

Capturing Kids' Hearts Tip of the Month

Topic – “Social Contracts”

What is it?

A Social Contract is a poster created in each class by students that lists agreed upon behaviors for how to treat each other. The Social Contract is created by responding to four questions:

- How do you want to be treated by me (leader)?
- How do you want to be treated by each other?
- How do you think I (the leader) want to be treated by you?
- How do you want to treat each other when there is conflict?

Personal take

Social Contracts guide our lives already if you think about it. Following the rules and laws when driving a vehicle, being quiet when in a library, and adhering to a code of conduct at work are all things we do that are similar to a Social Contract in a classroom. I find value in the Social Contracts because it empowers the class to get away from rules and focus more on the relationships within the group. This is powerful when we talk about teaching our kids critical skills that will help them no matter their future path.

Purpose behind it

The main purpose is to create self-managing students and groups. When students are the ones who create it they are more inclined to be the ones who want to make sure it is being followed. Students can “check” each other by putting a sideways thumb in the air if others in the room need to be reminded of the contract. We also have student raters who share out how the class is doing in accordance with the contract by giving specific examples. The Social Contract is the glue that holds the group together in all situations.

Helpful hints

- ✓ Show students why Social Contracts are relevant and how it applies to our everyday lives is crucial.
- ✓ Pick one or two words from the Social Contract each day or week to focus on. Have a class rater give examples of how well the class is doing in those areas.

Challenge

Think about creating a Social Contract with a group you do life with. You typically have expectations for how you want these groups of people to function. Why not take some time with everyone as a group and talk about their expectations before trying to accomplish something? I would be willing to bet that front-loading your work with this added step will save you time in the end.