The Unwritten Rules

How a shared expectation takes shape

S.6.9 "Explore the formation of group norms."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the problem that sparks a new expectation, circle the proposed practice, and number two later moments when the group reinforces or adapts it.

The Podcast Crew

1. At the first meeting of the school podcast crew, six students tried to plan an episode about the cafeteria. No one had written rules for discussion. When Maya began pitching an idea, Leo interrupted twice, and two others started talking over her. The group missed a useful suggestion about interviewing cafeteria workers. At the next meeting, Maya held up a pencil and said, "Could we let the person holding it finish?" The others agreed to try it. A repeated problem and a proposed solution had begun to shape an expectation about taking turns.

2. During the next three meetings, the crew passed the pencil before offering ideas. When someone waited, other members nodded and made space for that person's point. When Leo spoke without the pencil, a teammate quietly pointed to it, and he stopped. No teacher enforced the practice. Still, members began to expect it, and waiting became a way to show that everyone's ideas mattered. By the fourth meeting, students sometimes took turns without passing the pencil. Their approval, reminders, and repetition had turned one suggestion into an informal group norm, a shared expectation for behavior.

3. The norm did not stay fixed. During a live interview, passing a pencil slowed the conversation, and a guest looked confused. Afterward, the crew compared what had worked in planning meetings with what the interview required. They decided to keep the turn-taking expectation but use eye contact and brief pauses instead of the pencil when recording. At the following meeting, a new member began talking over a classmate. Two students paused and waited until the classmate finished; the new member followed their lead. By adapting the practice and modeling it for a newcomer, the crew kept the norm alive.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the first meeting create a reason for the crew to try Maya's suggestion?

2. How did other members help turn Maya's suggestion into a group norm without a teacher enforcing it?

3. Why did the crew stop passing the pencil during interviews without giving up its turn-taking norm?

4. How did the new member learn the crew's norm?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a group working on a shared task outside the podcast crew. In four sentences, explain a problem, how members propose and repeat a new norm, how peers reinforce it, and how the norm could adapt when the task changes.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the problem that sparks a new expectation, circle the proposed practice, and number two later moments when the group reinforces or adapts it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the first meeting create a reason for the crew to try Maya's suggestion?	**Several students talked over Maya, and the crew missed her suggestion about interviewing cafeteria workers. Taking turns could help them hear ideas.**
2	How did other members help turn Maya's suggestion into a group norm without a teacher enforcing it?	**Members repeatedly passed the pencil, nodded when others waited, and reminded Leo to wait by pointing to the pencil.**
3	Why did the crew stop passing the pencil during interviews without giving up its turn-taking norm?	**Passing the pencil slowed a live interview and confused a guest. The crew kept the expectation of taking turns but used eye contact and pauses instead.**
4	How did the new member learn the crew's norm?	**When the new member talked over a classmate, two students paused and waited. The new member followed their example.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A volunteer garden team keeps misplacing shared tools, so planting stops while members search for them. One member suggests returning tools to a marked shelf, and the team repeats this practice after each work session. Teammates thank people who put tools back and gently remind anyone who forgets. When the team begins working at a second garden, they use a marked crate there while keeping the expectation that tools belong in a known place.

Accept answers that explain how repeated behavior and peer responses create a shared expectation. For Part 3, look for a plausible problem, repetition, peer reinforcement, and a change in practice that fits a changed task.