

## Contracting

[JONATHAN DEE]

Contracting, I think, is so important for the whole year. That it's an agreement literally between me and the students. And I'm going to hold myself to the contract, just as I hope the students do the same.

And we'll talk about the consequences. If you break the contract, what does that mean in the real world and also in our classroom? I hope that they understand that it's not just me holding one side and them the other, that they can hold each other accountable, certainly being respectful of each other and taking ownership of their work, but understanding that the class, for it to be reflective, can't just be me in the front and them just listening to me. But it has to be a community effort where they're going to hold each other accountable, hopefully that they feel comfortable calling each other out in a respectful way or encouraging each other to remember the contract.

Again, the contract's going to be in their binders. It's going to be on the wall. It's going to be something that, hopefully, it just becomes second nature. I don't have to everyday stop and remember the rules or remember the expectations, that eventually, hopefully soon, it will be something that everyone just naturally keeps in mind as they enter the classroom.

I think with any activities in the first week or two of school, there's that unknown. Students don't necessarily know me. And I have 80 students. And I can't possibly know all of their attitudes and personalities just yet. But I think I'm always a little nervous. Will students take this seriously? Will they understand why it's important to have a reflective classroom? I've tried to do that in the first couple of days leading up to today's lesson.

We're going to develop a contract together today that can hopefully establish this as one of those reflective classrooms for the whole year, not just today because we're doing the activity today, but every day this is a place where hopefully you're feeling comfortable. I can't guarantee you you're always going to have that level of comfort. We're human. Different factors may come in from outside in our lives. But hopefully in this class, you'll feel comfortable.

So I use that word "contract." Can someone tell us what does contract mean? Or where have you heard it?

[STUDENT 1]

It might say what you have to do for something.

[JONATHAN DEE]

Now if you're signing that contract, it's not just the person. It's not just one person. A contract is an agreement between two groups. If we're making a contract for a reflective classroom, our goal is to have that classroom. What would happen if people are breaking-- and myself included. I'm in this class. What would happen if people started breaking expectations in our contract?

[STUDENT 2]

Office.

[JONATHAN DEE]

OK, so that there might be a consequence, like going to the office. But think about how would it affect our class?

[STUDENT 3]

Bad.

[JONATHAN DEE]

Let's be a little more specific, a little more descriptive.

[STUDENT 4:]

It wouldn't be reflective.

[JONATHAN DEE]

It wouldn't be reflective. First couple of days this year, the goal has been, how can we get the most out of this class? We're all here together. It's 45 minutes out of the day. I don't want you just to feel like you're going through the motions. You're in this class, and hopefully you're getting the most out of it as possible. You're learning the most.

I want this to be hopefully an interesting 45 minutes of your day. And that's one of the reasons why we're developing this contract. You guys are going to come up with some possible expectations for our class contract. And each group is going to get one paper here.

Come up with three to five-- I put the word "rules" down there, but I feel like rules-- Gabe mentioned you might go to the office. And I don't want us to be thinking about necessarily those types of punishments. Yes, some of that can happen in a school, of course. But I want-- I think maybe the better word that I have here is expectation. Come up with three to five expectations that members of our class should follow to create that reflective classroom.

Again, refer to the notes that we've talked about the past few days. Think about the journal that we just went through to come up with these expectations. On your papers, you're going to write down the expectation. And then in the bigger box, it says rationale, which basically is asking you, why or how does that expectation help create the reflective classroom? So you're explaining why your group developed that idea.

I'm going to give you five minutes. So, again, please turn around. So you're going to talk to the people in your group. And I'll be around to help. And then we'll come back together and start making our contract.

And how frustrating is it when someone jumps in when you have your hand up?

[STUDENT 5]

It's just annoying because then you're like, OK, I've got nothing to say.

[JONATHAN DEE]

What might that make you do in the future if that happens all the time in the class?

[STUDENT 6]

Maybe not ask anything.

[JONATHAN DEE]

Put your hand down and just be quiet. So when you guys write about peers, you're talking about other people in the class. You're being mindful of other people--

keeping that in mind. Not just worried about yourself, but worried about the whole class as a group. I like that.

And now I was able to check in with each group. A lot of great ideas. Together, we're going to go around the room at least twice. Each group's going to share one idea. Gabe's group, what do you have?

[STUDENT 7]

Respecting your peers. Treat others the way you want to be treated.

[JONATHAN DEE]

The golden rule-- it's going create comfort?

[STUDENT 7]

Yes.

[JONATHAN DEE]

Like you're feeling safe. You guys have something else?

[STUDENT 8]

Be thoughtful to things your peers say.

[JONATHAN DEE]

Be thoughtful. How can you-- what does that look like, being thoughtful?

[STUDENT 8]

Listen to what they see and think about what they're thinking.

[JONATHAN DEE]

OK. So maybe I'm thinking of the word "empathy," to feel empathy for other people. Be thoughtful of others. Show empathy. That's awesome. If we can do that,

then I think we've had a great year, if we can all develop empathy. And we're going to feel like this is a great place to come and learn.

I think the lesson went really well. I heard from a lot of different students. It wasn't just one person dominating, which is the whole idea of having a class contract. And I think that students really seem to buy into that idea that this is going to help make our class more effective and productive. They might not use those words, but I hope maybe more interesting for them throughout the whole year.

I think tomorrow they're going to come to class and their contracts will be written. And we'll sign them, and we'll go through that whole process, which we talked about-- what does a contract mean-- in the period today. And overall, I think that I was really pleased that most students really seemed to buy into the idea.

I think early on in the year, students are always looking to the teacher. And I notice that even just in the first couple days before this lesson that all eyes seem to be on me, which I think is natural. We've all been in classrooms. But I want students to really feel that it's a community and I'm not just their leader. Certainly, I'll be the educator leading us through different lessons, but I wanted them to feel that I'm part of the class, too.

Some of them, when they were working on coming up with their own expectations or rules for the contract, a lot of them would have language like, listen to the teacher. And I was able to stop and talk with them and say, should there be other-- who else should be listened to? And some of them, I think, knew that they all belonged in that but were nervous because I was looming over them. And we were able to get out of them, either in those small discussions or in the larger group discussion, that everyone's opinions matter. Everyone's opinions should be valued, not just the teacher. And I really think that if we follow that contract, that will lead to that more collective classroom.