

Class Meetings

There are many published resources out there discussing the purposes of class meetings and the various possible formats for them. Here are the procedures we follow:

1. We first read the class-meeting rules together. The students developed this short rubric at the beginning of the year. At first, they had a huge list of rules, but through conversation and debate, they narrowed them down:
 - a. Everyone should be seen.
 - b. Project your voice.
 - c. Raise your hand to speak.
 - d. Wait your turn to speak.
 - e. Pick a variety of people to speak.

1. Students begin the meeting by noting random acts of kindness. This is an opportunity for students to notice the small things that other students are doing to help make the classroom a positive place to be.
 - a. If it is a meeting that will follow a student agenda item, we consult the chart on which students write the possible agenda items.
 - b. The student who wrote the agenda item introduces the topic and explains his or her thinking. If it is the teacher's agenda item that addresses a success or concern, then the teacher explains his or her thinking before opening the discussion.
 - c. If it's a topic for class discussion, then we open the meeting to all students, and the discussion begins.
 - d. The goal is to allow students to express their opinions and ideas regarding the topic. We want to provide students with the chance to have some ownership over their education. Occasionally, the students come to an agreement on the topic, while at other times, they agree that there is too much to discuss right then. In this case, students try to agree on next steps and who will be responsible for what.
 - e. We close the discussion.

Successes and Concerns

One change that I made to the process recently was to add a grade-level meeting called Success and Concerns. Once every couple of weeks when I am working with a single grade level (fifth or sixth), I will gather the students in a circle for a very brief check-in before beginning class. The purpose is to make sure kids have an opportunity to share what's on their minds. This is not a discussion. It's simply a chance to be heard. It is a way for me to take a quick reading of any students I might need to talk with later.

Here's the procedure for a Success and Concerns meeting:

1. Gather all students up front in a circle.
2. Conduct the meeting in a round-robin format.
 - a. Students recount a success in their life or pass to the next student.
 - b. Students talk about a concern in their life or pass to the next student.
3. Give directions for the beginning of class, and everyone gets back to work.