

This School is Your School

Students remember best what they have created themselves. To establish school or class rules, have the create a parody of "This Land is Your Land." Here's how:

1. Play the song and learn the traditional words, but Woody Guthrie. Guthrie created this song in protest of the way the Okies were being treated in California as they traveled west to escape the dust bowl. There are many verses not in school songbooks. One of my favorites:

As I was walkin' - I saw a sign there
And that sign said - no tress passin'
But on the other side it didn't say nothin!
Now that side was made for you and me!

From THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

words and music by Woody Guthrie

©1956 (renewed 1984), 1958 (renewed 1986) and 1970 TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc. (BMI)

More lyrics at <http://www.arlo.net/lyrics/this-land.shtml>

Bruce Springsteen has a particularly good version on the "Live" CD set.

2. Hum the melody, and notice that the melodies of the refrain and verses are the same.
3. Together, make a list of the important things that make (or can make) your school the best that it can be.
4. Create a refrain, giving the main idea of how the school is best, or use the example below.
Example from Hamilton Avenue School, Greenwich, CT:

This school is your school, this school is my school.

We try to follow that famous golden rule.

Do unto others as you would have them do to you.

We make this school the best place it can be.

5. List issues that make the school less than it can be, and then identify possible solutions to these problems.
6. Small groups each choose one of the problems, and create a verse, identifying the problem and the recommended solution. Add movement and perform it for the rest of the class.
7. Write the text of the song with refrain and verses. All learn the whole song and share it with others.

Note: Substitute "class," (might get some interesting rhymes), or "room" to adapt this idea to a smaller situation.

Upper grade students can create a song, then share it with the younger students to teach the younger ones how to behave in a great school.