

Collaboratively Created Classroom Norms

Overview:

Collaboratively created classroom norms are a partnered approach to outlining expectations and agreements within the classroom community between teachers and students. At the beginning of a school year, course, or collaborative within a new group, the teacher engages students in outlining what success and belonging look like in the learning environment. From the brainstorm, an agreed upon series of norms is outlined and posted for regular reference and reflection, providing a common language and understanding around what behavior and therefore, engagement, will look like in the classroom community.

Purpose:

Belonging is one of the most essential human needs. Collaboratively creating classroom norms with students allows for a sense of belonging, which is an important activator of student engagement. When students feel they belong, they participate more freely and fully in the learning, and are less likely to retreat or marginalize. With this direct role in creating a set of agreements about what the learning environment will look like, sound like, and feel like, students have more ownership over their learning environment and a pathway towards deeper belonging is created.

Application: When and where can I use it?

Collaboratively creating classroom norms is a high leverage instructional move that can be used in any grade level or content area. Teachers can intentionally engage student voice in the process and foster a sense of belonging and connectedness within the learning environment. Norms also provide a common language for both teachers and students to understand about the learning community and the expectations held by all.

It is important to create norms early, but to reflect upon them often. Some teachers chose to do this on a regular basis, or as needed, but the more often the daily conversations connect to norms, the better. Norms are not simply teacher-created rules that students agree to and sign, but rather actions based on classroom or school values. Students and teachers have an opportunity to outline what their expectations are in order to live these values in the learning environment and have voice in the choice of phrasing.

Once created, consider posting these and having students and adults in the learning space sign off to show connection and agreement to the norms. As appropriate, have students share norms and values with families at home as well, or do so as the teacher. When possible, anchor the norms to school or district core values as well.

Getting Started: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Teaching tips, language to use to introduce or explain this move to the students. This part fleshes out the "Description/Steps" section, providing the teacher with more information to successfully implement the strategy with integrity.

Within the first few days of a new school year or semester-long course, engage the students in a dialogue about what a safe, productive learning environment looks like for all, teachers and students. Ensure that all voices are heard and respected. A community circle is a great structure for this activity, to ensure everyone has a voice.

Share with students that your desire as the teacher is to set up a learning community that helps all to feel like they are safe, connected, and able to learn to the best of their ability. To do that, we need to outline what the classroom will look like, sound like, and feel like when all feel safe and able to participate fully. Consider prompts by levels below or reference the additional resources at the bottom of the template for examples and potential scripts.

In elementary, classroom norms may start with question such as "What do you need from your teacher?" or "What do you need from your classmates?" Or, they may be prompted to start with frames such as "When we are safe we... [look like, sound like, feel like]...when we are focused we... when we are supportive to others we...when we work hard we..."

In secondary, norms might anchor to shared values. Have the class list words that describe them as learners. From there, brainstorm agreements and action phrases that demonstrate how the group will live these values. Consider how to build in your expectations and non-negotiables naturally while asking the same of students.

Revisit norms regularly. Have check-ins at the start of class, as challenges arise, or encourage self-reflections by students individually. Norms can also be created for project-based group learning or carried outside of the classroom environment with the same group of students. Above all, norms are an agreement between all in the community in how we will treat each other, honor individuality, and foster a safe environment for all to achieve.

See this Instructional Move in action:

[Fostering Belonging with Classroom Norms](#)

Read more about this Instructional Move (link to additional information)

[How can I create, uphold, and share responsibility for classroom norms?](#)

[Getting Started with Establishing Ground Rules](#)