

# How do we all want to be in our perfect worlds?

Each of us has a picture in our minds of how we want our personal world to be. This vision of our perfect planet contains the people most important to us, along with favorite activities, feelings, foods, decorations, surroundings and more.

Conflict arises when our vision of perfect collides with someone else's version of perfect. Vanilla ice cream at your birthday party when chocolate is your favorite? Ka-boom! A crash has occurred between your perfect world and whoever picked out the ice cream.

In our families and in our classrooms we have a challenge to align all participants' perfect worlds

in a peaceful position. How can new ever hope of doing that?

The process I'm about to describe worked in my elementary classroom. I've also used it with families, college roommates, and businesses to help each group create a unified view.

On the first day of school each



year I held a meeting with the entire class. We went around our circle and each student and staff member answered the question: How do we want our classroom to be? As each person spoke, I listed his or her comments on a sheet of sticky flip chart paper. Since I was also part of the group, I felt free to add my comments at the end, which helped include any ideas that were overlooked.

As our list grew certain themes emerged. For example, the list might include items such as: we want our classroom to be a fun place to learn, peaceful, kind, clean, bubbling, quiet, everybody included, problem solving, respectful.

With this list of two or three pages visible on the wall, I posed my next question: What rules do we need to make sure we have this kind of classroom?

Each person was asked to contribute ideas. I suggested we vote and limit the rules to five in order that the rules would be easy to understand and remember. The rules varied year to year, and were also subject to change in later class meetings. The rules would look something like this:

- Give friendly reminders of the rules and how we want our class to be.
- Do your work.
- Respect everybody.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Have a can-do attitude.

After the rules were written on



**Maren Schmidt**

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the flip chart paper and posted in full view, I asked my next question: How are we going to enforce these rules?

Each student was invited to comment on what consequences should occur. Some years the group suggested and voted for repercussions such as missing out on group activities, having to write apology letters, or going in front of a student tribunal.

That evening I would type up the three questions and their corresponding answers. Everyone in the class would sign a copy, which was posted in the classroom. Each member of the group received a signed copy for their portfolio.

Enforcement of the rules was easy, because the rules were rarely broken. With these three questions we aligned our personal visions of our perfect classroom. Our class, except for the occasional bump of personal worlds, was how we wanted it to be. For example, if we were served strawberry or pistachio ice cream, instead of chocolate, we it still would be a fun party.

*Kids Talk™ is an award-winning column dealing with childhood development issues written by Maren Stark Schmidt, M.Ed. She has more than 25 years experience working with young children and is the author of Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents. Contact her via*



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