

One very important goal that I have for the first grade classroom is to create a community atmosphere in which all students feel important, special, and loved for who they are. I want them to feel safe and comfortable in their strengths *and* in their weaknesses. I want them to know it is OK to make a mistake, and that we all make mistakes and learn from them. I want the children to know that they can learn, and have many strategies and friends who will help them learn in this classroom. I want the children to feel confident in their learning, and I will tell the children “they are all teachers.” I don’t give each other answers, but we all help each other with hints and clues in order to ensure that everyone is successful. I also give our friends “wait time” to think about what they want to say, if they have a hard time putting their thoughts into words. The children will learn that in our classroom, we celebrate each child’s uniqueness and diversity and rejoice in every child’s learning and success.

In order to create this community atmosphere, the students and I will have to discuss and practice some expectations that need to be followed in our classroom. It is very important as teachers to establish these the first few weeks and allow the students to practice them. The students need to know and understand what is expected from them, as well as what the consequences are for poor choices. We will brainstorm together the first few weeks many different expectations that would help everyone be safe, kind and able to learn. I want the children to come up with these – to give them a say in what our community expectations are and to give them **ownership** of these rules and expectations.

Children need to believe they are included and have a voice in the decisions we make as a class. Based on our classroom discussion and decisions, the students and I will make a final Classroom Constitution designating our classroom expectations and we will all sign it together. We will practice these expectations repeatedly and discuss positive choices. All consequences will be positive learning times for students and will be focused on removing a privilege rather than giving a negative consequence.

Throughout the year we will actively promote a democratic classroom and the students will participate in class meetings where it will be a time to discuss problems and concerns as well as recognize celebrations of good choices. Meetings will be positive, as the children will understand that they are **not** in trouble, but that they are active members in the classroom and can solve their own problems when given the tools.

I am very excited to be a part of this classroom community where everyone is appreciated and loved for who they are! By working together for the same goal, your children and I will have a wonderful year! ☺

*Adapted From Melanie Beck*