

# Developing Classroom Rules

Classroom rules create a sense of order and expectation in space shared by class members. Students will have a better chance of following the rules if they create them together.

## **Guidelines for rules:**

- Rules stem from personal and group goals, and are the way these will happen.
- The fewer, the better.
- Rules should make sense, and everyone should understand the importance.
- State rules in the positive.
- Post them where everyone can see them.
- Understand that the rules travel with the students, and apply everywhere.

## **Before Rules:**

- Establish signals for quiet - visual, aural, and kinesthetic.
- Establish a predictable routine for beginning each day or class session that includes, sharing, a group activity (singing, moving, choral speaking, Brain Gym), announcements/news.
- Set goals and wishes for the year. (Individuals do this in every class.)

## **A Process for Creating Rules:**

- Discuss “why rules?”
- Brainstorm rules for all types of class activities.
- Categorize the brainstormed list into larger categories.
- Develop global rules for each category.
- Determine non-punitive, fair consequences for breaking rules.
- Post rules, everyone signs them (have a rule-signing celebration).
- Write rules in journals, send home to parents.

In the upper grades, design class rules as a Constitution, modeled after the US Constitution. At the heart of rules is the need for order, and the willingness of participants to agree for the common good. As long as the rules are based on ethical human behavior, they provide the framework for students to become responsible for themselves, their relationships, and their learning.

Find more details at The Responsive Classroom website, <http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/>. Read Rules in School, by Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton, Deborah Porter, and Chip Wood, which you can find at the website above.