

Lesson Plan: Creating a Classroom Contract (setting 'Classroom Expectations')

Aims of Classroom Contracts:

The start of a new school year is an important time for the teacher and learners to get to know one another and to build trust and to become comfortable with one another. A classroom contract gives the learners the chance to have a voice in how they want to work together in their classroom, with one another and with the teacher. By collaborating to create the contract, everyone owns it and is responsible for sticking to it. By signing the contract, every learner commits to behaving in the ways agreed upon in the contract. It makes clear what is expected in the classroom.

It is important that the rules the learners suggest, discuss and finally agree on should come **from** them, not be imposed on them by the teacher. This will mean the learners have more of a voice and more control over what they want to happen in the classroom. The final list of agreed classroom expectations will be a way of setting boundaries from the start of the year/term.

Lesson Objective:

By the end of the lesson, the class and teacher will have created a classroom contract that they all agree to follow as a way of guiding them in positive behaviour and excellent learning.

Materials (if possible):

Flipchart paper/pens or whiteboard/pens (or chalkboard/chalk); pieces of paper for groups to write down their group's 5 suggested rules; manilla paper or flipchart for the final, agreed list of rules to all sign.

Suggested time: 2 lessons of 40 minutes

Lesson Steps:

1. Teacher will write the words "Classroom Expectations" / "Classroom Contract" on the board. Discuss these key terms with the class and explain the lesson objective.
2. Teacher will ask learners if they know what 'rules' are and why they are important. Allow a range of learners to respond and ensure girls are targeted to share their ideas.
3. Teacher will ask learners if they know what a 'contract' is and if they are unsure, have a real-life example of a contract (employment, marriage or any other) to show them and talk through what it is, what it means in terms of commitment from those who sign and clarify that all learners now understand what a contract is.
4. Divide the class into groups of 4, mixed gender, and ask each group to agree on **five classroom expectations** that they believe are important for the class and its contract. (The classroom expectations they develop should also include **a reason**, to explain why that rule is important. The rule should also have a positive focus, not a negative one e.g. **Arrive on time for all lessons** rather than Don't be late for lessons.)
5. The teacher will give the class an example, using a 'template' to follow, such as the following:
"We agree to _____ because _____."

Example: “We agree to *talk to one person at a time* because *when we all talk at the same time it is hard to hear what people are saying, and it is important that everyone has a chance to speak and give their ideas.*”

6. When the groups are ready, each group will present their five classroom expectations to the rest of the class. There may be several that are suggested by the groups that have the same, or a similar, idea, such as ‘showing respect’ or ‘being ready for the lesson’. The teacher will ensure that the classroom expectations are not duplicated or repeated.
7. The teacher will discuss with the class to create **one list of Classroom Expectations for the Classroom Contract**, based on the learners’ suggestions. If there are a lot of different rules, the teacher will ask the learners to vote (hands up) on the list of classroom expectations and agree to select ‘the top **8- 10** expectations. It is important that all the learners and the teacher agree on **all** of the rules.
8. If possible, use a clean piece of display paper (or even a clean sack or other recycled material) to write out the final list of **Classroom Expectations** on the **Classroom Contract**. (If you wish, ask the groups of students to write one of the classroom expectations out neatly on a piece of A4 blank paper. You can then stick each expectation onto the Classroom Contract.)
9. The Classroom Contract should be clearly labelled as ‘Classroom Contract’ at the top. Then the following statement should be written by the teacher:
In our class, we all agree to follow the following Classroom Expectations in our Classroom Contract:
10. When the flipchart poster is ready, with the heading, the statement and the Classroom Expectations, ask the learners to come and sign and date it. The teacher must sign and date it too before hanging the contract on a wall where it is clearly visible for everyone.
11. Agree with the class when they will review the classroom contract to see if they need to add/remove or change any of the rules (Termly? Annually?)

12. Discussion

If there is time, have a class discussion using some or all of the following prompt questions: (i) How can we make sure that everyone agrees to and follows the Classroom Contract?

(ii) What should we do if someone **does not follow** the expectations in our contract?

(iii) How can we make sure we all feel comfortable talking openly in class together?