships skills through development of flexible thinking skills, perspective taking and appreciation of others. New images can be created daily! Modification: For a teamwork alternative, group students in pairs to complete the image together. Tip: Start the year off by acknowledging the challenges students have faced. Further the discussion by encouraging students to reflect on their differing experiences, perspectives following the impact of a COVID on their routines, learning, connections, wellness etc.

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

