
Reflection on Rules for Classroom Conduct: Opinion Essay

Introduction

Rules for classroom conduct are purposefully stated statements that provide students with guiding principles for the types of behaviors that are either mandatory or prohibited. As an instance, it focuses attention on how to be understanding rather than on whether a student is speaking aloud in class. These standards should appeal to the common sense of students while leading them to be thoughtful about how they behave in the classroom. Classroom rules are necessary since they serve many purposes for learning goals. It secures the comfort of a cooperative environment as well as maintains politeness among students, teachers, and school staff. Standards for classroom conduct should be printed out and obviously presented in the classroom in the form of bulletin boards. An eye-catching bulletin board will build interest in every student.

In and outside the classroom, bulletin boards that make learning visible show what we value, offer opportunities for reflection, help learners make connections across subject matter, and contribute to a collective body of knowledge. One of the essential teaching strategies is to structure a bulletin board of the rules. This should be approached with the cooperation of the students in setting rules they fully understand and flexibly apply. In addition, a classroom contract must be set with the help of students to maintain effective class discipline.

To build interest, we chose a space theme bulletin board where each planet represents a certain rule. We believe space exploration is a brilliant way to bring the wonder of the universe into everyday classrooms, since it dares students to explore the unknown, developing a taste of adventure and pushing. The following rules are intended for the elementary student of Cycle 2 (grades 4 to 6).

Classroom Rules

Most probably, setting rules and procedures for your classroom at the beginning of the school year is considered one of the most effective methods to maintain a healthy classroom environment in the world of teaching. It clearly provides directions and responsibilities for every member in the class to commit to. It also provides a sense of safety, calmness, responsibility, and predictability to the classroom.

“A rule identifies general expectations or standards; a single rule can encompass a wide range of expected behaviors. A procedure communicates expectations for specific behaviors. Effective teachers use both rules and procedures.

For example, you might establish the rule “Respect other students and their property” and also create separate procedures for returning books to the appropriate place in the classroom and participating respectfully in class discussions.”

Rules can vary according to the grades and levels but should be presented by every teacher. Nonetheless, there are common rules between all classes, as the time for leaving, time for

speaking, and time for engagement.

“Research clearly supports the notion that designing and implementing rules and procedures in class, and even at home, significantly influences students' behavior and learning. But research also indicates that rules and procedures should not simply be imposed on students; they should be created with students.”

As a qualified teacher, you should take your time to explain each rule, involving your students in putting their effort in them as much as you can. Such involvement can help students in obeying the rules for they consider these rules are their own.

In your classroom, you should consider such areas: General Classroom Behavior/ Beginning and Ending the Period or the Day/ Transitions and Interruptions/ Use of Materials and Equipment/ Group Work/ Seat Work and Teacher-Led Activities

However, you shouldn't overload your students with rules from every aspect. No more than 8 rules must be given to a class to accomplish your targets. Furthermore, your rules should be direct, positive, and precise, making it easier for the students to comprehend them

Before deciding the rules to set for your students to follow, “take time to reflect on your beliefs, perspectives, and current practices regarding rules and procedures for the classroom. Your responses will give you a basis for comparison as you read about the strategies recommended in these modules”. Such reflections may be as:

- What kinds of rules and procedures do you typically set for your classroom?
- What are some of the reasons for setting classroom rules and procedures?
- How might classroom rules and procedures differ from the elementary to the secondary level?
- Should students be involved in establishing rules and procedures? If so, how?
- Setting rules and procedures is not usually a process that students think of as fun. What are some creative, interesting ways to engage them in the process?
- Think of a time when a classroom seemed to be well managed. What general rules or expectations for a behavior did students seem to be following?
- Creating a classroom with no rules or one with too many highly specific rules can lead to problems. What are your thoughts about how to create the right balance?
- Posting lists in a visible place in the classroom is one way to help students remember classroom rules and procedures. What are some other ways?

In addition, the way to motivate students to follow rules is by deriving those rules from what is most valuable: our values. Students should be given an explanation about how important it is to know why they have rules. Students have rules for three reasons: (1) to help keep them safe, (2) to help them get along and work together, and (3) to help them learn.

Students should be helping their teacher to write the classroom rules so that the classroom will be a pleasant place for all of us. Students and teachers will talk about how they should treat each other and how we can all get along and not hurt each other. If a child states a rule negatively, such as, “Don't come to school late,” ask how it could be stated in a positive way. Ask your students all the different things you do when a student breaks Rule 1. Do they see you as enforcing rules in a consistent way?

In the bulletin board we created, the space theme was emphasized. In our space, a solar system is located. By definition, a system is “a set of connected things or parts forming a complex whole, in particular”. Each planet is connected to its neighboring planet, and all are connected to a common sun –the center of the system. Through this theme, we aimed to show the rules as a connected system of consecutive behaviors, one leading to another, and all leading to a common goal: success.

We chose different classroom rules appeared to be the most effective for stable classroom discipline, each is located on one of the 7 planets of the solar system:

The Uranus planet matches up to the “We respect the property of others” rule. This encompasses the need for students to learn that other people will hold them accountable for neglect and mischief as it applies to their property just like they would. The students need to understand that they need to treat other people’s property with the same respect they would want other people to treat their belongings. They also need to understand the very real potential consequences for disregarding this rule.

The Jupiter planet relates to the “We do nothing that risks harm to others.” This simply means that students are to maintain a distance from another's personal space. This covers any undue physical contact, which may harm or injure others, or that of a sexual nature.

EARTH The third rule is “We always try do our best”. Students should be motivated to perform their tasks as well as they possibly can. They must be taught that we can never guarantee success, and failure is accepted while trying until they accomplish their goals. In fact, the measure of success is the knowledge they gained after giving it all they had. A teacher should explain to her class that doing their best means finishing their jobs right, striving for success, and working hard without complaining. Consequently, this can make students feel good about themselves, regardless of whether they accomplished their goals or not.

SATURN The fourth rule is “We learn from one another”. Learning involves a student’s engagement with the materials, participation, and collaboration. Students must demonstrate a process, argue, and analyze each other’s opinions. This can be accomplished through partner discussions, research projects, groups critical analysis exercises, and others.

The Mars planet corresponds to “We raise our hands to speak.” Students are expected to raise their hands and wait to be called on before speaking. Most of the time, a class functions more smoothly when students raise their hands before interrupting the teacher or other students. But when a discussion becomes intense, students may just offer ideas without raising their hands. Interrupting this great discussion with a warning about hand-raising would be inappropriate.

VENUS The sixth rule is “We respect different points of view”. Respect and take pride in the contributions from diverse individuals should be implemented in the students’ values. Being respectful helps students to value differences and appreciate others’ qualities. This brings out the fullest potential of one another. A student being respected feels more safe and better expresses himself. It builds a feeling of trust and wellbeing.

NEPTUNE, the seventh planet, is “We listen when others are speaking”. Listening has many benefits in the classroom environment. It removes distractions and maintains calm and respectful. It helps to better focus on what others are talking. Becoming a better hearer also

helps for a wide range, by becoming more empathetic and unselfconscious. It is a sign of respect that leads to deeper relationships. Indeed, you can learn a lot about your peers and community by simply listening to them.

Classroom Contract

A classroom contract is a framework with expectations of certain behaviors. It is a collaborative work of teachers and students in order to reach a common contract which is agreed by all the students. This helps in achieving ultimate student ownership. Classroom contracts can be flexibly changed when sudden situations arise.

A classroom contract might be very beneficial for classroom management by giving children certain responsibilities. This, in consequence, can be more helpful than just instructing students on how to behave and can lead to an appropriately managed classroom rather than a continuous “war” between the teacher and her/ his students.

Being positive is essential for setting a contract. In order to accomplish your contract, you can follow five steps:

1. List unacceptable behaviors; when brainstorming unaccepted behaviors according to them, students can be convinced to avoid such acts.
2. Establish consequences; a student determining the reasons behind each consequence can better understand the importance of good behavior. A teacher can explain the effects of an off-task or disruptive behavior on the flow of the learning activities, in order to show the students what is right and what is wrong.
3. Draft the contract; organize the information with the help of your students.
4. Sign the contract; students engaged in signing the contract can feel a sense of responsibility to obey what has been written on that contract, for they showed their agreement through their signing.
5. Review the contract; changes are accepted when any new situation appears. This change should also be done with the students’ participation.

You can approach an effective classroom contract through three considerations. By reflecting on them, students understand the necessity of being valued members and the importance of apologizing whenever a rule is broken. This leads to a safe and reflective environment in the classroom throughout the school year.

1. ASK STUDENTS about their needs in order to succeed. This can lead to a list of behaviors and expectations to encourage accomplishments.
2. POST THIS LIST and refer to it throughout the year whenever it was broken and add when you deal with new issues in the class.
3. USE A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH when the rules are not obeyed. “A restorative justice approach requires asking questions:

What happened? What part did you play in it? Who was affected by what you did? What can you do to repair the harm?

Classroom Contract Sample.

Our classroom will be a peaceful cooperative environment where everyone shares the fullest amount of knowledge. To accomplish this goal, we agree that the following expectations are needed in our class. We will try our best to accomplish these rules:

- We respect the property of others
- We do nothing that risks harm to others
- We always try to do our best
- We learn from one another
- We raise our hands to speak
- We respect different points of view
- We listen when others are speaking

We also agree and will make our best to fulfill the following statements:

- We do please
- We do thank yous
- We do kindness
- We do honest
- We do compliments
- We do May I?
- We do clean and tidy
- We do 'Raise Your Hand'
- We do happy
- We do its okay
- We do Quit
- We do healthy
- We do learning
- We do listening
- We do politeness
- We do abiding rules

In addition, we will be responsible for other issues, as:

- We will be on time.
- We will be prepared at the start of the class.
- We will fully do our homework.
- We will copy all the notes, request arrangements with our teacher for any missed work, and do any missed homework in case of any absence.
- We will not use any form of technology that isn't effective in reaching the learning goals.
- We will use proper language when discussing and having conversations with our peers and the teacher.
- We will be awake and totally engage while the class is conducted.
- We will be responsible and positive all the way through.
- We will succeed.

In consequence, if we chose not to approach the statements expected, we realize the following outcomes:

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- 1st time Verbal Warning
 - 2nd-time Time-Out
 - 3rd time Loss of Play Time
 - 4th time Student Counseling
 - 5th time Parents/ Principal Meeting

We have read our classroom contract and understood the syllabus and agreed upon them. As a result, we sign this classroom contract knowing what is expected from us in our class.

- Students signature/ fingerprints.
- Teacher's signature.
- Date

Conclusion

In the future, teachers can refer back to the rules and inform new students that these rules were created as a class with the input of former students. Classroom rules must be displaying them (whether on a poster or a bulletin board) in a manner that can be easily viewed and referenced. Everyone is expected to establish a natural system for consequences.

But beyond boards and posters, the most effective way for teachers to teach expectations is to reinforce them on a daily basis. As situations come up that require conformity, teachers should consistently make sure to verbally communicate these expectations to students.

Upon that, by making sure that as prospective teachers, we exemplify the required behaviors and we move from just announcing and enforcing to actually living out our expectations in a way others can emulate.