



**CLIMATE CONNECTION**

Information and strategies  
linking Climate and School Safety.

# Revisiting Expectations & Rules

Climate Connection is a publication  
of the NYS Center for School Safety.

**The new calendar year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on our school climate!**



Expectations and rules are a vital component of classroom management and an important topic to revisit and refresh in the new year. How our students *feel* and *act* in the school setting impacts their engagement and contributes to school climate. Research has shown that teaching rules and routines at the beginning of the year and consistently over time can increase academic achievement and task engagement (Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Johnson, Stoner, & Green, 1996).

January is an opportune time to revisit our expectations & rules with students to determine if there is a need for clarification or adjustment. The process of establishing a school environment that is structured and welcoming for all students can begin with expectations and rules that are **clear, concise, and positively stated.**

## Qualities of Effective Classroom and Building Rules



**Observable** – can be seen and observed by others



**Measurable** – can be measured, assessed, or counted



**Positively Stated** – phrased without negative language; are prosocial versus zero tolerance; focus on what to do rather than what not to do



**Understandable** – students know what is expected of them; language is age appropriate



**Always Applicable** – universally and consistently applied to all students; not limited to specific settings





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## Expectations

- Clarify **how** we want students and staff to act across all settings  
(e.g., "Be Safe. Be Responsible. Be Respectful.")
- Generally uses broad language
- Are consistent across settings

- *Create clarity and consistency.*
- *Supports social development.*
- *Helps students build an understanding of community.*
- *Provides guidance for students on how to engage and interact in their learning environment.*

## Rules

- Clarify **what** the expectations look like in a specific setting  
(i.e., "Raise a quiet hand")
- Might be more specific based on the setting  
(i.e., "To be safe in this classroom we wear goggles when handling lab equipment")
- May differ between classes or settings

## Ask Your Students Activity

Use the following questions to explore how your expectations and rules might be improved.

- Where does our class succeed?
- What is unclear or hard to understand about our classroom rules?
- What does our class struggle with the most? Why might that be?
- Do we know **what** is expected, **why** it is important, and **how** to meet the expectation?

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## How to Positively State a Rule

### **Not Positively Stated**

- No Cell Phones
- No talking back
- No calling out
- No tipping back in chairs
- No eating

### **Positively Stated**

- Cell phones stored in backpacks
- Speak respectfully to others
- Raise a quiet hand
- 6 legs on the floor when seated
- Food allowed during snack time only

## Tips for Revisiting Rules

### Review Your Rules



- Are the rules legibly written and posted throughout the classroom?
- Are the rules clear, concise and written in a way so that all students can understand them?
- Where do our students succeed and where do they struggle?

### Consider



- Were students involved in the creation of these rules?
- Have you referred to the rules routinely throughout the year?
- Have you taught, modeled, and reviewed the rules?
- Have we shared our expectations and rules with parents/caregivers?

### Revise



- Gather student, staff, stakeholder input and account for their suggestions.
- Consider the way rules are written to ensure they are positively stated and clearly understood by all students.
- Revisit the rules that are most often misunderstood and consider how they might be revised.