

TOOL: Developing Schoolwide Norms

Schoolwide norms are a set of agreed-upon expectations of how all students and staff will behave and interact to contribute to a positive school climate. Once developed, it's important to create opportunities to share and reinforce these norms with all staff, students and community partners. In addition to posting the norms throughout the building, many schools develop lesson plans, host school assemblies, and embed norms into daily school activities. It's vital to regularly reflect on the norms, celebrate examples, address lapses, and keep them alive and authentic throughout the school community all year long.

Below are some suggested approaches for collaboratively developing schoolwide norms:

Elementary Schools

Teacher-led classroom voting

1. Ask each classroom or homeroom teacher to introduce this exercise by explaining the definition, purpose, and importance of norms and giving examples of what norms might look like.
2. Teachers can then ask students guiding questions, such as:
 - **What type of school do you want to be a part of?**
¿De qué tipo de escuela quieres formar parte?
 - **What would it look like and sound like?**
¿Cómo se vería y se escucharía?
 - **How would people talk to each other?**
¿Cómo se hablaría la gente?
 - **How would people resolve a problem or a conflict?**
¿Cómo resolvería la gente un problema o un conflicto?
3. Teachers then work with their class to summarize their responses into three to five positively-stated norms, and submit their class's list to the SEL team.
4. The SEL team reviews answer from all classrooms for common themes, selecting about 10 agreements.
5. The SEL team can then create a survey in which all students and staff vote on the norms that best represent the common themes, and choose the top three to five norms.

Middle or High Schools:

Student-led classroom voting

With older youth, norms can be more powerful and engaging if students are invited to lead the norm-development process.

1. Identify student representatives from each classroom that represent the diversity of the school. It's important that representatives are not your traditional school leaders, but students who represent different perspectives, achievement levels, behaviors, cultures, values, etc.

2. Engage the group in a discussion around the meaning and purpose of schoolwide norms. This group should then decide on a process for engaging the larger student body in creating norms. You may choose to use the following steps as guidance for a process:
3. In each classroom or homeroom, the student representative introduces the exercise by explaining that as a school they will be developing schoolwide norms and that all students and staff are invited to submit recommendations for norms.
4. The student representative then explains the definition, purpose and importance of norms and gives examples of what norms might look like.
5. The student representative asks students to share reflections on guiding questions, such as:
 - **What type of school do you want to be a part of?**
¿De qué tipo de escuela quieres formar parte?
 - **What would it look like and sound like?**
¿Cómo se vería y se escucharía?
 - **How would people talk to each other?**
¿Cómo se hablaría la gente?
 - **How would people resolve a problem or a conflict?**
¿Cómo resolvería la gente un problema o un conflicto?
6. Next, the student representative opens the floor for suggestions, keeping notes on a whiteboard or chart paper until they have 5 to 10 suggestions for norms. Student representatives then submit their classroom’s suggestions to the SEL team.
7. The SEL team can then create a survey in which all students and staff vote on the norms that best represent the common themes, and choose the top three to five norms.

Alternative Approach

Appropriate for PreK-12

Beginning with Classroom Shared Agreements: Ask each classroom or homeroom to create a set of [classroom shared agreements](#). The SEL team collects those shared agreements and looks for common themes that would be applicable to a schoolwide setting.

The SEL team then creates two to three draft versions of schoolwide norms, explains how they were developed, and asks the whole school to vote on a final set of schoolwide norms.