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Effective Teaching in Today's Classroom

Classroom Management for Successful Instruction

J Roth
Foreword by Jim Fay

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Foreword

Classroom management is not solely about discipline. And it's not solely about superior knowledge of the curriculum and instructional techniques.

Great classroom management is an art form where the artist (teacher) blends relationships, routines, procedures, and instructional techniques into a masterpiece that translates into a happy, functioning classroom where students have a clear picture of expectations, routines, and a strong desire to please their teacher.

There will never be enough rewards, scratch and sniff stickers, tokens, colored cards, warnings, threats, consequences, disciplinary plans, contracts, in-school suspensions, and gimmicks to manage student behavior if teachers don't first develop positive relationships with their students.

Is it true that students work harder for, and behave better for the teachers they like? You bet it is. It's been proven over and over again. It doesn't take a Ph.D. in psychology or another government funded research study to verify this.

This bit of common knowledge was around before psychology was ever invented. What parent prays that this year his or her child will get a teacher he doesn't like? In 60 years of working with children and families I haven't met that parent.

For a student, what does it take for me to like my teacher? First of all I need to know that he/she knows and likes me as a person, and will do everything possible to ensure that I'm not embarrassed in front of my friends. Next I need to know that the teacher can handle the classroom so that I'm safe. Then I need to know his/her expectations. And last, I need to know what I'm learning and why I'm learning it.

The purpose of this book is to help you and all the other teachers find a roadmap to becoming the teacher who creates the masterpiece classroom where all kids have to do to prepare for the state tests is to sharpen their pencils.

—Jim Fay, M.A., Author of *Teaching With Love and Logic*
Co-founder, Love and Logic Institute, Inc.

Acknowledgments

I have learned a great deal through the journey of writing this book. Most of all I learned that when you surround yourself with good people, good things happen. I have been extremely fortunate that GREAT people have surrounded me throughout my life and career.

Professionally, I have had so many role models that it would be impossible to list them all here individually. I continuously gain educational knowledge from every teacher and administrator that I have had the honor of working with. Every day is a new challenge that requires a dedication and insistence that all educators do what is best for the students in our care. I have learned the power of patience, preparation, and collaboration from all of you. We all need to be proud of the great work we do for students every day.

This book could never have been completed without the hard work and dedication of the editing team of Sara Johnson, Lori Nash, and Nicole Downer from Teacher Created Materials. Thank you for always demanding excellence from me, and from you, as that is what educators reading this book and their students deserve.

Personally, I am so grateful for my children, Spencer, Sadie, and Maddi. You provide me with the drive and determination to be a positive role model. I could not be any prouder of you. My greatest wish is for each of you to understand that the most important thing in life is to be happy with the person you are.

Most of all I would like to thank my wife, LaVonna. Without your constant encouragement, positive attitude, and belief in me as an educator and a writer, this book would never have been completed. You serve as my inspiration every day to be the best father, husband, and educator that I can possibly be.

Introduction

In education, as in life, what gets the most focus will produce the most results. Education is the focus of many debates, from what kinds of tests we will use to assess student knowledge to implementing new standards. These topics definitely deserve attention. But in our zealous endeavors, sometimes we put the cart before the horse. In this case, the cart is the assessment and curriculum. The horse that is being left behind is classroom management. All of the best research-based instruction simply will not matter or make a difference if the teacher is unable to manage the behavior of the students in the classroom.

Many teachers have outstanding content knowledge but lack the management skills necessary to conduct a highly engaged and academically successful classroom. That is why I decided to focus this book on assisting teachers in developing their own classroom management style and practices.

Unfortunately, many university and school district teacher preparation programs have failed to coach teachers to effectively handle classroom management and discipline. However, when teachers do get the right kind of training, real changes can be made in the strategies they use for classroom curriculum instruction and in the organization of basic management approaches. This means more students will be engaged in their learning activities, which will translate to more teaching and learning occurring. In fact, I believe classroom management is so important that it should be viewed as an extension of the learning process.

As I began to put research and my experiences into the pages of this book, I initially had new teachers in mind. But the more I wrote, the more I realized that there were many seasoned teachers who also struggle with classroom management. This book contains multiple levels of application and reflection. The goal for this reflection is to identify the need for the most effective strategies that will result in reaching high student achievement.

The end of each chapter, as well as application activities throughout the chapters, will allow you to reflect on your current practices in specific topical areas. The final chapter will offer the opportunity to plan for a successful school year involving classroom management.

No one specific style of management is better than another because every teacher and every class of students is unique. What works for one may not always work for another. To get the most out of this book, I encourage you to be a reflective and honest responder when answering the questions posed. Don't be afraid to challenge your beliefs about classroom management. Try something new that piques your interest. Be a risk taker!

How you prepare and how you implement your classroom management will have a direct correlation to how well your students perform both socially and academically. At the end of this book is where you can use your knowledge to develop your own classroom management plan.

Besides parents, teachers have the greatest day-to-day impact on children. In order to teach them well, you need to first structure an environment that is conducive to learning. This book will assist in that endeavor.

How This Book Is Organized

The chapters in this book build on one another and present current research findings. The end of each chapter provides an opportunity to review and reflect on what you have learned and what it might mean in your own practice. **Chapter 1** asks the pertinent questions, "What is the difference between classroom management and classroom discipline?" and "Is there evidence of either one in my classroom?" The importance of establishing a positive learning environment is shared in **Chapter 2**. **Chapters 3** and **4** discuss how the physical and social environments of your classroom can enhance student behavior and academic performance to provide you with opportunities to design your classroom. **Chapter 5** examines tips for engaging students in their learning and keeping them on task. **Chapter 6** investigates everyday challenges with student behavior that can easily get you off track and how to properly handle these classroom disruptions. **Chapter 7** helps you understand what families may be experiencing with

their children in the home and how to communicate and work with them effectively. The benefits of collaboration with colleagues are explored in **Chapter 8**. Finally, **Chapter 9** helps you outline an effective overall classroom management strategy.

Chapter 1

Examining Your Classroom Management Practices

Whenever I am interviewing prospective teachers for job positions, one of the first statements I ask them to respond to is: "Describe what a typical day in your classroom would look like." What I usually hear is a grand description of a well-organized and superbly managed classroom—a room where students are actively engaged and the teacher is leading as if they were the director of an orchestra, blending various learning experiences together, producing a symphony of teamwork and knowledge. Unfortunately, what I frequently end up seeing during observations and classroom walkthroughs in reality, are pieces of greatness and behaviors or instruction the teacher wishes we could both forget. Why does this happen? It is not because the teacher is not trying or does not know what he or she should be doing. There are many variables involved in every classroom, namely the students. Things happen unexpectedly, experiments go wrong, or a student wakes up on the wrong side of the bed. This is life in the classroom. However, I believe that if we, as teachers, take the time and truly work through the process of identifying our philosophies and beliefs about effective classroom management, our classes will run more like that symphony of teamwork and knowledge.

Another reality is that even though teachers most likely have had coursework in college that dealt with classroom management, the opportunities to *practice* the various styles will not come until the first time college students become professional educators. Yes, during their internship or student teaching the intern has opportunities to head a class or classes; however, he or she is running someone else's class (the cooperating teacher). The truth is that as a student teacher, one is never really in charge. The

students in the classroom always know that they are playing by their teacher's rules and that the student teacher is there practicing and developing his or her craft to gain experience. Students will tend to behave because they are aware that if they do not, their teacher will be in the room to enact the discipline plan. Essentially, the student teacher is learning if he or she is comfortable with the cooperating teacher's classroom management plan and is taking mental notes about how he or she would choose to manage her very first classroom.

For many educators, classroom management is one of the biggest challenges that they face each year. Perhaps the greatest fear of new teachers is losing control of a classroom of students. Even *returning* teachers have nightmares about being unable to control the behavior of their students the first week of school. This can be the most difficult aspect of the job. The importance of a well-managed classroom should not be overlooked. Harry and Rosemary Wong, whose book *How to Be an Effective Teacher: The First Days of School* (1998) is often recommended for new teachers, write "Student achievement at the end of the year is directly related to the degree to which the teacher establishes good control of the classroom procedures in the very first week of the school year" (4). Poor classroom management affects school climate and academic performance (McDaniel, Yarbrough, and Ruma 2014). Armed with the information that shows the correlation between management and student success, we can be motivated to examine our practices from the very beginning of the school year and take the necessary steps to have a successful year.

What can hold many teachers back is the frustration with their lack of preparation to effectively manage their classrooms (Latham and Vogt 2007). When teachers have trouble establishing management and order, their morale unfortunately diminishes and they feel that they are not up to the task, resulting in stress and burnout. Research in the 1990s showed that over 40 percent of new teachers do not teach longer than four years, and that half of those are actually gone before teaching a full three years (Bernshausen and Cunningham 2001). Research from the National Education Association (NEA 2006) shows that this is still true today; they report that 20 percent of all new hires leave within three years. Close to 50 percent of new hires that are placed in urban districts leave the profession before teaching five years.

These statistics show us more than ever that we need to help these teachers be successful in their classrooms. We know that one of the more significant factors that affect teachers' ability to motivate students is stress (Tomal 2007). If this describes you, then take comfort in knowing that you are not alone in respect to your own frustration with class control. One of the primary preventions of teacher burnout is to take care of one's own health (Mendler 2012). There is mounting evidence that teachers who promote their own personal and professional well-being perform better in the classroom and affect better student outcomes (Duckworth, Quinn, and Seligman 2009). This book will explore the vital concerns surrounding classroom management and discipline, and provide proven solutions to having a successful classroom experience for both teachers and their students.

Classroom Management vs. Classroom Discipline

Before continuing, it is important to draw attention to the difference between the terms *classroom management* and *classroom discipline*. Although they are often used interchangeably, they are actually two different topics. Many of us are not fans of discipline. However, we understand that when management is not effective, discipline must be implemented. Classroom management refers to how things are generally carried out in the classroom, whereas classroom discipline is the specific management of student behavior when the strategies are not working. Dr. Marvin Marshall (2003) explains "Classroom management deals with how things are done; discipline deals with how people behave. Classroom management has to do with procedures, routines, and structure; discipline is about impulse management and self-control. Classroom management is the teacher's responsibility; discipline is the student's responsibility" (para. 7).

The reason these terms are often used synonymously is that the teacher first has to set up how the classroom functions in order to expect the students to behave. Simply put, effective teachers *manage* their classrooms with procedures and routines. This process often takes care of many of the concerns surrounding classroom discipline. Without effective rules and procedures, teaching and learning are inhibited (Marzano 2007). It

is no wonder that a concern of many new teachers is that of controlling the behavior of their students. Inexperienced teachers often do not receive much guidance, or have mentors assigned to them to assist in developing successful classroom management strategies. It remains a challenge for veteran teachers as well, as each year brings a fresh group of students for whom to establish management practices.

Of all the things teachers are expected to do during their professional day, classroom management is considered one of the most significant, and clearly has one of the greatest effects on student achievement (Hattie 2012). When considering classroom discipline, it is first important to consider that without the order provided by effective classroom management, there is little hope for teachers to instruct in any consistent and effective manner. When teachers resort to discipline, it is usually because they are inconsistent in following through when the students do not adhere to rules or procedures, or they did not spend enough time at the beginning of the school year practicing their rules and procedures. Classroom learning requires classroom order and, while it may be very difficult, it is central to what educators need to do.

Additionally, classroom management is absolutely necessary for instilling a sense of responsibility and maturity in students. Each time a teacher works with students in an effort to modify their behavior, both parties should be able to observe and better understand what is being expected of them.

The very first question teachers must ask themselves is, "What is the goal of my classroom management plan?" The answer should go beyond a peaceful, respectful classroom environment. The bottom line is that the main purpose of a classroom management plan must be student learning. Everything the teacher does needs to be focused on this as the ultimate goal. Student learning can only be accomplished if the teacher has an effective plan that both the teacher and student can buy into.

Examine Your Current Practices

With that in mind, the self-assessments in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 will allow you to analyze your own practices in the classroom. In order to obtain an accurate view of your current teaching practices, you should try not to second-guess your initial response. An accurate score will come from what you think describes your teaching practice and not what you wish your teaching practices would be on a day-to-day basis. When we can honestly reflect on our existing practices and challenges, then we can begin to see what needs to change and how we can embark on making valuable modifications. These reflection tools are not meant to be used in an administrative evaluation context. The "Classroom Environment Self-Assessment" in Figure 1.1 allows you to rate your overall role in facilitating a well-managed classroom. The "Rate Your Teaching Responses Self-Assessment" in Figure 1.2 allows you to examine your general response to students and situations.

Figure 1.1 Classroom Environment Self-Assessment

Rate yourself within your current classroom by reading the statements below and labeling them with a **Y** (Yes) or an **N** (No).

_____ I understand the different types of students I have and I take this into consideration when planning a lesson, an activity, or a field trip.

_____ I clearly communicate my classroom management expectations to my students.

_____ I follow through with consequences when classroom rules are broken.

_____ My students know what to do when they finish an assignment.

_____ My discipline is somewhat flexible according to the student.

_____ I don't typically lose instructional time due to discipline problems.

_____ I usually understand why a child is acting out or not doing his/her best.

_____ I always address student problems in an appropriate and timely manner.

_____ I use a variety of intervention methods.

_____ I teach my students how to solve their problems independently.

_____ My students are encouraged to work out their interpersonal problems without teacher help.

_____ My students help other students deal with problems.

_____ My students want to be in my class.

_____ My students feel safe in my class.

_____ I follow a systematic approach to classroom management.

_____ I have a signal to get my students' immediate attention.

How many **Y** (Yes) answers do you have in the survey above? _____

Out of the total 16 responses, what is your percentage of maintaining a successful classroom environment? _____

of **Y** (Yes) answers = Your percentage (%)

Sample: 16 100%

Figure 1.2 Rate Your Teaching Responses Self-Assessment

For each of the following areas, circle the number on each scale that most accurately matches your response.

1. My requests to students are

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ambiguous								Clear	

2. My requests to the students are phrased

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Negatively								Positively	

3. When I want student compliance, I usually use

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Questions								Direct requests	

4. When I make a request, I usually use a

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Loud voice								Quiet voice	

5. My state of mind when I respond to student behavior is

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Emotional								Calm	

6. After a request, I usually

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Immediately go on to something else								Watch for compliance	

7. I require compliance in (mark the number of seconds)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Add up the points for each response above:

63–70: You have *an exceptional ability* to respond to the varying conditions of daily classroom situations.

56–62: Your score indicates *very good teacher responses* as you meet the challenges involved in each day.

49–55: You have shown *a fair ability* to calmly address classroom issues.

42–48: Your score highlights the areas in which you might *need improvement*.

1–41: Your total shows that there are various areas in which you might *need guidance and coaching* in order to establish a positive environment of classroom management.

Taking the Time to Reflect

The next step to classroom management is to examine the information you have just gathered when rating your management practices. The reflective practice is an active process, meaning it is ongoing, continuous learning (York-Barr et al. 2006). Our goal is to practice effective reflection that leads to authentic positive transformation. To be the most effective, we need to question the goals and values that guide our work, the context in which we teach, and our assumptions. Only then will this type of reflection truly help us in our classrooms.

Think about the results from the self-assessment. What are your strengths? What areas can be improved?

This process of being a reflective practitioner is important for all teachers, not just those who are new or struggling. The very best educators practice reflective, deliberate thinking so that they can consistently improve their practices. Educators can gain new and deeper insights that lead to actions that improve teaching and learning processes to benefit their students (York-Barr et al. 2006). The teacher needs to decide what is reasonable and helpful while planning future experiences. It's only through reflection that one can gauge actions in order to further the goal of being a more professional educator. At its very core, it is about taking that thoughtful problem-solving disposition and applying it toward one's teaching.

After you have taken the self-assessments (Figures 1.1 and 1.2), you may doubt your choice of vocation. Perhaps now you are even thinking that you do not have the right personality for teaching. Low assessment scores do not mean that you are not fit for the profession, it simply means you are probably working twice as hard but only getting half the results. Left unchallenged, feelings of self-doubt or excuses can prevent you from acting on your most creative ideas. Reflection helps you learn who you are as a teacher and to be aware of how you teach. Keep in mind that the process of reflection will become easier and more meaningful the more it is practiced. Start by reading through the chapters in this book and reflecting on each aspect of classroom management that is discussed. Take the time to work through the ideas provided throughout the chapters and then complete the reflection questions. The tools provided in this book will support you in making positive changes to your classroom management so that when you take this assessment again, you will see improvements over time. Obtaining that great blend of classroom management and a positive atmosphere will assist you in getting the academic and social results you desire from yourself and your students.

Establishing Strategies That Inspire Student Academic Success

Of course, all teachers have different personalities, but they also have a lot in common—including the fact that many of them entered the profession in order to help students learn. They are often included in the professional category with others in service industries, such as nurses, counselors, ministers, and social workers. Classroom experts Harry and Rosemary Wong go further, saying "Teachers are in the helping and caring profession, a service profession to help people enhance the quality of their lives" (1998, 21). With a responsibility as great as this, teachers often feel an insatiable need to help others and finish the day with positive expectations for student behavior and achievement. Optimistic teachers believe they can influence student learning and positively affect their students' lives. It is vital that teachers demonstrate high expectations toward all students. Academic research consistently finds that the most reliable factor of student achievement, even for students who do not show a history of high achievement, is high teacher expectations (Lemov 2010). Students will rise or fall to their teacher's expectations! Even though teachers go into the

profession with the best of intentions, they will still be ineffective without productive classroom management strategies that lead to academic success.

In order to establish dynamic strategies in the area of classroom management, teachers have to be in charge of their students, the space around them, the time allotted for the content area(s), and the materials needed so that everyone in the class is effectively learning. There definitely is a link between how well managed a classroom is and how much students achieve (Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering 2003). Through all their efforts, teachers are essentially trying to do two things: enhance student involvement and cooperation, and establish a positive working environment.

Every educator has a different idea of what makes a good teacher. In all areas, including discipline, teachers glean ideas from their own personal experiences while growing up, past teaching experiences, and the advice and ideas of other educators. Sometimes it is problematic to go off of personal memory or even the advice of another teacher because it is difficult to second-guess what some other person might do in a given situation. A teacher might think that a particular method, style, or point of view is the best way to do something and then end up frustrated when it doesn't fit his or her teaching style or work for a particularly challenging group of students. Teachers need to reflect and act upon strategies that will work with their personal styles and the needs of their students because there is definitely room for individualism and flexibility in the profession of teaching. It is a continuous, changing process as new students come into the classroom and individual teaching approaches evolve.

Teacher Conduct

Before we examine the behavior of the students, it is very important to examine the general conduct of the teacher. The teacher's attitude, educational pedagogy, planning, preparation, and conduct are going to affect how students respond in the classroom. It is essential that students perceive teachers as confident, in charge, and fair. For this to happen, teachers must establish themselves as an appropriate authority figure and role model. When students challenge their teachers, a teacher may unwittingly follow with a counterproductive negative emotional response. There are several key components that need to be in place in order to avoid any such situation. By carefully planning lessons, knowing the students, having a

discipline action plan, and learning from past mistakes, teachers can avoid their own exaggerated emotional responses to disrespectful students, as well as avoid subsequent defiant outbursts in the future (Fischer 2004). While teachers are expected to be caring, dedicated, skillful, sensitive, flexible, and responsive, most of all they must be the authority figure in the classroom.

One of the top mistakes new teachers make is to try to be too friendly with students. While a friendly rapport with students is certainly desired and might come later in the year, the beginning of the year is the time to establish rules, expectations, and order. The teacher can still develop a friendly rapport by personally greeting each student upon entering the classroom and then starting the day officially with the expectation of correct behavior and high standards for learning. Some teachers have their students show signals as they enter the room to show how they are feeling. For example, a student who shows the number one is having a bad morning and the student showing a five feels great. This process is done individually, and the teacher is the only one who should see the signal. This process helps to determine the moods of his or her students as they enter the classroom. As you go through your own learning process about which strategies work best for you, be patient with your own learning curve and with your students (Starr 2005).

How do you set the tone with your students at the beginning of the year?

Respecting Students

Fundamental to any workable classroom management system is respect for students. It is important for teachers to accept the students they have in their class and not the students that they wish they had. To elevate to this level, teachers will first have to think of each individual student as a person who deserves to be treated with dignity, regardless of his or her intellectual abilities, primary language, social training, cultural background, or personal circumstance. If teachers treat all students fairly, then students are more likely to respect one another. In some cases, students may react in aggressive ways. Here, it is vital that the teacher persevere in showing those students that they not only deserve respect but can live up to that respect.

Effective schools communicate with a deliberate and systematic effort to students and the greater community that all children are valued and respected. This can be accomplished in various ways. Some examples include (Deal and Peterson 2009):

- Displaying children's creative and academic work prominently throughout the building and classrooms
- Highlighting students' cultural diversity with displays and events that celebrate the various cultures in the school's community
- Hanging banners throughout the school encouraging students to work hard and excel
- Creating halls of honor where student and faculty awards, newspaper articles about the school, and other forms of positive recognition are on display
- Displaying historical artifacts and collections of the accomplishments from prior years' students to show connections to the past

Students respond to adults who respect them and hold them to high expectations of successful learning. At the start of each school day, teachers can write the day's objectives on the board along with the question "What do we need to do to be successful in today's lessons?" This can be implemented as bell work when the students arrive in the classroom each morning or each period. A class discussion takes place to answer the question and then the class moves into the day's lessons. The teacher can reinforce the plan with a message such as "You are accountable for your learning by accomplishing these tasks" and by reminding students again and again that they are important and that they are required to live up to the standards set. Remember, students tend to work harder for teachers they like. In fact, metacognitive research conducted by John Hattie has shown a positive effect size of 0.72 (high statistical significance) when it comes to student-teacher relationships and student achievement. Hattie's research states that an effect size of .40 or greater has more of an impact on student learning than just a typical year of academic experience and student growth (Wiggins 2012).

Dignifying Students

At first glance, dignifying students seems to be the same thing as respecting them, but it actually takes it one step further. One dignifies others when he or she demonstrates interest in their lives, ideas, and activities. On the school-wide level, schools that accomplish this are the ones where families feel invited to participate and be present on campus. These schools celebrate and validate the various cultures and languages represented in a school. By dignifying students' efforts, teachers in the classroom create an atmosphere where students feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Glasser (2000) even went so far as to suggest that teachers adopt seven connecting habits:

- Caring
- Listening
- Supporting
- Contributing
- Encouraging
- Trusting
- Befriending

The goal should be to interface with students as an extension of your own authority, rather than simply attempting to control. Students will normally accept fair and reasonable rules and consequences when they know you are genuinely concerned about their well-being. This means they should not be singled out or used as negative examples. When you have to repeatedly or strongly correct a student, it is important to reconnect and show the student that you care about, believe in, and sincerely want what is best for him or her before leaving for the day. Perhaps you would even want to take this student aside and explain that he or she is a role model for some of the other students in the class so it is important to set a good example for them. With this kind of positive responsibility, the student generally will live up to your expectations. The key is continual validation. The following are some phrases that you can use to do this. These types of statements not only redirect students from counterproductive behavior, but also provide them with hope.

- "You are important."
- "I know you can be one of the best…"
- "Others are depending on you to…"
- "I'm on your side."

How do you validate students in your classroom?

Keeping Control of Your Emotions

It is extremely important for teachers to control their emotions and stay calm. As the adult, the teacher should model appropriate behavior even under highly stressful situations. If an authority figure loses self-control, it becomes more difficult to make the proper decisions and also to retain the respect of the students. This sort of immediate reaction usually reflects a teacher's own lack of confidence in dealing with a given situation (Fischer 2004). When a teacher loses his or her cool, behavior becomes the focus of attention rather than the students and their learning. If a person in authority is getting too agitated, it is wise to take a deep breath and examine what is going on for five seconds. If necessary, the teacher can assign a few minutes of individual work and take some time to gain composure and calm down.

Then, the teacher can move in to control the situation, walking with hands placed behind his or her back. This is less threatening to the students and may possibly save the teacher from inappropriately using his or her hands with gestures or pointing.

What techniques do you use to calm yourself down when you find you are getting frustrated in the classroom?

Maintaining a Calm Voice

Using different vocal inflections in the classroom is appropriate only if it has a legitimate educational purpose, does not demean students, and does not result in yelling, which is often ineffective. Some teachers use loud projecting voices and find that they have to keep getting louder in order to compete with the 30 other voices in their rooms. These teachers might find themselves without a voice at all, or a very hoarse one. Although the teacher may be rewarded with immediate improvement in the student's behavior, this change is usually only temporary (Linsin 2011a). Teachers will generally have more control, as well as credibility, with their students, parents, and superiors if they never raise their voice (Fischer 2004). Instead of feeling

the need to resort to yelling, the teacher should create a management plan that works and be consistent with it. The overall goal should be to build influential relationships with the students so that the teacher has personal leverage that causes them to want to behave (Linsin 2011a).

One of the most valuable voice techniques teachers can use is a stage whisper because it is human nature for students to want to know what is being whispered. The teacher should get as close to them as possible and whisper as loudly as possible until they are straining to hear. Since it is impossible for every student to hear the first time, do not expect them to calm down immediately. Give the students a few seconds, and watch what happens.

Eye Contact

Direct eye contact and nonverbal communication are effective classroom management tools. When a student is misbehaving or breaking a class rule, simply pause and look him or her in the eye. This is not to be intended as a threatening gesture, but one of authority. Many times, the teacher won't even need to say a thing—the student will feel the power of his or her gaze. Eye contact is also used as a preventative measure for discipline issues. Students want some signal that validates their presence in the class. Teachers should get in the habit of scanning the room every few minutes to know what is going on and to let students know they are a valuable part of the group. It is also very important to be aware of the cultural norms represented in the classroom. Students from some cultures, such as Asian, African, and Latin American countries, are trained that eye contact from a student to an authority figure is disrespectful (Johannasen 2010). Thus, do not necessarily demand it of students (e.g., "Look at me when I speak to you"), because they might be demonstrating respect by looking down.

Praise and Correction

Students crave attention. Sometimes, a student is so deprived of attention that he or she will invite even negative attention through inappropriate behavior. Therefore, public praise in the classroom can be a very powerful tool. This can be a quick strategy that involves subtly recognizing a student with a positive gesture.

However, when it comes to behavior correction, it is generally more powerful and appropriate to correct students individually and privately. This applies to students at every grade level. However, it might also be appropriate to direct positive correction in the form of an affirmation, such as "Pay attention, you are very important to us." Students who are corrected in front of their peers often respond by acting out even more because they are responding to that unconscious or conscious need for attention. It is ineffective to engage in disciplinary conversation from across the room (Starr 2005). A general guideline is to correct privately and to praise publicly.

One way to publicly praise students is to have an impromptu praise time when the teacher can go around the room and say one or two sentences about as many students as possible. Many, but not all, students love being singled out if there are others getting the same degree of attention. Compliments should always be genuine, specific, and never contrived. It is up to the teacher to ensure that praises are evenly distributed if done publicly. Remember that students use the teacher as a gauge to see how they are doing. If the teacher likes what he or she sees, they should let the student know immediately.

A teacher can evaluate his or her use of praise by videotaping a typical lesson and then judging the motivation for praise used and how it seemed to affect the various students in the classroom. Praising should encourage self-confidence and autonomy in the willingness to take risks in learning.

How do you use positive reinforcement in your classroom?

Encouragement

One step further is to give encouragement. With encouragement, the teacher may no longer need to use prizes or rewards. Encouragement shows students unconditional love and acceptance and separates them from their actions. With this support, they see that mistakes can become opportunities for learning. The teacher becomes inspiring and stimulating without appearing to be judgmental or manipulating. This does not mean teachers have to "dummy down" their course/lesson or give false support, but it

does include building scaffolds, both academically and emotionally. It also entails providing prompt and detailed quantitative and qualitative feedback on how well the student is doing. According to Carol Dweck (2006), students who are encouraged for their efforts are more willing to take risks and choose more challenging tasks than students who only receive praise.

Setting Goals

Setting academic goals at the beginning of the school year is one example of how to encourage students. To do this, the teacher meets one-on-one with each student during the first few weeks of school and reviews his or her previous year's academic record. This could be as simple as looking at the last reading level that the student performed at successfully, or as complex as disaggregating state standardized test performance. This quantitative data is used as a starting point for the student moving forward. The teacher and the student discuss goals and levels or targets they wish to achieve during the school year. These goals need to be both short term (6–9 weeks) and long term (entire school year). A simple goal-setting chart with the current data and the goal to aim for can be created and monitored throughout the school year. Figure 1.3 shows an example of an elementary version. This half sheet can be taped to the student's desk and serve as a constant reminder to the student of the goals they set. At the middle and high school levels, where teachers may teach only one or two subject areas, the teachers can work together and have the students bring the form to each class to conference with the teacher and set their goals. Since most classes at the secondary level are specific, first quarter goals may be more difficult to target. Once that grading period is completed, the teacher and student should have a better idea of the student's potential performance and set the next goals based on the performance from the previous quarter. Figure 1.4 shows an example of a goal-setting chart for secondary education. The form is simplistic and that is done on purpose. It should serve as a quick reminder to the student, not something that they are going to have to reflect deeply on each time they look at it. Data chats are then held periodically throughout the year to monitor the students' progress towards their goals. The teacher needs to be sure that the goals they set with students are challenging, yet achievable. This encouraging environment can ultimately simplify the job of teaching, as students are motivated to be engaged in their own learning processes.

Figure 1.3 Sample Elementary Student Goal Setting Chart

Reach for the Stars!

Name: _____ Grade: _____

	September	December	March	June
Reading Goal:	450			
Math Goal:	3+			

Figure 1.4 Sample Secondary Student Goal Setting Chart

SUBJECT	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Algebra	B	-	-	-
Spanish I	A	-	-	-
Chemistry	B	-	-	-
Orchestra	A	-	-	-
U.S. History	B+	-	-	-
Literature	A-	-	-	-

Listening Before You Discipline

It is important to listen carefully to students and to consider their points of view before disciplinary action is taken. Listening to students is particularly important when there is a situation in which the teacher may not have all the pertinent or correct information. When the teacher can take the time to do this, he or she demonstrates a sincere respect for the student's sense of self-worth. Teacher knowledge of student thinking is critical. Without active listening by both the teacher and the student, the communication process will not be effective. It is incumbent upon the teacher to ensure

that he or she is genuinely listening to the student's position and that the student is also listening (Tomal 2007). The process of listening will not only assist teachers in making proper decisions, but will often result in a teachable moment for everyone involved. Sometimes, the greater issue isn't the problem at hand. The teacher must keep an open mind for an underlying situation or frustration that may need to be addressed. If an incident occurs in class and the teacher doesn't have time to get into a discussion, he or she can say something such as, "I'd like you to work over there by yourself so that no one bothers you." This way, the redirection is provided immediately and done in a positive manner. Some teachers keep a notebook in the back of the classroom in which students are invited to write issues that arise in the classroom. The teacher reads the notebook at the end of each day and can be aware of ongoing problems between students and address concerns when necessary.

Giving Directions

Even the seemingly simple process of expressing directions can be stated in an affirming way. Examples include, "We need you to pay attention so that you don't miss vital information," or "You are important to this discussion." Other times, the teacher needs to give specific expectations in his or her directions. When working with a student who needs constant redirection, the teacher might need to take these further steps:

- Look the student in the eye
- Call him or her by name
- Use close proximity
- Use appropriate verbal and nonverbal cues

Consider specific goal-directed messages such as: "Mary, sit down in your chair now; work quietly, finish these ten problems, and do not get up until the bell rings." For this purpose, it becomes extremely important to learn students' names, and pronounce them correctly. Give the student sufficient time to process the direction, decide to comply, and then actually obey after giving a request. During this waiting interval, do not converse or argue; rather, look the student in the eye, restate the request if required, and wait for compliance. All of this is to be done in a calm and even tone of voice.

Avoiding Confrontations with Students

Arguments are merely power struggles. The teacher is the authority in the classroom so there is no need to argue. Students who disagree with what the teacher requires should be encouraged to discuss those concerns privately. They should not be allowed to argue with the teacher in front of other students or to publicly challenge the teacher's authority. If a student continues to press the point after the teacher has told him or her what to do, one can simply say, "I appreciate what you're saying, but nevertheless…" and restate the point.

Eliminating the Use of Threats

One of the reasons that students can behave perfectly without any problems for some teachers, but are uncontrollable with others, is the issue of conducting oneself in a respectful manner. Teachers must use their positions and confidence to gain compliance. They should never threaten students. Allowing oneself to get carried away with such strong emotional reactions will always be counterproductive and will probably result in regret later (Fischer 2004). Rather, the teacher should work toward being consistent and not forewarning consequences that he or she is unable or unwilling to deliver.

If teachers clearly spell out the cost of students' choices, then they should be prepared to back up their words by consistently enforcing the rules. It is much better to say nothing than risk saying something that cannot be followed through. This is a great example of the necessity of clear expectations from the onset of the school year. If there is a readily seen and accepted list of rules and consequences, then the teacher does not constantly have to come up with consequences to enforce. The students will not be surprised when consequences are enforced. Even if students choose to make the same choice every day with a negative behavior, there will be consistency in the consequence for their action(s).

Working toward forming strong relationships with our students will enable us to reach our students. Learning how to control our emotions and the ways we respond to our students will create an atmosphere where students feel that they can learn. By doing this we will create a classroom atmosphere where our students can thrive and grow, and where we will experience the desired success that drove us to this profession in the first place.

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you consider to be your underlying philosophy or values for creating and maintaining a controlled classroom environment?

2. Now that you have explored the difference between classroom management and classroom discipline, what are two strengths and two areas of improvement that you have in the area of management as it pertains to student behavior that is exhibited in your classroom?

3. How does this chapter discussion change your view of your own teaching practices as they pertain to classroom management and discipline?

Chapter 2

Providing a Positive Learning Environment

Enter any classroom for the first time and glance around the room. Is it bright and colorful? Can you identify student work posted? Look at the faces of the students and the teacher for that matter. Do you see smiles or do you see fear, boredom, or frustration? Within only a few minutes, we can determine the pulse of the learning environment. The good news is that classroom teachers determine the learning environment in their classrooms. Every action and inaction establishes the learning environment as ultimately positive, neutral, or negative.

Teaching can be challenging because teachers are on stage from the moment the first student enters the classroom each day until the time that the last student is dismissed at the end of the day. Every decision the teacher makes will be dissected and analyzed by each student in the room. How they interpret the teacher's actions will determine how they choose to behave moving forward. The level of teacher positivity will also determine the students' behavior level and will have an effect on how much they learn during class.

By creating excitement and sharing his or her passion for teaching, students will in turn have a greater fervor for learning. Brain-based learning informs us that the human brain retains a greater amount of information when it is not over-stressed or in fear (Roth 2012). When in a comfortable but still challenging setting, our brains perform more efficiently and effectively (Willis 2006). When students are eager and engaged in the learning, they simply forget about causing a disturbance.

Everyone likes to end the day feeling good about themselves and their work environments, but few jobs allow people to create a physical atmosphere to fit their personality. Teaching is definitely an exception to this rule. Teachers can usually choose the colors displayed, the words posted, the visuals, the type of student work shown, and the amount of wall space to use. Teachers can choose to post motivational phrases, inspirational photographs, and encouraging displays of student academic progress. Teachers can choose the formation of the desks, which directly affects the types of activities allowed in the classroom.

How to Help Students Feel Good about Themselves

A classroom with a positive learning environment will hopefully include students who feel confident about their abilities and efforts in their learning journeys. When students believe they are valued members of the classroom community through mutual trust, support, respect, and appreciation, they are more apt to contribute to a positive learning environment. This process strongly relates to the development of a child's self-esteem. Children often judge themselves by the way they think the important people in their lives feel about them. Many times, these "important people" are their peers. This becomes increasingly true as students grow older. These peers are also caught up in their own processes of identifying themselves, making them less willing to build up the self-esteem of others around them. Therefore, parents and teachers must do all they can to help children feel that they are unique and special.

Teachers spend a very large portion of the day with students, making them significant people in their lives. Research has shown that when teachers take the time to build positive relationships with their students, engagement, motivation, and test scores will increase while discipline issues and absenteeism will decrease (Brown 2010). According to Jensen (2013), students who have a positive relationship with their teachers experience less stress, behave more appropriately, and are more excited about learning. It makes perfect sense that students would tend to work a little harder for teachers that they like and respect.

Some students have a hard time feeling good about themselves and showing respect to others because it has not been modeled appropriately or unconditionally to them. When teachers start the school year by treating everyone inside and outside of the classroom with equal respect, they have a large impact on student lives. They are modeling behavior with every interaction they have throughout the day with parents, co-workers, and especially students. When a student witnesses a teacher treating someone harshly, the message being sent is that it is all right for them to do the same. When they make every effort to remain positive, the students will more than likely try to emulate that behavior. The teacher's interactions with students also affect students' self-esteem. Consistently providing students with feedback that is both positive and meaningful helps them become more likely to accept the information in a constructive way, which leads to continued growth. The teacher gives clear expectations that the same behavior is expected from all students. This quickly becomes a two-way street. If the teacher is negative and belittles his or her students, then they will learn to act the same way toward other students and the teacher. If, on the other hand, teachers consistently remind students they are important, they will eventually believe this and behave accordingly.

One of the best ways to help a child develop healthy self-esteem is to find and emphasize his or her strengths. Students are usually very aware of academic weaknesses. The teacher should highlight areas where the student has made growth or improvement by comparing this information with the previous data (Shore 2012). Teachers can subtly help students to feel good about themselves by placing their work on a bulletin board for the rest of the class to see.

Teachers should encourage students in areas of both strengths and weaknesses and find ways to recognize each student as special. They should avoid the natural tendency to compare one student with another. In order to encourage students, teachers should stop and listen. A good way to do this is through active listening where the teachers paraphrase what students have said to them and then speculate and recap how certain situations might make them feel. This will help teachers to better understand the students' points of view.

Another way to help students feel good about themselves is to have everyone write one unique thing about themselves on a sheet of paper. It can be a place they have visited, a special accomplishment, an activity they

enjoy doing, or anything that is unique about them. When each student has one thing written, have the class stand in a circle. Introduce the activity by announcing that the class will be celebrating uniqueness and finding commonalities all at the same time. Each student then reads his or her statement. Then, anyone who has any connection to that statement steps into the circle and shares his or her commonality. While this takes some time, there is great value in allowing students to honor their individuality and even greater value in encouraging the class to recognize the many ways in which they are similar to one another. An activity such as this allows students to collect information about the whole class. This process validates what is unique about them and, more importantly, how their uniqueness actually connects them with a group of peers. Figure 2.1 provides other ideas for promoting student self-esteem.

Figure 2.1 Ways to Promote Students' Self-Esteem

- applaud the activity, not the student
- use mistakes as learning opportunities
- focus on the positives/student's strengths
- establish realistic goals/expectations
- avoid comparing students to one another
- promote participation in activities (sports, art, music, dance, etc.)
- provide opportunities for choice in classroom activities
- display students' work
- feature a student of the week and celebrate him or her
- allow students to mentor younger students in academic or nonacademic areas
- use collaborative groups during instruction
- inform students' families of their successes

Promoting Positive Behavior

There will be many times when the teacher will have to redirect his or her students because of misbehaviors. It is important to address the students' misbehavior, not the students themselves (Goodwin and Hubbell 2013). For example, if a student is talkative during whole-group instruction, the teacher may say "I see that you are anxious to share your thoughts with the group. If you can hold off from sharing for five more minutes, you

will have the chance to do just that during group work." By handling the situation in this manner the teacher successfully re-directs the student's behavior and provides him or her something to look forward to.

To establish and promote positive behavior in the classroom there are three principles that need to be followed consistently by the teacher (Marshall 2007a). These are: positivity, choice, and reflection. Before moving forward it is important to acquire at least a basic understanding of these concepts.

Positivity

Our environment changes our brain for the positive or the negative (Jensen 2009). When we feel good, we learn and perform better. Take a moment and think about what happens when negative consequences are administered in a classroom. My guess is that you envisioned a student sulking or getting defensive and argumentative. Thus, instead of moving forward and focusing on learning, the student is stuck thinking about either being embarrassed for being singled-out, or how the teacher is being unfair to them and they are not at fault. Neither of these responses were the mind-set that the teacher intended when administering the consequence, and now, unfortunately, acquiring knowledge is the furthest thing from the student's mind. Remember, positivity breeds positivity.

Establishing a positive learning environment includes a wide array of teacher actions and expectations. A teacher's smile and the way he or she greets students entering the classroom can guide students toward the academic means desired, just as the actual setup of the classroom and a well-planned lesson can facilitate a student's ability to learn the day's lesson objectives. Communicating in positive terms reduces stress, improves relationships, and is more effective than negativity in prompting change in others (Marshall 2007b). Figure 2.2 demonstrates some alternative actions for creating a positive learning environment. They are positive approaches for encouraging and motivating students toward success in their content learning.

Figure 2.2 Alternative Ways to Help Provide a Positive Learning Environment

Instead of saying or doing this...		Say or do this...
Marking –4 to indicate four mistakes on a test	➡	Mark +6 to indicate the number of correct answers.
Praising an individual student out loud	➡	Praise the student privately and praise the class publicly.
Putting names of misbehaving students on the board	➡	Put names of achievers, good citizens, etc., on the board or special chart.
Repeatedly explaining the directions	➡	Model the response desired with a few practice examples.
Nagging the student who is not working	➡	Say "Thank you for staying on task."
Criticizing the class for poor test performance	➡	Praise the class for what they did correctly. After reinstruction, ask them to see if they can improve their scores the second time around.
Talking at length with a student after his or her misbehavior	➡	Tell the student you were disappointed in his or her behavior or recall a time when the student behaved well and remind him or her how good it felt to be praised for positive behavior.
Constantly attending to the same student who misbehaves all day	➡	Give the student lots of attention when he or she is doing the right thing.
Calling a student's name and then asking a question, giving no time for processing	➡	Ask the question, allowing the student to think and even share answers with another student, and then calling on a student who is ready to answer.

The Contingency Approach

Instead of the consequences approach, Marshall (2007b) suggests the teacher implement a contingency approach, as contingency is proactive and positive instead of reactive and negative. The power of contingency is that it relies on students' internal motivation. By phrasing the contingency in a positive way, students will be clear on what they need to do to move forward. An example of contingency word choice is the classic "If/then" statement. "If you finish your mathematics assignment, then you may go to the computer station." Another example would be "When/then." "When your work area is clean, then you may join us for share time." These statements not only send a positive message, they place the responsibility solely on the student.

Choice

Choice provides students with the understanding that they have the freedom to select how they respond to any given situation. It also gives students ownership while at the same time reducing resistance. It is important that the teacher shows students that it is in their best interest to choose appropriate responses. By offering choices, students are prompted to think instead of react impulsively. Marshall suggests giving the student three choices to end an unwanted behavior. For example, when a student is having difficulty completing an assignment and is causing disruption, the teacher can offer three choices in writing: "Would you rather complete your work (1) in your seat, (2) in the back of the room, or (3) in another classroom?" This will reduce resistance to the task (2007a, 52). The goal of choice is to diminish students' feelings of coercion and to get them to realize that they are ultimately in control of their actions and behaviors. For students to truly learn to regulate and direct their own behavior, they need to be given opportunities to make choices, to reflect on their progress, and to make mistakes in a safe environment free of public ridicule (Harris 2014).

Reflection

Reflection is a key component that is often overlooked in classroom management. This is true not only in classroom management, but also in teaching in general. Too often teachers feel rushed to move on, or simply have yet to realize that reflection solidifies the learning or choice that has taken place. When we reflect, we self-evaluate. Teachers should ask students

self-evaluative questions, such as "How do you feel your disruptions affected the class today?" "How can you be a more positive influence in the class?" or in the case of learning, "What big idea did you learn or what connection to previous learning did you make in the lesson we just finished?" The human brain searches for connections when attempting to form ideas and learn information (Roth 2012). Only by taking the time to reflect on the situation and what was learned from it, will actual change take place in students' behavior or learning.

How do you want your classroom to feel?

Researched-Based Approaches

There are experts in the field of classroom management who have drawn similar conclusions and provide similar approaches. Jim Fay is a prominent behavior specialist who has developed an approach to positive management called Love and Logic (Fay and Funk 1995). According to the Love and Logic website (2014), a Love and Logic classroom is characterized by "students being given a task and allowed to make their own choices (and fail) when the cost of failure is still small. Children's failures must be coupled with love and empathy from their teachers" (1). Love and Logic manages behavior in a way that provides consequences for student negative behavior, but does so in a caring way. The teacher provides the student with choices to address the consequences for his or her behavior, and the choices are all acceptable outcomes to the teacher. The point is that students realize that their actions have consequences, and they must take responsibility for their choices in order to be able to make better decisions moving forward.

Another leading authority in this field is Becky Bailey. Bailey has created an approach that she has titled Conscious Discipline (Bailey 2001). According to her work, Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates social-emotional learning and discipline. It empowers teachers to consciously respond to daily conflict and to utilize this as an opportunity to teach critical life skills to their students. Just as with Love and Logic, Conscious Discipline addresses not only student behaviors, but also the teachers'.

I have observed both the Love and Logic and Conscious Discipline approaches to classroom management instituted in schools at various levels throughout K–12 education. From my experience, when a teacher or school decides to implement either of these and dedicate themselves to consistently following through with the positive approach, misbehaviors are minimized and a culture of support and learning is developed. Teachers can choose the specifics from any of these experts, and as long as they are consistent in the implementation, they will have a great chance to succeed.

Designing Your Own Approach

Another option, instead of simply following a plan prescribed by someone else, is for teachers to develop their own plan based on a combination of the philosophies and examples that have been learned from the experts and from their own experiences and research. An example of an experienced teacher who has taken this approach is Sam Williams, a highly effective kindergarten teacher at a Title I school where over 90 percent of students receive free lunch. Here, Mr. Williams explains how he has implemented his own hybrid approach to a positive learning environment in his classroom. His positive learning environment is a combination of his experiences and what he has learned through studying Becky Bailey's (2001) Conscious Discipline, and Jim Fay's (1995) Love and Logic methods.

Mr. Williams explains:

Behavior management is such a struggle for many teachers. I spent years trying all kinds of behavior plans in my classroom. The majority of what I tried was extrinsic behavior plans, such as ticket systems, moving clips or colors to get rewards, and treasure boxes. What I found after years of these systems being unsuccessful was that the students were striving to please me (the teacher) to get a reward (treasure box, computer time, etc.). The students had little or no interest in working towards a goal for intrinsic purposes. It was rarely for the satisfaction of doing the right thing for them. The students always seemed to want to please me, but I started to realize that they felt they would never be good enough because there was always the possibility of failing.

So every day I had students that would have to move their clips down within the first 30 minutes of school…their day was lost.

What I realized was that the charts and systems I was using were simply tracking the behavior and providing extrinsic motivation but were doing nothing to change the behavior. So I worked on a new system. My new chart is a very minimal part of the classroom, but it is important. I have seven colors (pink, purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red). Every student starts on green and we move up to blue, purple, or pink for showing positive character traits (sharing, friendship, caring, consideration, empathy—all things we work on in the classroom). Students move down to yellow, orange, or red when continually demonstrating a lack of consideration in the classroom. This is the important part to remember—the students always have the opportunity to make a better choice before moving their clips down.

When students are not following the rules, they are either asked or are allowed to choose on their own, to take a moment to change their behavior. Students can choose to take a moment and contemplate the situation by walking away or finding a quiet place to think, etc. We practice different breathing techniques that are proven to re-engage students, calm them down, and get them back on track. For example, the student may simply take a deep breath and focus on relaxation, which Conscious Discipline calls STAR: Stop, Take a Deep Breath, and Relax (Bailey 2001). Or the student may choose to take a short meditation where they will sit quietly by themselves to think about the situation. Another technique from Conscious Discipline is called Pretzel Breathing. This involves crossing the legs, intertwining the arms, breathing through the nose and out through the mouth. This form of breathing and crossing legs and arms has students crossing the midline of the body which is a proven technique to re-engage both sides of the brain and get them back on track (Bailey 2001).

When a student is having a difficult time with a situation, such as not wanting to complete his or her work, I give them a choice such as "Markus, you may do your work at your seat or you may go to the carpet and do your work. Which works best for you?" Either choice gets the desired result (the student does his work) but the power is in

the hands of the student. This is the key to the success. Allowing the student to feel like they made the choice—that they have the power—allows them to quickly move away from the power struggle and get back to what they should be doing (Fay and Funk 1995). I have found this to work nine times out of ten for students. Even the most difficult child just wants to feel a sense of control and power and this technique lets them have both.

Rewards for the behavior chart are not extrinsic any longer. Students only receive praise and the power of knowing that they made the right choice. The students (even in kindergarten) know that they will get a note home in their daily agenda planner if they do well or a phone call when they make it to the top of the chart. They also know that I comment on their behavior chart at the end of every day. I let the students know how proud I am of them. The smiles on their faces tell me that it works, and the fact that I have minimal behavior problems in my class verifies that it works.

As one can see, Mr. Williams' classroom management plan is focused on the three principles that Marshall (2007a) described as the essentials that need to be consistently followed in order to enhance classroom management and promote positive behavior: positivity, choice, and reflection. By concentrating on these and combining his own experiences with the teachings of others, Mr. Williams has developed a classroom management system that intrinsically empowers his young students and creates a positive learning environment for all.

Another example of a teacher using his background knowledge and experiences to create his own classroom management plan is Brandon Gogue. In his fourth-grade classroom, Mr. Gogue chooses to create a new theme each year that serves multiple purposes. One year, Mr. Gogue chose to go medieval. He was referred to by the students in the class as the king of their castle (classroom). The boys were the princes and the girls were princesses. Each student was addressed as prince (their name) or princess (their name). For example, there was Prince Jose and Princess Priscilla in the class that was governed by King Gogue. At the beginning of the school year, Mr. Gogue spent time in class meetings (which were held weekly)

describing and explaining the setting and other information of the medieval system that prevailed during that time period in history. By developing this background knowledge, Mr. Gogue encouraged his students to feel excited and ready to take on the roles and responsibilities they would then have in the classroom. One of the messages that was consistently discussed and that all students were expected to follow was that with recognition as royalty comes great responsibility. These responsibilities included but were not limited to such things as completing homework, attending school regularly, treating others with respect, and being a role model, as all others will be looking up to you. Not to be left out, there was also the underlying understanding that the most beloved princes and princess were always humble, helpful, and led by example.

In order to keep this theme ongoing throughout the year, Mr. Gogue designated days of the week in which other symbolic gestures would take place. On one day each week, the students each wore crowns, symbolizing their status in the class monarchy. On another day, beads were worn around the students' necks. At the end of the day the necklaces were exchanged with a partner along with a positive compliment. The compliment had to be about the person's "royal" character or accomplishments. Upon entering the classroom, visitors were welcomed by Mr. Gogue and the class with a special and unique greeting that went like this:

Mr. Gogue: Welcome to our castle, I am King Gogue and these are my…

Students: "…Princes and Princesses. We're up in the morning with the rays of the sun, gonna learn all day until the learning's done!

This short greeting not only welcomed visitors to the classroom, it also reinforced a positive message to the students. They were well trained to understand that the teacher chose when to start the greeting and in which situations it was appropriate. For example, if the teacher was in the middle of a guided reading group and the rest of the class was working with an intense focus, the greeting would be bypassed and the class would continue working. The greeting was most often implemented when the teacher was in direct control of the classroom, the learning situation, and most importantly, deemed it to be appropriate.

Does this type of management approach work? For Mr. Gogue it does. If a student, a group of students, or even the entire class begins to not

live up to the expectations that were set at the beginning of the year, Mr. Gogue holds a meeting with the appropriate student or students to remind them of their responsibilities. In the three years that Mr. Gogue has been implementing his themes, he has yet to be compelled to write a discipline referral on any of his fourth-grade students. In addition, his class attendance rate has been the best of all classes in the school. Academically, his students consistently make growth based on standardized testing measurements.

Ultimately, the teacher must decide what his or her classroom management plan will be. It should be positive, provide students choice, and provide students time to reflect. No matter which plan is chosen—the exact guide from an expert in the field, or a hybrid version—the teacher must be consistent in its implementation. Inevitably, students will rise or fall to the level of expectation that the teacher has for them. If the teacher strives to achieve a positive room environment, then students are likely to react accordingly. Keeping open discussion on good attitudes, praising when deserved, and using positive reinforcement can work wonders!

Questions for Reflection

1. What emotional components in your classroom contribute to a positive learning environment?

2. What three principles promote positive behavior in the classroom?

3. What are four ways that you can change your own learning environment in order to make it more positive?

Chapter 3

Examining the Physical Environment of Your Classroom

What if I told you that from the instant you meet your students, you set the stage for how successful or unsuccessful your classroom management will be for the remainder of the year? Would you believe me? Students are examining and critiquing teachers from that very first moment by asking themselves, Is he timid? Is she sitting behind her desk or standing behind a podium or other object? Is she nervous or full of confidence? Is he smiling, or is there a look of indifference on his face? Does he greet each student and introduce himself, or does he simply tell students to find their name on a desk and take a seat? Once seated, is there something for the students to tend to or are they to sit quietly and wait for everyone else to arrive before they do anything?

The message that teachers send to their students from that first moment of interaction will resonate with the class as they move forward with their day, week, month, and year. As discussed in Chapter 2, creating a positive learning environment is extremely important for a class to be successful. This does not happen unless teachers prepare the classroom for success.

To optimize classroom management, teachers need to plan how their room will function. From the very beginning, they need to establish a climate of work. This means considering everything in the classroom including the floor space, desk arrangements, work areas for students, wall space, and access to student and teacher supplies that might be needed. The physical environment of the classroom can have a big impact on a student's ability to focus and maintain self-control (Harris 2014). It is also important to be flexible from the onset. Students will appreciate hearing

that if one plan is not working for the whole class, changes can be made. Many teachers who use group desk arrangements change seat assignments as often as every month. This way, they can reassure those who are not getting along with their group members that the change is coming soon. Many students appreciate a new group or fresh perspectives and faces at least a few times during the year.

Stop and Think

Why is it important for the teacher to be flexible?

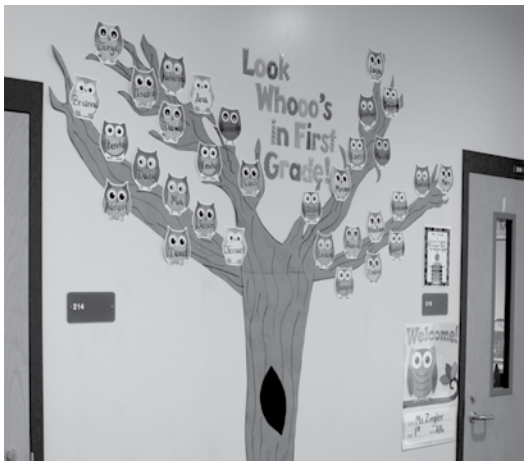
Classroom Design

One of the most commonly underestimated steps in the preparation process is how the classroom is organized and decorated. When students walk into the room it is important that they feel welcomed through the design and organization of the environment. Students need to see the room as if it is their second home. A comfortable learning environment will go a long way in relieving much of the stress that students often feel, especially when they are coming to a new class or school. There are multiple factors to think about when decorating and organizing both the inside and the outside of the classroom for success.

Outside the Classroom

Can you recall the first day of school each year? Most of us have vivid recollections of the sights and feelings that we experienced. I remember some years when I turned down the hallway where my classroom was located and it was intimidating. It felt as if I was walking down a long tunnel, not knowing what I would enter into when I reached the dim light at the end. Other years when I turned that corner I could not wait to get to my room. The hallway was bright and decorated with welcoming displays. How teachers and school staff/administration decide to adorn the hallways will help determine the emotions that their students will feel as they enter and walk through the building. Figure 3.1 shows a sample of hallway decorations at the elementary level.

Figure 3.1 Sample Hallway Decorations



What you can do here depends on your school building type. Does it have inside or outside corridor access to the classrooms? Interior walls are much easier, as the weather will not affect the materials used. Although outside walls do present limitations, there are products that are made to allow some use of the walls. If your school administration provides restrictions on the types of materials that can be used, make sure to share your ideas and get permission before beginning the decorating process.

Stop and Think How does hallway décor affect students?

Preparing classroom doors with a welcoming sign or banner lets students know you are excited that they are going to be a member of the class. There are many banners or signs that are pre-made and sold at various teacher stores, which can come in handy if you don't consider yourself particularly crafty. On the door, you could have a sign with the names of all the new students listed on it. You may even consider taking time to personalize the sign. Again, be imaginative. A colorful display with the students' names written creatively is much more appealing than a class roster that was simply printed off of a computer. This may sound very primary, but it is surprising the positive responses that will be received from the students when they

find their name posted as a member of the class, even for older students. Figure 3.2 shows a sample of door area decorations at the elementary level.

If beginning the year with a specific theme, it would be advantageous to have the outside wall decorated with items related to the theme. Each day the students come to class they will be reminded of the academic focus. As the themes change throughout the year, the decorations should change as well. Students get very excited when they arrive and see something different that was not previously there. It signals a transition to a new adventure.

Figure 3.2 Sample Classroom Door Area Decorations

Inside the Classroom

The walls of the classroom send a definite message to students as they enter the room. Since the walls are most likely the largest surface areas in the classroom, they can serve multiple purposes for creating atmosphere. Bare walls can send a message of institutionalism and sterility, which is not exactly the warm climate a teacher would want to create. Covering appropriate areas with butcher paper can help with the ambiance of the room. An alternative to butcher paper is fabric. Some teachers do this with a theme in mind. Not only are these areas colorful, they give students a little insight into their teacher and his or her passions outside of the classroom and school building.

Depending on the design of the building and classroom, you may have a great deal of space to play with or you may be very limited. There are other issues to keep in mind, such as flammability of the materials and fire codes in regards to what materials can be used and how much space decorations

are permitted to cover. Consult with your administration before decorating. The following is a list of ideas for classroom themes:

- mascot from local college/university
- popular storybook characters
- transportation
- cultures around the world
- construction
- bugs/insects
- flowers/plants
- jungle
- zoo animals
- patriotic
- frogs
- apples
- community
- ocean/under the sea
- rainbow colors
- sports
- movies/Hollywood
- monsters
- pirates
- Dr. Seuss
- polka dots
- beach
- owls
- super heroes

Effects of Color

When designing and adding décor to the classroom, teachers should give serious thought to the colors that they will utilize. Most teachers have been using two criteria for the colors of the bulletin board paper they put up: What colors are available, and which colors they like. Research indicates that the colors teachers use in the classroom affect both student learning and behavior. Every color has an affect on the brain based on its hue, value, and intensity (Wright 1998; Gaines and Curry 2011).

In an article in the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences in Education*, researchers Kristi Gaines and Zane Curry (2011) reported on the color impacts on student behavior in the physical learning environment. They reported that responses to color are both physiological and psychological. Physiological changes can include variations in blood pressure and brain development. Psychological changes include changes in mood and attention. Large amounts of color, even if it is a preferred color for students, tend to overstimulate and create a stressful learning environment not conducive to learning. Some students are more sensitive to color in the classroom than

others. Specifically, students with autism or attention deficit disorders tend to be affected adversely. Teachers' choices of colors and color combinations in the classroom and hallways subconsciously influence the physiological and psychological states of their students. Teachers are literally setting the tone for their learning environment through the colors they choose.

There are four psychological primary colors, red, blue, yellow, and green (Wright 1998). Each color has an effect on both behavior and learning. Since all other colors are combinations of the primary colors, the affects they have on behavior and learning are adaptations of the primary colors that they derive from. Figure 3.3 lists common positive behaviors and learning associated with the four most common colors (Wright 1998; Gaines and Curry 2011).

Figure 3.3 Relationships Between Colors and Behavior and Learning

Color	Behaviors	Learning
Yellow	Confidence/Optimism	Concentration/Innovation
Blue	Trust/Security	Creativity/Efficiency
Red	Courage/Strength	Attention/Memory
Green	Peace/Harmony	Vocal Expression/Application

There are other factors to consider also. These include the age, gender, and activity level of the students (Gaines and Curry 2011). According to Wright (1998) and Gaines and Curry (2011), elementary students prefer warm colors (red, yellow) while secondary students like cool colors (blue, green). Boys tend to favor the cool colors (blue and green), while girls prefer warm colors (red and yellow). Also, active children prefer cool colors (blue and green) whereas passive children are more comfortable in warm-colored surroundings (red and yellow).

Needless to say, the majority of students, as well as adults, will be a combination of all of the aforementioned general guidelines. Therefore, it is that much more important for teachers to know their students and to learn as many characteristics about them as they can. Teachers should

then use this information to create the color scheme that will best fit the majority of their students. As important as it is to connect the color scheme to students' physiological and psychological needs, it is just as important that the teacher does not overdo the amount of color. A room saturated with color will easily overwhelm students and defeat the purpose. Finally, when the teacher notices a student off task or unable to keep up with the work, they need to conduct a quick assessment of the color of the learning environment.

Student Work Areas

Another important aspect of preparing the classroom for success is organizing students' desks. There is no seating arrangement that is inherently good or bad. Specific designs will prove themselves to be better than others, depending upon the type of activities being incorporated into instruction. Teachers need to consider the effects that the physical arrangement of the room will have on developing the type of classroom environment they want. Rows of desks suggest order and discipline but do little to build a sense of community. However, rows accommodate large numbers of students and can often be quickly moved into group settings. Putting desks into clusters or pods best facilitates communication and cooperation among groups of students. Large or concentric circle arrangements encourage communication and sharing among the entire class. The seating arrangement can be changed as often as needed, but teachers have to remember to continually coach students about the expectations and give them practice moving appropriately in any new classroom arrangement. Informing students of the purpose of the classroom arrangement will allow students to share the teacher's vision of a well-organized flow that facilitates their important learning process.

If students are brand new to the teacher, or the teacher has no previous knowledge of students' behavior records or tendencies, it can be a good idea to allow students to choose their seats at first. This will allow the teacher time to evaluate where and by whom students are drawn to sit as well as who the leaders are. Then, the teacher can strategically place these students throughout the classroom when cooperative groups are implemented. While it may appear old-fashioned to many, some teachers prefer that their students sit in rows, and there is nothing wrong with this approach, when used appropriately and for specific reasons periodically through the year. The truth is that this method might work very well for some teachers if

their students are acting out while sitting in groups or circles. Sometimes just getting them to pay attention and limiting their interactions is what is needed. Keep in mind that while rows of desks provide an advantage in keeping order, they leave little space for deep learning activities.

If a great deal of instruction will be accomplished with the students working in small groups or with partners, then having them sit in clusters would be more conducive to that learning situation. This allows for conversations and group work to take place without having to move desks or chairs around. Normally, the optimum number for a group is three or four (Shindler 2009). That number can be expanded or decreased depending on the activity planned. When the size of the group is large, there are often students who are not active participants, and they quickly become spectators (Slavin 1994).

Figures 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 show different sample room arrangements. There are advantages and disadvantages to each. The key is to determine which feels appropriate for your classroom and the type of instructional activities that you typically implement.

Figure 3.4 Sample Classroom Arrangement 1 (in Rows)

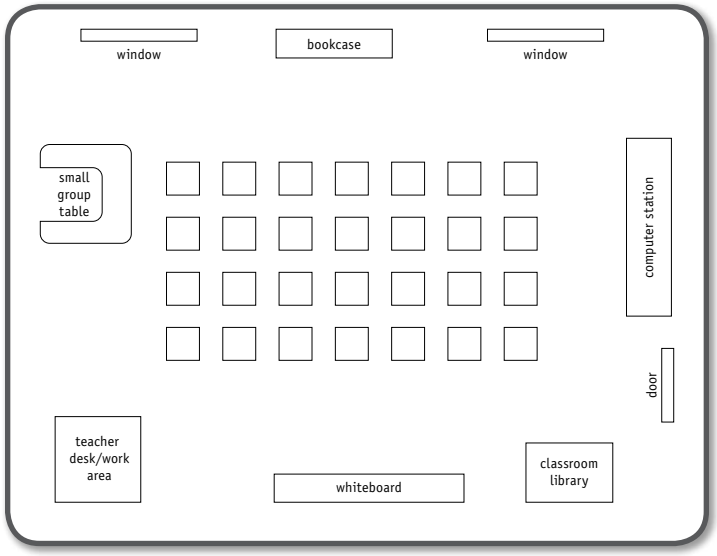


Figure 3.5 Sample Classroom Arrangement 2 (in Pairs)

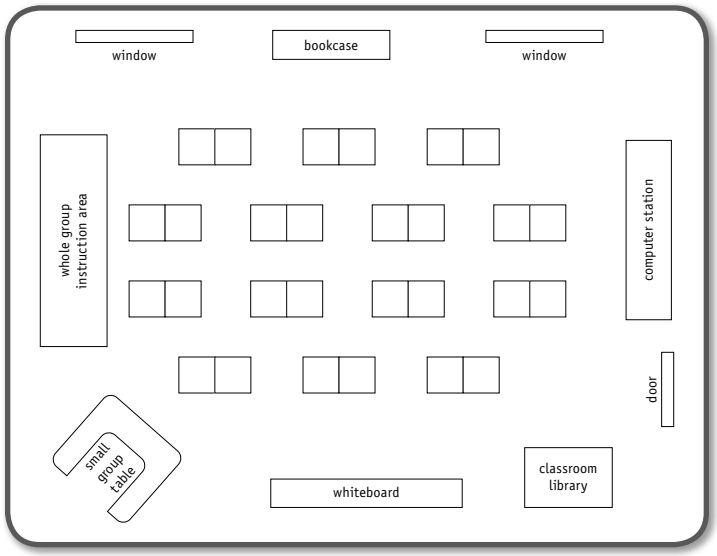
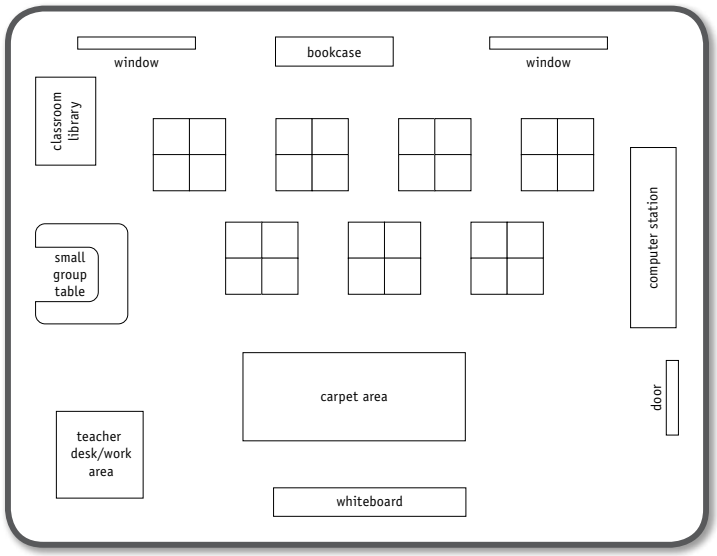


Figure 3.6 Sample Classroom Arrangement 3 (in Groups)



Stop and Think Look at Figures 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6, then answer the questions.

1. What would work well in each of these room arrangements? What might present challenges?

2. Do the teacher and students have plenty of room to move around in each of the plans?

3. Can the teacher see every student at all times in each of the plans?

4. Can the students easily see instructional displays and presentations?

5. Which plan is your favorite and why? What would you change?

None of these arrangements are right or wrong. Any one can prove to be very effective. Modifying these arrangements based on the activity can also lead to effective classroom management and student engagement. It all depends on the planning and implementation of the desired design. Just because students are arranged in rows does not mean they always work in isolation. By simply turning in any direction, students are easily able to work in pairs, triads, or quads. Conversely, even if students are seated in quads, it is simple to have them working on individual assignments by simply placing dividers around the perimeter of their desktop.

Floor Space and Flow

There are other space considerations to keep in mind. If the teacher likes to bring his or her students in close for whole-group instruction, he or she may want to designate floor space to meet with the class for this purpose. It is a good idea to have a large rug or carpet squares in that space for comfort if the room is not carpeted. If students rotate through workstations or centers often, the teacher will want to consider the location for these also. There may also be students with special needs or who need specific accommodations in the class. Special considerations should be given to the seating locations for those students in order to best serve their unique needs.

An additional aspect to consider is what I refer to as the "flow" of the room. Flow refers to the relative ease with which teachers and students can move around the classroom and be able to access resources that may be needed. Supplies or materials that may be needed during instruction should be easily reachable. It is also important to avoid too much clutter or too many obstacles, as this will not only interrupt the lesson being taught but may also be a safety hazard.

Questions for Reflection

1. What physical components in your classroom contribute to a positive learning environment?

2. How can you personalize your classroom to assist students in getting to know you?

3. Describe how your current classroom arrangement helps or hinders effective instructional time in your classroom. What changes/improvements can you make to enhance the classroom arrangement to improve instructional time?

Chapter 4

Examining the Social Environment of Your Classroom

Standards of Conduct

The social environment of the classroom can be an exciting place. Personalities combine together in that space for the purpose of learning. We, as teachers, are the facilitators of this learning and our decisions affect these personalities and the social environment of our classrooms in a large way.

Teaching is a profession that does not remain static for long. It can be exciting and exhausting at the same time. There are always new things for us to learn and ways for us to improve. Something that worked beautifully with one class may not with another. Each year provides a new opportunity for teachers to reflect on their current challenges and successes. Teachers need to begin each school year by being consistent with rules, procedures, and their system of consequences and rewards. Systems can always be tweaked to fit the needs of the students in order to maximize the amount of time that students are working and learning.

With this in mind, it is important for teachers to constantly reflect on the expectations that they have conveyed; the rules they have established; the rewards for abiding by, or the consequences for not abiding by, the rules; and the ways that they facilitate their entire management system in order to determine how well they have prepared their students for success.

There are many things teachers can do to create excellent learning situations. Ron Clark, Disney's Teacher of the Year in 2001 and author of *The Essential 55* (2003), believes that setting expectations for acceptable

behavior at the beginning of the year is one of the most important things teachers can do. A teacher's classroom management skills establish and maintain an environment where students are eager to learn under his or her guidance.

Certainly, the best way to increase the odds of success is to plan and prepare. Being a teacher is like performing a juggling act. As you formulate a plan for your own classroom, you should think through the things that are important to you. At the same time, you must prepare yourself to keep learning and be flexible, because just when you think you have achieved order in your class, something new may come along and catch you by surprise. Feel confident as you pursue the best research-based strategies so that you can become an effective classroom manager. Before the first student walks into the classroom each day, take a few moments to think about what content will be covered, what materials will be needed, and in what activities the students will be participating. As you prepare, imagine your students interacting with the texts, materials, activities, and peers around them. What problems might arise? Make a plan for addressing these problems by writing down a series of actions you might take with various situations. As you read the next section about establishing rules, consequences, and rewards, think through this plan of action.

Establishing Rules and Standards of Conduct

We have rules in every aspect of life—that is what makes civilization possible. Rules for students are those simple things that make the classroom manageable. Teachers who effectively manage their classrooms establish clear expectations at the very beginning of the year and follow them consistently the entire year (Whitaker 2004). Establishing standards should be done the first day the teacher meets his or her students because it will have a lasting effect on student conduct throughout the entire year. Setting reasonable limits and consequences with consistent and predictable enforcement is essential in maintaining a safe and secure learning environment. A disciplinary action that takes students by surprise is usually not only ineffective, but it often results in the students perceiving the teacher as being unfair and unreasonable.

The rules need to be set in very specific behavioral terms. Start by thinking through priorities, or "must-have behaviors." Figure 4.1 highlights

some of the criteria to consider before formulating a set of classroom rules. These criteria might also be shared with students if you have opted to include students in the process of creating the classroom rules for the year, as engaging students in establishing overall classroom rules and procedures is often a successful way to encourage student involvement (Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering 2003; Marzano 2007).

Figure 4.1 Criteria for Choosing Classroom Rules

- ✏ Choose rules you can enforce.
- ✏ Choose rules about which you feel strongly.
- ✏ Choose rules that are age appropriate.
- ✏ Choose rules that reinforce school rules.

The list of rules should be general enough to cover multiple situations. For example, you might decide that students should be allowed to share their work and ask each other questions under specific conditions. Or, you may determine that you want students' full attention when you or anyone else is speaking to the class. You may also want students to be quiet and remain in their seats during class discussions or lectures, but offer the possibility of more movement for cooperative learning activities with peer interaction for maximum academic language exposure and use. With all this in mind, two appropriate classroom rules are: "Listen and stay seated when someone is speaking" and "Use a quiet voice during cooperative learning time."

When deciding on classroom rules, make sure they meet the following criteria:

- clear
- specific
- behavioral

It is best to make sure that the total set of rules is limited to five to eight (Emmer, Evertson, and Worsham 2003), and that they are phrased in a positive tone. This means that the list begins with *dos* rather than *don'ts*. It is also important to refrain from including common classroom procedures in the official set of classroom rules. Although they are intricately linked, they have important differences (Marzano 2007). Rules identify general expectations for student behavior, while procedures describe the behaviors that will help realize the rules. For example, your rule may be: Receive permission to sharpen your pencil during class time. The procedure for this would then be: Raise two fingers in the air, then once the teacher nods approval, you may get up and go sharpen your pencil.

Figure 4.2 shares examples of common classroom rules. This set of rules is not meant to be used as is; rather, choose a few rules that might apply to your classroom and create your own to fit what works for you and your students. In order to inspire the flow of ideas, walk around the school and take pictures of evidence of rules, consequences, and rewards in other classrooms or search the Internet for creative ideas from other educators. This will help you decide what you want to include in your classroom and how you want to convey the expectations clearly to students.

Figure 4.2 Common Classroom Rules

- Work quietly without disturbing others.
- When the teacher is talking, it's your turn to listen.
- Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking.
- Keep your hands, legs, and other objects to yourself.
- Always walk in the halls and classroom.
- Follow directions.
- Be in your seat when the bell rings.
- Bring all necessary supplies to class.
- Use the appropriate voice level in the classroom.
- Put your trash in the trash can.

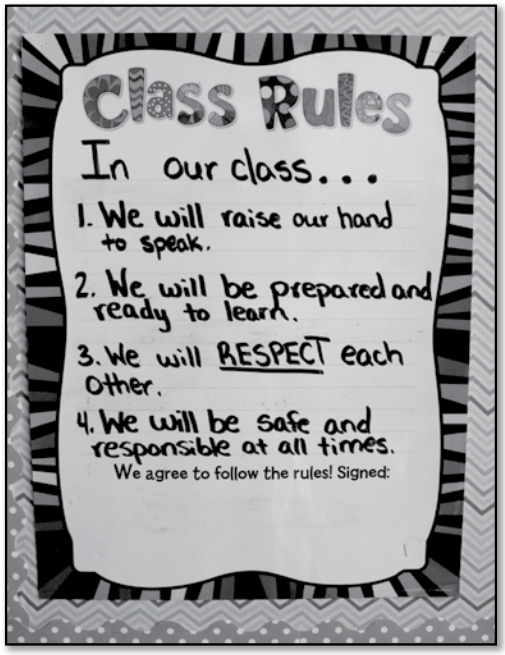
Stop and Think

Why is it important to have clear rules and standards of conduct?

What rules might you choose to incorporate in your classroom?

Once you have decided what the rules will be, post and teach them so that everyone knows exactly what is expected. Next, have students agree to the posted rules and consequences plan by actually signing an agreement on a large poster in the room, as well as signing a send-home copy or a copy that is kept in a folder. Sending the agreement home to families will help with parental/guardian collaboration and cooperation. Students must understand that rules are non-negotiable. In other words, when a rule is compromised, there will be a consequence per the agreement made the first days of school. Figure 4.3 shows a sample rules agreement poster.

Figure 4.3 Sample Rules Agreement Poster



Logical and Natural Consequences for Student Behavior

Students should expect natural and logical consequences to their behavioral choices. All people need feedback in relation to appropriate and inappropriate behavior (Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering 2003). Natural consequences are those that result directly from a student's behavior or actions. An example of a natural consequence is when a student has to redo a paper if he or she loses it. Or if a student draws on his or her desk, the natural consequence is that he or she would have to clean it. Logical consequences are those the teacher deems appropriate, such as making an apology if a student interrupts someone else during a discussion. The consequences should always be linked to the offense and should be closely aligned to the severity of the behavior. Consequences must be age appropriate as well.

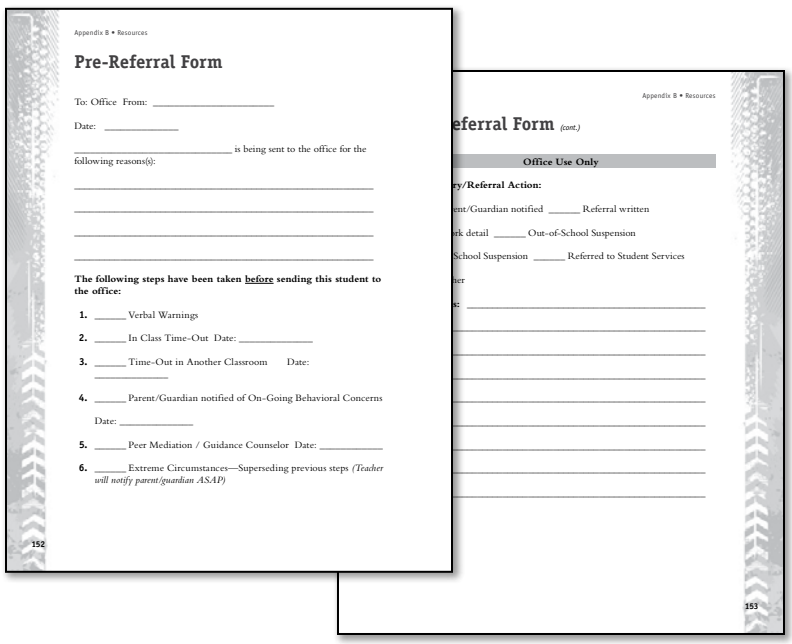
All students need to understand that if they choose to disregard or violate classroom expectations, a correlation exists between their choices and the natural outcomes. When consequences are clearly posted, this connection between the decision to violate a rule and the appropriate consequence will seem more reasonable to the student. This needs to be discussed with students while rules are being developed, discussed, and practiced. Then, the consequences that correlate to the rule infraction should be posted alongside the classroom rules. While a specific posted rule for each possible act of misbehavior is not needed, it is a good idea to have a rule that incorporates many so that a logical consequence can be enacted. In the previous example about drawing on the desk, the rule could be "Take care of school and classroom property."

It is difficult to identify in advance appropriate disciplinary consequences for every circumstance that might arise in a school environment. Usual disciplinary consequences include: loss of a privilege, loss of free time not related to instruction or necessary physical exercise, or a call to the parent or guardian. Any chosen consequence must also be an acceptable practice at the school. For example, some schools do not allow students to be kept longer than a predetermined amount of time after school. A student who has to take a school bus home should not be required to miss the bus unless the teacher has made an arrangement with a parent beforehand. A referral to the office usually comes only after other disciplinary strategies have failed to bring about the desired result. A referral is also only going to

work if administration has a procedure set up to handle referred students. In these circumstances, a pre-referral form can be helpful. This informs administration what steps the teacher has taken prior to sending the student to the office. By utilizing this or another pre-referral form, teachers are able to justify removing a student from instruction based on the prior steps taken. It also allows the teacher to avoid acting instinctively and just sending students out of the room. By being asked to process the previous actions taken, the teacher can justify that a trip to the office is warranted.

Figure 4.4 shows a sample pre-referral form. There is a section at the bottom that informs the teacher of the action that the administrator has taken. Examples of infractions that would fit the criteria to use the pre-referral form are such things as constant disruption or direct defiance. Severe violations that result in the student being sent to the principal, assistant principal, or dean immediately upon the first offense include bullying, fighting, possession of drugs or weapons, physical threats, and sexual harassment. These infractions must be brought to the attention of administration without delay so that no further damage is inflicted.

Figure 4.4 Sample Pre-Referral Form



Appendix B • Resources

Pre-Referral Form

To: Office From: _____

Date: _____

_____ is being sent to the office for the following reason(s):

_____

_____

_____

_____

The following steps have been taken before sending this student to the office:

1. _____ Verbal Warnings
2. _____ In Class Time-Out Date: _____
3. _____ Time-Out in Another Classroom Date: _____
4. _____ Parent/Guardian notified of On-Going Behavioral Concerns Date: _____
5. _____ Peer Mediation / Guidance Counselor Date: _____
6. _____ Extreme Circumstances—Superseding previous steps *(Teacher will notify parent/guardian ASAP)*

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Appendix B • Resources

eferral Form *(cont.)*

Office Use Only

ry/Referral Action:

ent/Guardian notified _____ Referral written

rk detail _____ Out-of-School Suspension

School Suspension _____ Referred to Student Services

her

e: _____

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Positive Consequences and Rewards

The term *consequences* often makes us think of negative penalties for misbehavior. However, the meaning should include consequences for all behavior; thus, positive behavior should bring about positive consequences. All corrective interventions need to include a healthy balance between negative consequences for inappropriate behavior and positive consequences for expected behavior (Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering 2003). Students, like adults, respond to positive reinforcement better than to sarcasm or use of constant negative chastisement. Praising desired behavior is usually much more effective than reactive discipline and punishment. Keep in mind that positive reinforcement needs to be specific, descriptive, earned, and accurate.

Praise is only one component in a classroom rewards system. There is research that discourages the use of rewards in general, as it has been found that students become more interested in getting the reward rather than changing behavior in a positive direction (Kohn 1999; Linsin 2011b). As the ultimate goal is to increase the positive consequences and decrease the negative, students must be able to internalize the consequences and adjust future behavior accordingly.

Most teachers use some form of rewards in their classrooms. These rewards should be a reflection of previously established classroom expectations as well as be authentic and sincere. Praise communicates to students what teachers really care about. If teachers give praise for work that visually looks nice, the result might be that they get students who aim for that simplified goal rather than the quality or depth of understanding that is really desired. Effort and growth is generally what teachers are after, and comments should concentrate in this direction by giving explicit and timely feedback. Students generally need to know when they are doing something correctly at that moment.

It is also important to keep reflective records to document whether the system of consequences and rewards is working in order to manage the classroom and general learning environment. Effective teachers maintain a record-keeping system that allows them to keep track of student behavior in an efficient manner without wasting too much instructional time (Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering 2003).

Rewards, like consequences, should be in proportion to students' correct choices. They should have a legitimate educational purpose, and the return offered should be sufficient to motivate the student to continue making correct decisions. While some earn rewards for doing great things, others might earn rewards for just doing what they are supposed to do. This would be the case for those students who struggle just to meet the behavioral norms of the rest of the class. The end goal, however, is to gradually increase the level of expectation of positive behavior for struggling students' to eventually get them to the place where they are earning rewards for exemplary behavior rather than just "normal" behavior.

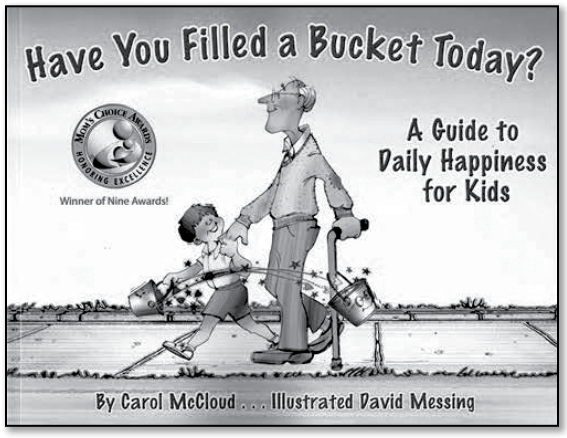
Also consider various levels of rewards. There might be praise or rewards for *individual* behavior, such as choice time during centers, stamps on a paper, or choice of a partner with whom to work. There might be *group* cooperation points where, at the end of the week, the table with the most points gets to choose a prize or receive the ability to choose an activity the following week. There might also be a *whole-class* reward when the entire class is participating well in a lesson, such as accomplishing a project in order to eat lunch in the classroom with the teacher. Because not every student is motivated by the same reward or recognition, using a combination of all of the above recognition systems can help us better meet the needs of all students.

Stop and Think

In what situations might group praise be appropriate?

Another effective system is to have school-wide rewards. School guidance counselor Ms. Herda has implemented a successful behavior reward system used throughout her entire school that is based on positive consequences. She calls her program "Bucket Filling," and is based on the book titled *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud (2006). See Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Cover of *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*



During the first weeks of school, Ms. Herda, the principal, and the assistant principal go to every classroom and read the book to students. Afterward, a class discussion is held to discuss the meaning of being a "bucket-filler." Before leaving the class, they hand the teacher a bucket (decorated for this purpose) and a bag full of cotton balls. It is explained to the class that whenever they exhibit great character and an adult at the school recognizes it, the class is rewarded with a cotton ball. The goal is to fill the class bucket with cotton balls until no more can fit. Some examples of student behaviors that are often recognized for this purpose are: doing something nice for someone else, using good manners, being respectful, being responsible, or setting a good example for others (class or individual). Each time the bucket is filled the class is rewarded. Rewards can be just about anything the teacher can imagine. Examples from Ms. Herda include: popcorn, freeze pops, or ice cream parties; eating lunch with the teacher or with a staff member; and teacher choice or student choice (from a list of acceptable options). Interestingly, most often, the students strive for the rewards that involve spending time with the teacher or other adults in the school. For that reason, the food-related rewards are given for the first few times the bucket is filled. Equally gratifying to students is that each time their class fills their bucket, Ms. Herda recognizes them on the school's morning show. Teachers and staff consistently provide students with clearly-stated positive feedback and verbal praise for their actions. This type of reward enhances students' intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 2001), which is maximized when students feel a sense

of competence and have self-determination in their environment (Rovai et al. 2007). Since Ms. Herda implemented the program at her school four years ago, the total number of school discipline referrals written by the entire staff has been less than ten each year.

The key to this success story is the social environment that Ms. Herda has nurtured. Through diligence and "stick-to-it-ness" she has been able to get the entire staff to effectively buy into the program and to follow through on its consistent execution. Each school year, no matter how many previous years the students may have heard the story, it is read again to each class and the explanation is given. It is very rewarding to walk around the school and hear students telling other students that the words they are using, or the actions they are taking are bucket-worthy.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are some things you should consider when creating your classroom rules?

2. From your comprehensive list of possible classroom rules (question 1), what are four or five rules that would encompass most behavior or management issues in your classroom?

3. What is meant by logical and natural consequences and why is it important to know the difference?

4. What could be a logical and natural consequence for a student who chooses not to attempt his work assignments during class time?

Chapter 5

Lesson Planning for Student Engagement

Picture a classroom where the teacher is eager to teach and the students are excited to learn. What a wonderful classroom that would be! John Dewey claimed that keeping students interested in learning was the key to deeper learning (Schraw, Flowerday, and Lehman 2001). As teachers, we teach so that students will learn. So, the question is, how do we create lessons that keep students interested so that deeper learning will occur on a regular basis? Dewey believed that the key to keeping students interested in learning is to provide lessons that challenge them (Schraw, Flowerday, and Lehman 2001).

In order for students to feel challenged and not bored, teachers must engage them. Our instructional approach should stimulate student engagement. Marzano (2007) says that there are several ways to keep students engaged in the classroom.

1. **Provide lessons that are high energy.** Since movement and learning are processed in the same parts of the brain, create lessons that provide opportunities for movement to get the brain active and working.

2. **Provide lessons that include missing information.** Create lessons that make students curious about something. We want them to *want to know* about something. I know I'm successful if during a lesson a student is sneaking on his or her phone to google some information about what I've said. They want to know!

3. **Provide lessons that include mild controversy and competition.** Create lessons that engage students in solving problems. Teaching lessons that involve creative problem solving (Treffinger, Isaken, and Stead-Dorval 2006), project-based learning, and problem-based learning are ways to challenge students to think deeper and solve problems.

4. **Provide lessons that consider the self-system.** Plan lessons that involve topics your students are interested in.

5. **Provide lessons that place students in situations of mild pressure.** Plan for open-ended questions that will allow you to ask more than one or two students what they think. When questions have only one right answer, there will not be much of a discussion. The idea is that students will feel the pressure to answer the question and will know that they will be called upon to offer their viewpoint.

When planning lessons, think about how your students will interact with the content. If you were the student, does the lesson make you want to learn about this topic? Ask yourself how you can make the lesson more engaging and interesting. This chapter provides strategies and suggestions that support student engagement through planning strong lessons, the components of a good lesson, ideas for using signals for attention and transitions, and ways to use technology in the classroom. These ideas are designed to help you maintain students' focus in a positive way while keeping them motivated to learn and work hard.

The Basics of Lesson Planning

Lesson plans are a teacher's road map. They help teachers stay on track to meet the objectives of what students should learn. Typically, we used the classic model made popular by Madeline Hunter (1993). Her lesson plan included the following steps:

1. objectives
2. standards
3. anticipatory set
4. input and modeling
5. guided practice
6. closure
7. independent practice

Some teachers still use this tried and true lesson plan structure, but there are other formats or structures for lesson planning. The format of your lesson plan should depend on the goals you want to accomplish. For example, do you want to increase critical thinking? If so, you might want to use an inquiry-based lesson plan (more on this later in the chapter). Does the content lend itself to a more straightforward manner as opposed to an inquiry manner? If so, then you may want to use a traditional format more like the Madeline Hunter lesson plan.

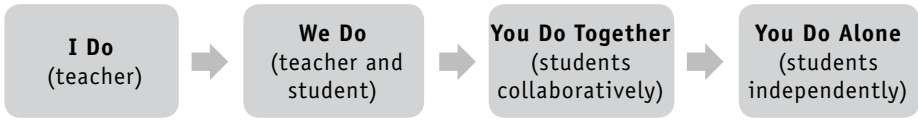
There is nothing wrong with using a more traditional, straightforward lesson plan. This style of lesson organization can help teachers pinpoint what is needed in a lesson. It is also easier to write and is helpful for teachers newer to the profession. However, just because the lesson is straightforward does not mean that it cannot be stimulating. The engaging and creative elements of the lesson simply fit within the steps of that lesson. For example, the anticipatory set is meant to be the hook that grabs students' attention. The input and modeling portion of the lesson can be tied to a popular topic that students are interested in. The guided practice portion can be a hands-on application. No matter which part of the traditional lesson, all parts can be and should be engaging to students. Below is a shorter modification showing five steps to lesson planning. The 5-step lesson plan is a simple way to begin planning lessons. Remember, always add engaging elements within these steps.

5-Step Lesson Plan

1. the opening (hook)
2. introduction to new material ("I do")
3. guided practice ("we do")
4. independent practice ("you do")
5. the closing (assessment)

At this point, you may be thinking that some of this reminds you of what is referred to as the gradual release of responsibility model (Fisher and Frey 2013). In the gradual release of responsibility model, students are given increasing amounts of responsibility to learn a concept or complete a task over time after being first taught by the teacher, then working with classmates, and finally working independently. Responsibility is systematically transferred from the teacher to the students. This provides students with multiple learning stages and opportunities to master the objectives of the lesson. Figure 5.1 is a visual representation of the gradual release of responsibility model showing its four interactive components.

Figure 5.1 Gradual Release of Responsibility Model



(Adapted from Fisher and Frey 2013)

Once a teacher is proficient in planning these lessons, he or she can plan more advanced lessons using an inquiry method, for example. In inquiry-based lessons, the focus is not on getting the right answer. Inquiry lessons focus on developing inquisitiveness in students. The goal is for students to develop skills through questioning and investigating, and ultimately, drawing conclusions.

The 5E instructional model is one way to plan inquiry-based lessons (BSCS 2006). It is based on the constructivist's philosophy of learning where students build their own understanding of a concept based on what they already know about it. The lesson is formatted around five Es: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. The concept is framed within an essential question that drives the objectives of the lesson.

The 5E Lesson Plan

1. **Engage:** This part of the lesson hooks students and gets them excited about the content. Teachers can introduce the concept with an intriguing or challenging question designed to capture students' interest. It can build on prior knowledge and should make students want to know more.

2. **Explore:** Provide an overarching question for students to answer. The students come up with their own way to find answers to the question and conduct various hands-on problem-solving activities and experiments that encourage them to explore the content. Often the biggest challenge for teachers is to let students explore the content.

3. **Explain:** Teachers help students observe patterns, analyze results, and draw conclusions. This is when the teacher makes the connection to what the students did. "Here's what I wanted you to come away with."

4. **Elaborate:** This is the extension activity that builds on the knowledge that students have just learned. It brings a new perspective.

5. **Evaluate:** Student understanding is assessed either through a written exam or project. Students show what they have learned.

The following is a 5E lesson example on the topic of bacteria. The essential question that drives the lesson is "What is bacteria?"

Engage: The lesson begins with a video that shows where germs are present in various locations in a community and the after-effects of the spread of germs. Then, students participate in a discussion about germs and how they spread.

Explore: The teacher places students in small groups to come up with an experiment to test for the presence of germs in their school.

Explain: Students learn about disease-causing bacteria and helpful bacteria found in the gut through various media including texts, videos, and images.

Elaborate: Here, students' knowledge is extended by learning how bacteria can help clean the environment.

Evaluate: Students reflect on the essential question and on their learning. They also take an assessment to show what they learned.

(Adapted from Discovering Science Through Inquiry: Cells *by Teacher Created Materials)*

Another alternative lesson structure is the use of project-based learning/problem-based learning. These types of lessons begin with determining a driving question; gaining knowledge of the concept and applying skills to answer the driving question; allowing students to make choices about how they work and the project they would like to complete; providing time for critique and revision; and finally, presenting their project to an audience. When students complete these "projects," they are actively participating in their own learning by exploring real-world problems or challenges and acquiring new knowledge in the process. For more information on project-based learning, you can explore the Buck Institute for Education website which can be found at http://www.bie.org.

Regardless of the lesson planning format, there are plenty of opportunities to build engagement into a lesson. Remember, having a specific lesson

structure does not mean that the lesson should be boring for students. When planning lessons we should always be incorporating interesting questions, unique examples, and creative projects to fully engage students. These engaging lessons can begin with a straightforward format, and the creativity involved in presenting the content of these lessons is sprinkled throughout.

What kind of lesson plan do you use most often and how effective is it with engaging students?

Important Components for Every Lesson

Regardless of the type of lesson one plans for students, all lessons should have these basic components:

- Concept (the information or skill the students will learn)
- Learning Objectives (the measurable things students do to learn the concept)
- Procedure (a way for students to learn the material)
- Assessment (a way to measure what students learn)

Most strong lessons begin with a concept. The concept is the information or skill the students will learn. It is the anchor of a lesson. Everything builds around students understanding that concept.

The learning objectives are the standards. They are the measurable things students do to show that they have learned the concepts. Each state has a set of standards and objectives that students must learn within a grade level. Good objectives are clear and legitimate. I will always remember when I was a classroom teacher, my principal said to the staff, "Get rid of the fluff." By this he meant that if instruction and learning objectives are not based on one's state-adopted standards (e.g., Common Core State Standards or other state standards), then they should not be taught. The amount of subject matter that teachers are required to teach each year is overwhelming enough without adding extra content even if it is fun to teach. It can also be helpful to combine objectives or standards whenever appropriate. This not only provides additional time to instruct on the material, but it is also best

practice, as the brain thrives on making connections (Roth 2012), which contributes to successful student learning. It can be helpful to have the objectives for each class or subject that day posted on the board or on a chart so that students' brains will make connections to what they may already know about the subject and to what new learning lies ahead. A teacher can use the objectives of a lesson to build on students' background knowledge and pique curiosity. The teacher accomplishes this through thought-provoking questioning or connections to prior learning (Schmoker 2011).

The procedure is the core of the entire lesson because it is when the actual content is taught. There are many instructional approaches that can be followed for this part of the lesson. Good instruction takes into account the fact that even though students may be working in groups or individually, the teacher is still managing the instruction and remaining actively engaged in the teaching and learning process. Other instructional approaches are more inquiry oriented and allow for students to do their own discovery and learning before the teacher comes in to solidify understanding and content. Still other instructional approaches where teachers balance the role of content deliverer and facilitator may be more appropriate depending on the objective of the lesson.

The term *withitness* refers to a teacher who is paying attention to more than one thing at a time (Eby, Herrell, and Jordan 2005). The label is not as important as the awareness of what is going on in the class and the flexibility to adjust and differentiate the lesson according to the individualized needs of the students. Students need academically engaging time in which teachers are prepared, have strong management skills, and do not spend excessive amounts of time making announcements or passing out materials (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2004).

It is also important to consider different learning modalities during instruction. Since everyone has preferred ways of learning, the teacher should vary the instruction to make sure that all modalities are adequately covered. Phil Wilder states "… if we recognize that our students learn in different ways, then we also need to recognize that our students need us, when possible, to teach lessons with strategies that allow students to process information through multiple modalities" (Wilder 2014, under "Teaching with Multiple Modalities").

During the procedure, within any type of lesson, there will be opportunities for the teacher to circulate around the room and provide assistance as necessary in order to correct any mistakes or misconceptions in the learning that he or she may see. While walking around the classroom, the teacher needs to be actively assisting students who are having trouble adjusting to the level of difficulty of the work. This will go a long way to ensure proper classroom management. Providing help to those who need it and giving alternative tasks to students who have demonstrated mastery of the assignment will help to prevent boredom and classroom disruptions.

Assessment is the final component in a strong lesson. Assessment is not merely used to assign grades, rather it is used to give the teacher feedback on what students are learning.

Formative assessments are the ongoing appraisals that teachers use during instruction to assess their teaching and improve student learning. These assessments can be written, verbal, anecdotal, or any other tool that teachers use in assessing student learning and adjusting ongoing instruction, based on the findings. Formative assessments can include observations of students, exit slips, journal entries, or think-pair-shares. The important point to remember about this type of assessment is that it is done on an ongoing basis and drives teachers' instruction. If a formative assessment shows that some students are not grasping the content, then instruction has to be changed and retaught in a new format. This means that the teacher may need to take a different approach to the teaching style when students do not comprehend the initial lesson. For example, if the original presentation was conducted through mostly auditory instruction, then during re-teaching the teacher should focus on a different learning style such as a kinesthetic approach by adding manipulatives or materials for a more hands-on approach or adding a web-based lesson for visual learners.

By definition, a formative assessment is "checking for understanding." Checking for understanding falls within all parts of a lesson. Those that are appropriate at the end of the lesson can vary depending on where in a unit of study the particular lesson falls and can include things such as exit slips, student self-assessments, journal entries, and small-group discussions.

A teacher should plan how he or she will be checking for understanding ahead of time during each step of the lesson. This will help teachers remember to constantly assess learning throughout the lesson, not just at the

end when it is much harder to correct student misunderstandings. Figure 5.2 provides some ideas to use as checks for understanding.

Figure 5.2 Sample Checks for Understanding

Check for Understanding	Definition
Gallery Walk	Students walk around to explore texts/items that are placed around the room. They can write down their understanding of these texts/items on paper so the teacher can see their thinking.
Graphic Organizer	Students fill out information on graphic organizers to show what they understand from the content.
Exit Ticket	Students write down what they learned from the lesson and hand it in to the teacher on their way out of the classroom.
3-2-1	Students hold up their fingers to show the teacher their level of understanding.
ABC Professor	Students brainstorm words or phrases about a topic that begin with each letter of the alphabet.
Show It With Dough	Students make a three-dimensional sculpture with dough to represent what they learned in the lesson.
Individual Whiteboard	Students write their work on individual whiteboards so the teacher can easily walk around and check for understanding.
Thumbs Up or Down	Students give thumbs up if they understand the content and thumbs down if they do not understand.
Interactive Notebook	Students keep information written on various folded graphic organizers in a notebook that they can refer back to and also show their growth.

A summative assessment is used to gauge student learning at the conclusion of an instructional unit by comparing it against a standard(s) or benchmark(s). This type of assessment is traditionally given at the end of a unit and could include a final project, paper, or exam. Depending on the type of lesson and where it falls in the overall unit of study, the teacher will have to decide which type of assessment is most appropriate to use at the end. With both types of assessment, the greater number of assessments collected, the truer representation of each student's accumulative understanding in that area.

Summative assessment is not meant to be used as a check for understanding, although the final data can be used to evaluate student understanding. If it appears that even at the end of the unit students still need additional support to understand the concept, additional opportunities for re-teaching should be built into the instructional plan.

How often do you assess students? How can you plan to use more formative assessments in the classroom?

Using Signals for Attention and Transitions

Students are not learning if they are not listening. When a teacher needs to cut through the chatter in order to get the students' attention, his or her voice isn't always the best tool. The use of a signal can be an effective tool instead. A signal is an action or prop that is used to obtain student attention. Just as an orchestra conductor taps the baton to get musicians to pay attention, teachers can get their students' attention with a gesture or a sound. There are as many of these signals as one's imagination can invent. Asking veteran teachers for signals that they use in their classrooms can prove helpful as well. Ultimately, teachers have to find out what works best for their teaching style and their students—a signal that is highly effective for elementary students may be considered childish to middle and high school students.

The first thing to remember is that the signal needs to sound different from the students' voices. To be successful, students need to be able to see or hear it from anywhere in the room. One of the most common times to use a signal is when the class will be working in cooperative groups. They will need to be able to hear it even when many of them are talking at the same time. Remember, the teacher may be anywhere in the room when he or she may want to use the signal. It needs to be convenient to the teacher at all times. A heavy gong that stays at the front of the room is not convenient if the teacher is sitting at his or her small-group table in the back of the room. Since signals are often used many times throughout the day, it is also important to pick ones that aren't bothersome to hear over and over again.

Teachers should establish expectations for how fast they expect the class to react to their signal and reward the class with praise when they respond

appropriately. A simple acknowledgement, such as "I appreciate the way that the entire class was ready for our next task within the five-second time limit" reinforces the expectation and can make students feel proud.

Some teachers use several signals, each one for a different task. Examples are a train whistle to get students to line up, a hotel bell to let group leaders know to collect supplies for their group members, and a timer to give a five-minute warning. Depending on how the signal is used, the teacher may also expect different outcomes. For example, if the teacher wants to interrupt students while they are working to give a directive, the expectation would be that when the signal is complete all students are silent with their attention on the teacher. A signal that can be used for this is as follows:

Teacher: "1, 2, 3. Eyes on me!"

Students: "4, 3, 2. Looking at you!" (materials down, no talking, eyes on the teacher)

In other instances, a signal may be more for transition purposes where the expectation is that students are still able to talk in order to wrap up what they are doing and get ready for the next task or to move from one learning station to another. A signal for this might be a timer, a short music clip, a series of strikes on a gong (e.g., by the third gong students have to be ready for the next thing), or counting backwards to convey the expected period of time in which to accomplish a task, clean up, or move.

Successful teachers who use signals explain expectations, instruct students on the procedures for the signal, and offer plenty of opportunities to practice before they expect the students to actually be successful in using the procedure efficiently in their daily routine. Teachers with highly organized and well-managed classrooms realize that students often forget procedures and need to practice them frequently, especially after returning from the weekend or a longer school break. Whichever signals are chosen, the key is to model and practice until it is a natural behavior on the students' part. Teachers must always be upfront about their expectations and never make students guess what they are trying to accomplish. A signal is not effective if the class does not respond to it. Also, the teacher must determine how the students should demonstrate that they have seen or heard the signal. For example, if the teacher claps, should the students clap too, or should they

put down their pencils and look up. Sometimes, a silent teacher signal and a quiet reminder can be equally strategic (Starr 2005).

Finally, remember that the purpose of using signals is to eliminate wasted time on transitions and to gain students' attention. Investing in the necessary extra amount of time at the beginning of the school year practicing and rehearsing classroom procedures will be more than made up for with gained instructional time later in the year as the procedures become fluid.

Figure 5.3 shows some signals that teachers could use in their classroom. The list is separated into visual, auditory, and call-and-response signals but may be combined.

Figure 5.3 Examples of Classroom Signals

Visual Signals
• use a stop sign • red light • hold up your hand and wait for students to put their hands up/stop talking • thumbs up and wait for students to put their thumbs up/stop talking
Auditory Signals
• bell • clap your hands twice (or in any type of sequence) and students mimic your clap • classroom chant (make up on your own or with your students) • count backwards from five (or another appropriate number) • song or chant • rain stick • gong
Call-and-Response Signals
• Teacher: "Hocus, pocus." Students: "Everybody focus." Students stop talking and turn attention to teacher. • Teacher: "Hands on top." Teacher puts hands on head. Students: "Everybody stop." Students puts hands on head and looks at teacher. • Teacher: "We are..." Students: "determined dolphins" (name of mascot) • Teacher: "Hip-Hip!" Students: "Hooray!" • Teacher: "Are you ready to rock?" Students: "We're ready to roll!" • Teacher: "All set?" Students: "You bet."

What signals have you seen that worked in classrooms? What signals will you try to incorporate?

Managing Technology in the Classroom

Among the more exciting educational tools that have been introduced in recent years has been the implementation of technology in the classroom. From interactive whiteboards to the use of the Internet, and yes, even mobile phones and tablets, technology has the potential to change the instructional landscape from pre-kindergarten through grade twelve and even higher education. With this instructional format also comes numerous classroom management challenges. Effective classroom management technology strategies require teachers to provide students with clear guidelines on school policies and procedures when working with technology in the classroom. Every school should have an Acceptable User Policy signed by students and their parents on what constitutes acceptable behavior when using technology (Deutsch 2005). Before implementing the use of technology in the classroom, specifically Internet and mobile devices, students should be provided in-depth and specific instructions of do's and don'ts, outlining what inappropriate usage looks like, and the consequences that would follow the breaking of these rules. This alone will curb the majority of potential problems, just as having classroom rules deters most students from misbehaving during regular class time. A simple way to manage classroom use of technology is to employ the Traffic Signal Approach (Teachbytes 2012). Figure 5.4 explains the basic guidelines to be followed according to which color the light is on.

Figure 5.4 The Traffic Signal Approach

Red Light

All electronic devices must be put away and out of sight. Consequences are determined by the designated classroom policies.

When to Use: Test-taking and situations where student attention must be focused on a task.

Yellow Light

Students may have electronic devices out if being used for educational purposes. Any misuse will result in consequences as determined by the designated classroom policies, such as loss of user privileges or confiscation.

When to Use: Independent research or situations where technology might be a good learning resource.

Green Light

Students are to have their electronic devices out for a classroom activity. Any misuse will result in consequences as determined by the designated classroom policies, such as loss of participation points or confiscation.

When to Use: Situations where the teacher is leading students in an activity that utilizes technological devices, and other situations where the technology is required for participation.

Understandably, the traffic light approach may seem extremely primary to secondary school teachers, as it is a common management system in many elementary classrooms. I would argue that because it is simplistic and visual, older students should have no trouble understanding and following the approach. Diverse learners and English language learners will benefit from this approach as well. By having a system, the teacher will eliminate the ability for students to argue that they were not clear on the guidelines for technology use in the classroom.

As many teachers have experienced, their students can be light years ahead of the average adults when it comes to technology know-how. Unfortunately, this includes ways to hide what they are inappropriately doing with the device when not being directly supervised. This alone makes it extremely important that the teacher is able to view what all students are doing with their technical devices. If your school employs a technology teacher, I suggest that before the students use these devices, that you have this expert thoroughly explain to students how he or she is prepared and equipped to monitor and identify any illegal or unwanted activity.

Since the importance of understanding and being proficient with using technology continues to be more and more a part of daily living, and schools play an important role in preparing our students for future employment and careers, it makes sense to have students interacting with technology in our classrooms. This is especially true for economically disadvantaged students who may otherwise not have the necessary exposure to these technologies. Through the proper management and monitoring of the multitude of technologies that are presently available and those that are not yet imagined, teachers will be able to focus their attention on the application and teaching of these new devices and not be as concerned about the misuse of technology.

Stop and Think What rules and procedures do you have in place to manage technology in the classroom?

Questions for Reflection

1. What value can well-planned lessons bring to your classroom?

2. In what ways can you incorporate a suggested style of lesson planning from this chapter into what you already do? What changes will you need to make and how do you think this will help students to better grasp the content?

3. Why is it important to check for understanding? How will this help both you and your students?

Chapter 6

Handling Classroom Disruptions

It is inevitable! At various times during the school year there will be classroom disruptions. These interruptions will range from unexpected announcements over the intercom system, to unannounced visitors, to off-task student behaviors. How teachers plan and follow through in handling these distractions will ultimately result in the amount of time that is spent on these non-academic issues. In short intervals, this time away from teaching and learning may not seem like a big deal. But, the big picture tells a different story. Imagine that each day classroom disruptions take away a total of 10 minutes from instruction. If there are 180 school days in the year, multiply that by 10 minutes each day and that equals an incredible amount of lost time in learning opportunities for the teacher and students.

10 minutes × 180 days = 1,800 minutes

If we continue breaking this time down by dividing those 1,800 minutes by 60, that equals 30 instructional hours that the teacher and students can never retrieve.

1,800 minutes ÷ 60 minutes per hour = 30 hours

If during a normal day, there are about 5 hours of instructional time with students the ultimate loss of instructional time equals 6 days!

30 hours ÷ 5 hours per day = 6 days

Add to these days events such as assemblies, fire drills, and delays or changes for bad weather, and the learning time continues to diminish even

further. Much of the lost time for assemblies, fire drills, etc., is simply out of the teacher's control, which makes it that much more important to control and limit the other interruptions as much as possible. This chapter provides ideas and interventions to assist the teacher in maximizing instructional time by not allowing the off-task behaviors to dominate during this time.

Helping Every Student Work on Task

We know that most of the responsibility for student learning in the classroom falls on teachers and how they plan for instruction and student engagement. By planning meaningful and effective instruction, teachers will minimize the amount of student time off-task, which will lead to fewer interruptions. With this in mind, here are some techniques to use with students whose behaviors, if left unaddressed, can lead to consistent classroom disruptions.

Students Who Consistently Finish Early

Have you ever heard a student say "Teacher, I'm done"? This common utterance can become very disruptive if there is nothing planned for early finishers. But before a teacher can begin to prepare for these students, it is important to figure out why those students are finished so quickly. Are they rushing and have many mistakes? Are they finishing early because there are many students struggling with concepts who are taking longer than expected? Or are they finishing because the work was too easy for them? Depending on the answer to these questions, the teacher may need to spend more time with those students to coach them to slow down and check their work before truly being finished.

For those students who do truly finish early with accurate and complete work, it is important to have a plan for extra learning activities and to make sure that they understand the expectations for behavior with those activities. This will help independent practice time run smoothly and allow the teacher to continue to support the students who are still working instead of helping the early finishers get started on the next task. The teacher might also consider using extra activities when students enter the classroom, during which time the teacher is occupied with addressing morning/start-of-class period concerns, collecting homework, etc.

The selected activities should match the content during that block of time and be challenging enough for students to reinforce and/or extend their learning. The activities should also be easy to start and stop quickly so that significant student preparation is not needed. For example, a messy art project with lots of pieces and parts might not be the best choice as an early-finisher activity, especially when a student only finishes a task five minutes early. The activities should also match the readiness level of the student. If a non-reader finishes early, it is not appropriate that his or her extra activity includes challenging word problems that he or she cannot read without assistance. That would likely lead to frustration, boredom, and eventual disruption when the student is no longer on task because it is too hard. Instead, using strategies such as choice boards, menus of options, and learning centers/work stations lead to more effective use of student time for early finishers.

Choice Boards

A choice board is a way to make sure "students are engaged in a meaningful activity at all times" (Teaching with Simplicity 2014, under "choice board"). In the classroom, a choice board can simply be activities written on a piece of chart paper for students to see or a designed board that can be used over and over again. The use of this type of board allows students to complete activities at their own pace and takes into account different learning styles and modalities. As an added benefit, choice boards help to foster independence and responsibility. These boards can be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. Typically, a choice board is used to accommodate students who finish their work early. They can locate the board and decide which activity or activities they would like to complete and in which order. However, it is really up to the teacher to decide how choice boards could be implemented in his or her classroom.

No matter what activity is planned for students who finish their work early, it is imperative that it does not become busy work. There must be follow-through on the teacher's part by checking the quality of the work. Otherwise, the students quickly realize that the work is just there to occupy their time while others complete the original assignment, which again, can lead to disruptions.

Menu of Options

A menu of options can be thought of like a restaurant menu. All choices on the menu should be directly tied to the content being taught. The restaurant menu generally contains items or assignments for an appetizer, main dish, side dish, and dessert. In terms of the classroom, an "appetizer" choice could be a list of assignments that are negotiable. However, the student must choose at least one of the assignments to complete. "Main dish" choices are the assignments that must be completed. These are not negotiable. A "side dish" assignment consists of more negotiable assignments and students must complete at least two of the ones listed on the menu. Finally, "dessert" choices are assignments that are too good to resist—these should be interesting and challenging for the student. The main idea behind a menu of options is that students take ownership over their assignment choices, but the teacher still dictates the types of assignments that are on the menu.

Learning Centers and Work Stations

Learning centers consist of spaces around the classroom that contain different activities pertaining to the content being taught. The idea is that the students rotate to each center in a set period of time. For any free-choice centers, the teacher will want to remind students of daily behavior expectations and consequences for disrupting the students who are still working on the assigned task.

Typically, learning centers are used to enhance teaching and learning of the topic. Students can engage in activities that are kinesthetic, auditory, and/or visual. For example, a learning center during math time might include an extra set of math problems on the board or the freedom to explore a certain set of math manipulatives. Perhaps the teacher could ask students to follow a series of simple directions to draw a geometric figure. During language arts instruction, the teacher might post a topic sentence and have the students write three sentences related to that topic. Students could also be given the chance to read silently and respond to their reading via a reading response log or journal. A teacher's role during a learning center is to observe, listen, ask questions, and reinforce what to do if help is needed (Magnuson 2010).

In your classroom, what strategies will you use for students who complete their work early?

Students Who Are Unmotivated

There are also those students who appear unmotivated. A lack of motivation can be due to a variety of causes, ranging from confusion to boredom. Typically, an unmotivated student doesn't look at assignments as fun, interesting, or a good challenge. According to the Center on Education Policy at George Washington University "Students who are bored or inattentive or who put little effort to schoolwork are unlikely to benefit from better standards, curriculum, and instruction unless schools, teachers, and parents take steps to address their lack of motivation" (Crotty 2013, under "Motivation Matters"). These students may not feel "smart" because of previous negative experiences or they may have an extreme need for perfectionism and feel anxious about attempting the assignment for fear of failing so they don't do the work at all. These students may have already mastered the concept being taught and do not feel the need to do the work because they already know the material or they may not feel that the concepts are relevant so they shouldn't "waste" their time learning them. There could also be social reasons behind students' apparent lack of motivation. Maybe there's bullying that is going on and the students feel intimidated to work hard in class or engage because of what the bully is saying to them or making them do. Perhaps there are more serious problems such as hunger, homelessness, or abuse that are playing a role in the students' academic behaviors. These social issues should not be overlooked and direct support from the school guidance counselor or social worker is recommended so that any necessary district/school policies or procedures can be carried out appropriately.

First, it is important to get at the root of the behavior in order to help the student become motivated to work hard and reach his or her potential throughout the school year. This can be done by having a one-on-one conversation with the student and asking questions such as:

- What do you like about school/this class?
- What do you wish were different about school/this class?
- When I give you an assignment, how does it make you feel?
- I've noticed that when I assign work in class, you don't seem to want to do it. Why do you think that is?

If the conversation is unsuccessful or does not give you all of the information you need, you may consider calling the parent/guardian for more input. Then, you can use the information gathered to plan specific steps to fix whatever the problem may be and increase the student's motivation. If you can't figure out the problem based on either discussion, it may be helpful to seek support from the school guidance counselor as well. Figure 6.1 gives some ideas for motivating students depending on the needs addressed during the investigative conversation(s).

Figure 6.1 Tips for Motivating Students

For students who don't "feel smart"...	• validate the student's intelligence and importance to the class • look for ways to get the student involved in class discussions in a non-threatening way • provide activities/assignments where the student can demonstrate success and work up to more challenging tasks • praise all academic efforts and provide rewards, if necessary (e.g., a sticker for every completed assignment; five stickers then equals a positive call home or a trip to the principal's office for a high five)
For students who are afraid of failing (perfectionism)...	• praise and value the student's hard work rather than receiving a perfect score • equate success with working hard instead of "being smart" • remind the student that everyone makes mistakes and that the important thing is that we learn from them; share a personal story about a time when you learned this lesson • encourage the student to try new things at school and outside of school (e.g., new sporting activities on the playground, music or art club) • reinforce the importance of creativity and imagination over getting a perfect score all the time
For students who have already mastered the material...	• provide the student with choice when completing assignments (e.g., "choose the 10 problems on the assignment that would challenge you the most") • talk with the student's parents/guardians about helping him or her keep a positive attitude about school • create a plan for how the student is to demonstrate mastery of the concept (e.g., an abbreviated version of the full task) and then allow him or her to engage in another activity of their choice (from a set "menu" of pre-approved choices) • discuss with the student the benefit of repeated practice and how that is useful in the real world (e.g., in sports, in art, or in music)
For students who don't see relevance in the material...	• help the student see a connection between what they are interested in and the work that they need to accomplish • help the student see beyond the present task to the overall benefit of the achievement • invite guests to visit the classroom and explain the importance of school/certain subject matter to their current profession

How can you help students who are unmotivated in your classroom?

Students Who Are Frequently Out of Their Seats

To establish order, teachers should consider their teaching styles and how they want to organize procedures for the number of students they will allow out of their seats at any time. It is also important to consider acceptable reasons for allowing students to leave their seats. Because these decisions may change based on the type of instruction occurring in the classroom at any given time (e.g., whole-group instruction and activities, small-group instruction, centers or workstation rotation, or independent work time), these procedures should be taught to students as routine practices rather than one specific posted rule. Normally, students should not be allowed out of their seats when the teacher is instructing the whole group or working directly with that student's assigned group.

If the school day/class period is broken up by interactive activities that allow students to get up, share information with their peers, stretch their legs, and interact with content, then they will have less desire to "escape" from their seats and this type of disruption will most likely be minimal or nearly non-existent. It is also helpful to implement preventative procedures that will save instructional time. For example, have a can with sharpened pencils and a basket with extra paper that students are responsible for preparing at the end of each school day for their groups the following day, or take class bathroom breaks periodically throughout the day to minimize the impact of students needing to use the restroom during instructional blocks.

Student Use of the Restroom and Drinking Fountains

Students are expected to get their drinks and to use the restroom during their breaks. However, there are other times when the need arises. Think through what your expectations are for those times. Is there going to be any type of record keeping for this? What is your procedure for quickly getting them back on task when they return? How do you acknowledge students who may habitually abuse the opportunity to leave during class

time? These are procedural issues that may vary by age, school policy, campus layout, and school schedule. Be clear so that the students are aware of the expectations.

Many teachers now allow students to have a water bottle at their seats. This is helpful not only because it limits the number of students requesting drink breaks, but it also aids the learning process, as hydration is important for optimal brain function (Norman 2014, under "Feeding the Brain for Academic Success"). By taking a look at how the brain functions, one can see that staying hydrated is essential to "thinking clearly." According to Joshua Gowin, when you are dehydrated, you have more difficulty staying focused. Dehydration can "impair short-term memory function and the recall of long-term memory" (Gowin 2010, under "Why Your Brain Needs Water). It is vital that students have access to ways of hydrating their bodies during the school day to keep their brains functioning optimally so learning can occur.

Students Who Are Slow to Complete Assignments

For students who are slow to complete assignments, the teacher might need to re-evaluate the amount of work assigned. Many students can demonstrate competency of the concept without completing an entire page of problems or questions. If a student demonstrates a working knowledge of the skill, then the teacher can accept the amount of an assignment he or she is able to complete in the time allotted. Often, a timer works well and the assignment can be turned into a contest. Instead of just trying to finish the work, the student is trying to beat the clock, which is a lot more fun. This strategy is only effective if the teacher truly believes the student is able to complete the assignments faster than he or she is presently doing.

The teacher can also assign a peer helper for a short period. It is the peer helper's role to see that another student stays on track. If a tutor helps this individual, then he or she can be rewarded by not having to turn in part of his or her own assignment. When possible, the student who works slowly may need a quiet place to work and, initially, this student may benefit from rewards for finishing an assignment within the time limit.

How can you help students in your classroom who are constantly struggling to complete assignments on time?

Students Who Need Constant Assistance

There will be certain students who seem to need constant help. The first step is to make sure they understand the assignment. This can be done by having students share their understanding of the task with a partner before beginning. It is also good practice to check in with these students during the first few minutes of independent work to make sure they are on the right track. For students with frequent questions during an assignment or task, consider establishing the procedure of "ask three, before me," where the student must ask his or her question to up to three other students in the class before approaching the teacher. In this procedure, the student only comes to the teacher if the three other students were not able to answer his or her question.

Students Who Call Out Answers

Have you ever encountered those students who are impulsive and call out the answers? This can be very disruptive if it happens over and over again, but by changing teaching patterns this problem can be eliminated.

The traditional method for asking questions is to pose a question to the entire class or group and let students raise their hands if they have a response they'd like to share. Instead, pose the question and instruct all students to think about a response rather than raise their hands or blurt out a response. Then, have students pair up with anyone sitting near them and share their thoughts about the question. This technique is commonly referred to as Think-Pair-Share. With this strategy, the "answer blurters" feel like they get to give their answers first, even though everyone else is also sharing answers simultaneously. The students who don't like answering questions aloud are also held accountable for coming up with the answers because they have to respond during the share portion of the strategy as well.

The following are other strategies for encouraging a variety of students to respond during discussions while keeping unsolicited comments at a minimum:

- pull sticks with student names/numbers on them out of a can
- pull cards with student names/numbers on them from a deck of cards
- use a spinner with student names/numbers on them

In times where this process is not possible, find ways to give recognition to these students who need to blurt out answers. If this problem occurs in a small-group situation, try the strategy where everyone in a group is given the same number of small blocks or counters. As students work on the project, they must turn in a counter to the center of the group each time they verbally contribute something. Once the student has no more counters, he or she is no longer allowed to speak until everyone else has spent all of their counters.

If a student does not respond to these strategies, consider writing a contract with him or her specifying exactly what behavior is expected. For a visual reminder, keep a running tally on the student's desk of every time he or she calls out answers inappropriately. Only the student should be aware of what the tallies signify and why they are there. Finally, as with other student misbehaviors, be sure to communicate with the parents/guardians so they can reinforce classroom expectations at home.

Students Who Talk During Instructional Times

There are always those students who talk to others during instructional or independent working times. This usually happens when students are excited about what they are doing, but it can also happen when they are bored or do not understand what to do. This type of behavior should be approached in different ways, depending on the particular student and the reason why he or she is talking.

First and foremost, think about your teaching practices. Are you allowing enough time for students to mentally and verbally process their own learning, or are you talking a majority of the time? Are you allowing for adequate wait time (approximately 10 seconds) after asking a question? Students who engage in this behavior are likely those who need to use language in order to remember, rehearse, and retain new information. Even if they are talking occasionally about things other than content, increasing student participation and interaction in a lesson is likely to have them actually discussing more content with deeper understanding than they

would have in a typical "listening-only" lesson. Ways to increase this type of participation are through active listening strategies, such as Think, Pair, Share; turn and talk; numbered heads together; and student summaries. Also, evaluate the appropriateness of the task to find out if it is too difficult or if the time limit is too short or too long. Once you have made sure the assignment is clearly understood, you should then praise or reward those who are following instructions appropriately. The disruption from students talking out of turn will usually subside when they see their peers receiving recognition, praise, or rewards for following directions.

Sometimes, the best resolution is to separate these students from the others. If the need is there, this should be done as positively as possible by saying something such as "Please create an office for yourself in the back of the room. I don't want anyone to disturb you while you are working," or "I would like you to sit over here where you won't be disturbed. You are important to us." Remember, however, that this is not a punishment but a removal of distractions so the student can continue to participate fully in the learning, so always allow separated students to participate in lessons when they are willing to do so within the expected guidelines. This should not be a permanent removal from the group, but rather a temporary attempt to refocus the student. Finally, reward successes with something like a scheduled time for a special activity of their choice.

Are you allowing your students enough time to mentally and verbally process their own learning or are you talking the majority of the time?

Students Who Are Off Task

It can be difficult to understand the motivation behind a student who is off task during an assignment or activity because there is so much going on in a typical classroom situation. If the problem is common among many students, it is advantageous to first examine some of your teaching practices and see if changes can be made. However, sometimes there are students who continue to disrupt instruction by being off task regardless of what is going on in the classroom. The information in Figure 6.2 may offer new ideas for handling certain off-task behaviors.

Figure 6.2 Ideas for Handling Off-Task Behaviors

Off-Task Behavior	Tips and Suggestions for Correcting the Behavior
The student does not understand what is being taught or expected of him or her.	• Establish a signal to cue the student regarding the off-task behavior and to determine whether he or she understands your expectations. • Frequently in the lesson, ask the class to show a visual signal to demonstrate that they understand, sort of understand, or don't understand. (For example, thumbs up, sideways, or down displayed under the chin for privacy.) • Provide timely feedback to the student.
The student does not think he or she can do the level of work required.	• Decide whether the work is too hard for the student's readiness level. • Make necessary accommodations/differentiate instruction appropriately. • Provide timely feedback to the student.
The student is acting out to get attention.	• Give no attention to minor offenses. • Redirect with minimum interaction. • Give positive feedback when the student is on task.
The student is acting out for some other reason.	• Look for other reasons to explain why the student is acting out. • Find time to discuss the reasons with the student. • Give positive feedback for correct behavior. • In a positive way, redirect the student back to the class rules. • Consider a behavior contract.

Using Nonverbal Communication Effectively

The use of nonverbal communication in the classroom can be extremely effective for managing student behaviors. PBIS World states "(nonverbal communication) creates a relationship with the student without calling attention to the student in a negative manner" (2014, under "Non-Verbal Cues and Signals"). The benefit of the use of nonverbal cues is that it helps to reinforce an "on-task" behavior, as well as redirect an "off-task" behavior—all while not wasting teaching and learning time.

If a teacher decides to implement the use of nonverbal cues in the classroom, it is important to teach the students what each cue means. For example, if a teacher is working with a student who tends to be "off task" during lessons, he or she should meet individually with the student to establish a nonverbal cue that signals that it is time to be "on-task." This can be as simple as a facial expression, a hand gesture, proximity, or even a quick note on the student's desk. The student can also help the teacher decide which cue would work best for them. Nonverbal cuing is a technique that can be easily applied in any classroom. There are many types of nonverbal communication tools, such as proximity, eye contact, and gestures or signals.

Proximity

Proximity is a very effective tool for classroom management and for keeping students engaged in lesson activities because of the profound effect that personal space plays in social interaction. Simply put, that means that teachers who walk around the classroom and monitor student conduct usually maintain much better classroom control than those who remain in one spot or in the seat behind their desk.

Author Fred Jones (2000) writes that the classroom is divided into three distinct areas: the red zone, the yellow zone, and green zone. The nearby red zone is where the students are actively listening and involved. The yellow zone, which is usually ten to fifteen feet from the teacher, is where the students may be involved when they think the teacher is watching. Finally, he calls the back of the room the green zone, where the students are playing around or daydreaming because they don't feel engaged. When the teacher moves around, boundaries are changed in these groups, and the students who were in the yellow or green zones must start paying attention. Thus, through mobility, the teacher is constantly disrupting the students' impulse to become distracted or disturb others. I call this the chameleon effect because the zone colors change as one rotates through each one. It is vitally important to remember that as the teacher changes the green zone to the more desirable yellow or red zones, the opposite effect is also taking place, and the original yellow or red zones are now possibly the green zones. Do not allow oneself to get bogged down in one zone!

The strategy of proximity can be highly effective with even the most restless students (Starr 2005). For example, it can be highly effective to give a specific classroom instruction while standing next to the student least likely to act on it. This action often diffuses the student's desire to act out during a transitional move or speak out of turn while the other students are complying with the direction.

Eye Contact

One of the most simple and effective solutions for small reoccurring problems is to make direct eye contact with the student who is not on task or is displaying any kind of misbehavior. The teacher explains privately to the student that when this eye contact is made, the student needs to refocus without the teacher ever needing to say a word or stop teaching. This serves as a wonderful visual reminder and can improve behavior for certain students within a few days.

Gestures and Signals

The use of gestures and signals in the classroom can help to promote a meaningful and positive classroom environment where learning can take place. A whole-class signal such as a bell can be used to signal that it is time to transition to another activity. Similarly, music could be played to alert students that there is five minutes remaining in an activity. The use of signals and gestures within the classroom helps to maintain order as well as promote a positive learning environment.

Signals and gestures can also be used for individual students. These signals and gestures help to maintain the dignity of the student by not calling them out in front of the entire class to redirect behavior. For example, a teacher and student may use an agreed-upon signal or gesture if the student were to become off task. A simple tap on the shoulder may work well or even a signal such as touching one's nose could work. The idea here is that the student knows what the signal is and how to respond when it is given.

Reducing Transition Time

Transition time is the time it takes to change from one activity to another. Students may be changing from teacher-led instruction to group or independent work, from one center/workstation to another, or even from one academic subject to the next. Students also transition as they enter or leave a classroom. Transitions occur many times during the day and after a while, this wasted time starts to add up. Misbehavior during transition time is common, especially if the proper procedures are not taught, established, practiced, and frequently enforced, which can ultimately take away from learning (Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering 2003). The goal in establishing procedures should be to limit the time that is spent in transition.

The following are some methods to shorten typical transition times:

- Before any transition time, first get the students' attention with a signal and state your expectations. Have students point to where they are going or visualize how they will get to the next activity. Then give a pre-established signal for students to actually begin to transition.
- Tell the class they have only 20 seconds to prepare for your next instructional activity. Sometimes counting down backwards in a calm voice or using a timer helps students regulate their responses and evaluate how much time they have to accomplish a task.
- If students are away from their desks working on activities, have them clean up and return to their seats before providing instructions. Step-by-step directions are often much easier to understand and remember.
- When students are returning to the classroom, have an activity ready for them to do immediately. They should know to begin working automatically. Students don't always handle surprises well and the younger the students, the more you need to prepare them. Before entering the classroom, inform students of any big changes that have occurred in their absence.

- Have students turn to a partner and repeat "Thank you for contributing to my learning today." The students then shake hands and return to their seats.
- Give a warning or signal that transition time is about to begin. This can be a five-second warning or simply a bell that tells them to freeze and wait for your instructions. It is worth the effort to rehearse transitions working to beat the previous time.

Stop and Think

What transition technique will you try in your classroom?

Questions for Reflection

1. If a student is consistently having difficulty completing assignments but what they do complete is correct, what modification could you make?

2. Describe what is meant by proximity and when and how you might use it for classroom management purposes.

3. What are the benefits of having students "pair-share" answers before having a student answer in front of the entire class?

4. Evaluate the time your class spends in transition. Where/how can you make improvements in this area?

Chapter 7

Communicating and Working with Families

Have you heard the popular saying, the power of one can be great, but the power of many is better? The power of a teacher to change students' lives is great. We can all affect our students in powerful and positive ways. But we don't have to do it alone. The parents and guardians of these students can be our partners in building a great learning experience for every child.

All parents bring with them different views surrounding the issues of involvement in the education of their child, parental influence in how the classroom is managed, and ideas concerning the best ways to address behavioral matters. This can be due to various factors such as their personal experiences in school, their understanding or assumptions of what goes on in the classroom or at school, and their cultural beliefs about the role of educators. Excellent communication skills are essential for a successful teacher in establishing a good rapport with parents and guardians. These skills can enlist the help of families in order to teach students to make responsible decisions and contribute to the overall goal of a positive learning environment. The process of recruiting the support of families can take a good deal of effort and time, but it is well worth it! "The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing; families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life" (Henderson and Mapp 2002, 7). Parents know their children best and usually believe their child is unique and special. It's normal for any parent to feel this way and advocate for their child's rights. If we, as teachers, can build alliances with parents that validate their concerns and contributions, these connections will directly relate to improvements in student achievement (Henderson and Mapp 2002).

The way to start is to make a strong positive first impression by clearly communicating with parents at the very beginning of the school year. This will go a long way toward setting the tone for the school year. Tell families that you want to establish partnerships with them so that their children can have a successful year in your class. Explain your classroom management system so they understand how your class is being operated. Answer their questions and concerns and assure them that your goal is to help each student succeed this year. All parents will appreciate it and most likely be supportive of you as a teacher.

How do you establish rapport with parents?

Ways of Communicating with Families

Try to have at least three different methods of communication, such as a phone call, an email, and a note home. It is important that the first three communications in a school year with parents or guardians be positive. By doing this, they are more likely to be receptive to the teacher's communication if a call or note needs to go home expressing concerns about a negative behavior.

It is also important that communication is accessible to parents. It is always helpful to send translated notes for those parents who speak and read languages other than English. This creates a welcoming climate for the second-language-speaking families.

The first step toward effective parental communication is to evaluate the types of communication currently in place. Then, the teacher should evaluate what each form of communication accomplishes for the parents. For example, when sending a note home to explain a specific behavior incident, is it handwritten or is it a form that includes spaces for all of the pertinent information to be shared? Then, reflect on whether further modes of communication are necessary. Figure 7.1 outlines various ideas for communicating with parents.

Figure 7.1 Ideas for Communicating with Families

- phone calls before or after school
- text messages
- class newsletters
- weekly or monthly calendars
- emails
- notes
- in-person discussions before or after school
- conferences
- home visits
- class website
- open house
- report cards
- progress reports

What methods do you use to communicate with parents and guardians?

As you consider the most effective ways to communicate with parents and guardians, consider how the various forms of communication can accomplish the objectives listed in Figure 7.2. Although not every form of communication can accomplish all of these objectives at once, when you look at your methods of communication comprehensively, each item in Figure 7.2 should be addressed in some way.

Figure 7.2 Objectives of Teacher Communications with Families

Communication should help parents/guardians to:

- express expectations about their child's education
- feel invited and welcome at the school
- understand their child's academic and behavioral progress
- share insight into their child's home study styles with the teacher
- discuss their child's interests and behavior issues with the teacher
- understand what concepts their child is learning
- understand how they can help their child learn more at school
- understand their role in helping their child with homework
- initiate contact with the teacher if they have questions or concerns
- become involved in volunteering at the school
- extend learning concepts through home activities
- discuss future academic possibilities
- understand the avenues for the child to reach certain academic goals, such as graduation or college
- understand the various opportunities for involvement available at the school

(Adapted from Henderson and Mapp 2002, 22)

Phone Calls

When teachers better understand parents' and guardians' beliefs about themselves and their child, they can use that information to create successful communication when they call home. Begin by making positive phone calls. Teachers should tell parents how well their child is doing and what they appreciate about that child. If a call is for negative behavior, keep the focus on the behavior, not the student. Always mix in some positive feedback, too. If the teacher has already sent a detailed account of the classroom management plan at the beginning of the year for the parent to sign, then the phone call home will serve as a reminder to the parent of the agreement made between teacher, student, and parent. The parent can then focus the conversation with their child on the rule that has been broken. In some cases, it is best for the teacher to send a note ahead of time to let them know that they would like to talk about an incident at school. Before

calling the parent, talk to all of the parties involved in the incident and write down any facts gathered ahead of time. It is important that the parent sees the teacher as a partner in solving problems, not an adversary. Plan ahead of time on how to initiate the conversation. Some strong examples on how to begin a conversation with parents are:

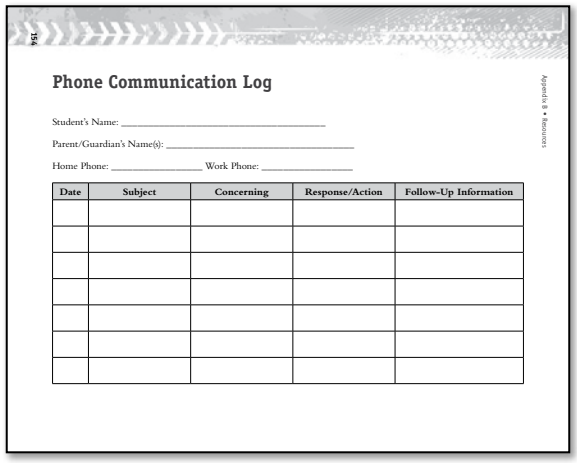
- "I appreciate being able to speak with you."
- "Thank you for all of your help,"
- "You've done a wonderful job with Johnny."
- "We had an incident at school and I wanted to let you know about it."

Parents might not understand the teacher's expectations of their involvement in solving the problem. Therefore, it is important to be clear about any required action on their part or if the phone call is to just to keep them informed.

Take a deep breath and relax when calling a parent. You, as the teacher, are the parent's agent inside the classroom and both of you are working together for the child's good. Always be prepared to provide ideas for solving a problem at school if the need arises. Parents appreciate when teachers inform them when they see a situation improving. Choose one of the forms of communication listed in Figure 7.1 to update the families on the student's progress. Finally, always thank the parent for working together to make the necessary changes.

It can become very difficult to remember which issues arose for which students. A sample communication log is shown in Figure 7.3. A full size version can be found in Appendix B. This is helpful for documenting any communication the teacher has with the parents of a student.

Figure 7.3 Phone Communication Log



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Phone Communication Log

Appendix B • Resources

Student's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name(s): _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Date	Subject	Concerning	Response/Action	Follow-Up Information

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences can be intimidating for new and veteran teachers alike. Do not worry about parents asking difficult questions and feeling put on the spot. Teachers should reinforce the message that they are there to help their child succeed to his or her fullest and that they are on the same "side" as the parents. Open and frequent communication throughout the school year will help parents stay abreast of specifics that are happening in the classroom. This regular communication will allow parents to reinforce the importance of learning objectives (Goodwin and Hubbell 2013). This in turn will reduce surprises at parent conferences since the teacher has been keeping families in the loop.

Ideally, the first communication with parents should come before the official parent conference. Parents are vital to a student's success, so try to get them involved early with invitations to the classroom, notes of praise, or other forms of communication. Teachers may want to send home a letter listing the points that will be covered in the scheduled conference so that parents will be informed and prepared. As teachers make a schedule for parent conferences, flexibility is important. Parents' involvement is shaped by their perceptions of their own skills and abilities, and their experiences with feeling welcome and invited to be involved at the school (Henderson and Mapp 2002). Teachers may also need to schedule translators for parents

who do not speak English. Parent involvement is extremely important for the learning process. Establishing a system where second-language-speaking families are seen as partners and, where they are encouraged to participate in the school setting, will be very effective in reaching what Chow and Cummins (2003) refer to as "inclusive pedagogy."

Set an agenda for the meeting. It is best to start by sharing the student's positive qualities then provide time for parents to share valuable information about their child and any concerns they want to discuss in the conference. All parents love to hear nice things about their children. Be sure to show the student's work and discuss relevant test scores, including previous year-end tests if necessary. If it is the time of the school year for report cards, present the report card and explain what the grades mean. Ask parents to share further questions, concerns, or clarifications. Some districts dictate specific items that need to be covered in conferences, so be sure to check with the district. Teachers can set up a protocol for how parents are to communicate with them after the conference in case they have further questions or concerns. This communicates to parents they are equal members of the team. Finally, wrap up the meeting and define goals for the coming months. This may include changing seats, altering class work, getting special help for the student, or establishing a time to do homework or a place to put it when finished.

How do you prepare for parent conferences?

The Basics of Conferencing

Some generalizations can be made about conferences. Teachers will become more comfortable with conferences as they gain more experience. It is helpful to make a conference schedule form and post it outside the door for parents to see as they arrive. Also, provide a copy to the office and any other person who might need to attend a conference, such as a resource teacher, speech therapist, counselor, or translator. To help focus the meeting, organize the report card, student work, test scores, and other accompanying materials before the conference begins. Other ways to prepare are to have a pen, paper, and post-its on the table for note taking. Be sure to schedule enough time for questions and discussion so that other

parents are not kept waiting too long. It is wise to try to schedule potential difficult conferences at the end of the sessions to allow extra time to talk.

In an effort to ensure that parents attend conferences on time, send out a reminder one or two days ahead of time. Schedule phone conferences for those parents that are having difficulty attending a conference in person. Send the report cards home with the students and call the parents in the evenings to discuss the content with them.

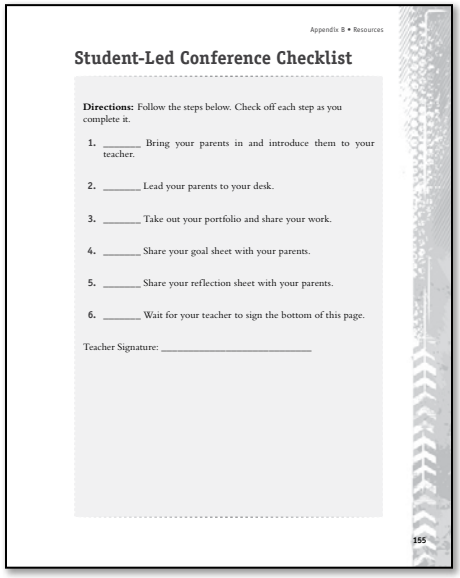
If possible, greet parents at the door and walk into the room with them. The conversation needs to be focused on the child. Be specific about which subjects and activities need further support or enrichment. Note the areas where the parents will need to provide further support, and the areas of need that will mostly be addressed in the school setting. If there are academic problems, it is important to give possible solutions. Parents need specific guidance in the areas in which they can help the child. The teacher may want to demonstrate specific helpful activities, such as flashcards, and show parents how to teach difficult concepts so they can reinforce these at home.

Student-Led Conferences

Some schools and teachers invite the student to be a part of the parent-teacher conference. Many schools even ask older students to run the conference. This teaches students to take most of the responsibility and ownership in reporting what they have accomplished (Guskey and Bailey 2001). This growing trend in schools is the concept of student-led conferences. The purpose of student-led conferencing is to allow the student to see the entire picture of how he or she is doing in class. Student-led conferences usually take between 30-40 minutes to complete. The first 15–20 minutes are spent with students going through their work portfolios with their parents and explaining their work. The parents are encouraged to ask questions about the work. The remaining time is spent with the teacher, student, and parent all together, and the teacher goes through the portfolio discussing what work is good and what work needs further development or improvement. As mentioned, the student-led conference relies heavily on a student portfolio of work. Therefore, it is imperative that a portfolio is explained and taught to the students from the beginning of the year so that when conference time comes, they have a wealth of documents to share. It is also important that the teacher routinely checks the student's portfolio

so that enough quality work is there when conference time comes around. I have witnessed student-led conferences in action with students and parents from kindergarten through seniors in high school. Each is handled a bit differently and done in an age-appropriate manner. Kindergartners need more teacher involvement and guidance while older students can be expected to follow an agenda that the teacher sets for the conference and the teacher checks in with the parents to see if they have any remaining questions. Student-led conferences not only provide students with a sense of ownership of their work, but also assist the parents in becoming active partners in their children's learning. There are numerous student-led conference templates. Figure 7.4 shows a sample checklist that can be used for student-led conferences. A full size version of the checklist can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 7.4 Student-Led Conference Checklist



Appendix B • Resources

Student-Led Conference Checklist

Directions: Follow the steps below. Check off each step as you complete it.

1. _____ Bring your parents in and introduce them to your teacher.
2. _____ Lead your parents to your desk.
3. _____ Take out your portfolio and share your work.
4. _____ Share your goal sheet with your parents.
5. _____ Share your reflection sheet with your parents.
6. _____ Wait for your teacher to sign the bottom of this page.

Teacher Signature: _____

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If a conference is ending and the teacher has another appointment, but the parent is still talking, the teacher could politely ask to continue the conversation at a later date or time. It is wise for teachers to leave some open slots at the end of the conferencing period for parents who missed their appointments. Teachers may also want to give themselves some free time during the conference schedule so they have a chance to relax and

reflect. If a teacher is new to the process and conferences can be held over multiple days, it is best to start with only a couple of conferences the first day to give the teacher some time to get comfortable with the process.

How can you transition your regular conference to have components of student-led conferences instead?

Topics to Discuss During Conferences

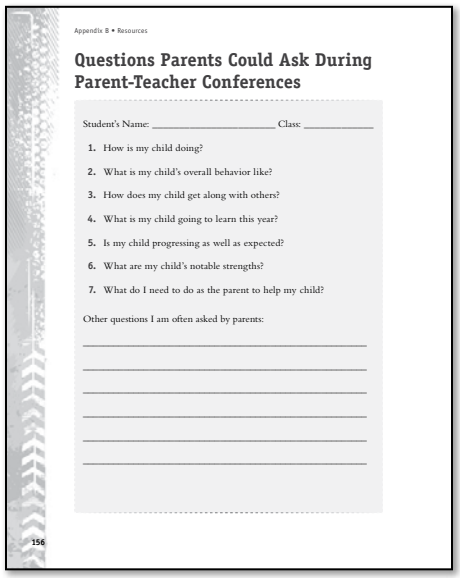
It can be insightful to ask the parents what their child has to say about school or whether their child has any particular thoughts about what the class is doing. Perhaps they have their own concern about their child's progress in school. The teacher should learn what some of the child's favorite or least favorite subjects in school are. This is also an excellent opportunity to find out if the child has any special needs that should be considered regarding his or her performance in school. Ask parents if they understand the grading system and allow them to share goals they have for the child or goals the child is already working toward. Finally, find out if there are any questions they would like to ask. It is very common to find parents who are primarily concerned with their child's behavior and other parents who are primarily concerned with their child's academic progress. Strive to create a balanced discussion of both issues in the conference.

Figure 7.5 can be used as a guide for teachers to contemplate responses to questions that might arise during a parent conference. A full size version of Figure 7.5 can be found in Appendix B. It is very important to be prepared for discussing the academic and behavioral issues surrounding each student in the classroom. Consider that sometimes parents' questions can have underlying confusion about the teacher's expectations in the classroom. Be sure to explicitly explain to both the student and the parent what the expectations are in the classroom and provide examples of what these behaviors look like. This form is helpful because sometimes parents don't know what is important to ask. Be sure to bring up the topics about which the parent may not have known to ask. Remember, you want to be complimentary and factual.

Figure 7.6 contains a sample form that can organize the information you want to cover in a parent conference. A full size version of Figure 7.6

can be found in Appendix B. With a form like this, you can check off the information covered, even as the parents' questions and concerns are addressed. The concept surrounding this form can easily be adapted for different grade levels. You will want to make a similar form addressing the main concerns important to the content covered and academic goals for the specific student.

Figure 7.5 Sample Questions Parents Could Ask During Conferences



Appendix B • Resources

Questions Parents Could Ask During Parent-Teacher Conferences

Student's Name: _____ Class: _____

1. How is my child doing?
2. What is my child's overall behavior like?
3. How does my child get along with others?
4. What is my child going to learn this year?
5. Is my child progressing as well as expected?
6. What are my child's notable strengths?
7. What do I need to do as the parent to help my child?

Other questions I am often asked by parents:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Figure 7.6 Information Organizer for Conferences

Appendix B • Resources

Information Organizer for Conferences

Student's Name: _____ Date: _____

Thus far in this reporting period, we have had _____ assignments, tests, and quizzes.

Your child's scores are:

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

Therefore, the overall current grade is: _____

This grade is not final and is subject to change depending on make-up work and/or future work. If this score is unsatisfactory, there is still sufficient time to bring it up to an acceptable level.

Teacher's comments: _____

_____

_____

Parent's comments: _____

_____

_____

Parent's signature: _____

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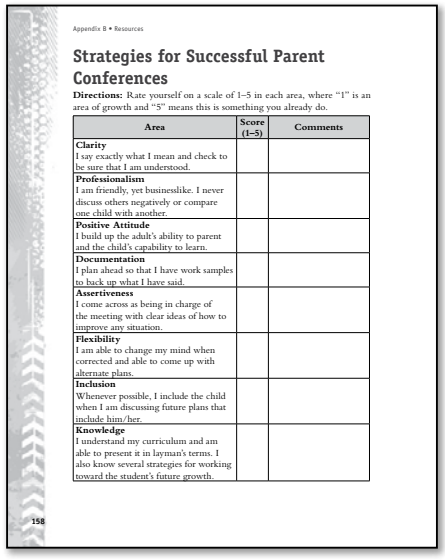
Figure 7.7 suggests strategies for boosting your effectiveness when meeting with parents. A full size version of Figure 7.7 can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 7.7 Strategies for Successful Parent Conferences



Appendix B • Resources

Strategies for Successful Parent Conferences

Directions: Rate yourself on a scale of 1–5 in each area, where "1" is an area of growth and "5" means this is something you already do.

Area	Score (1–5)	Comments
Clarity I say exactly what I mean and check to be sure that I am understood.		
Professionalism I am friendly, yet businesslike. I never discuss others negatively or compare one child with another.		
Positive Attitude I build up the adult's ability to parent and the child's capability to learn.		
Documentation I plan ahead so that I have work samples to back up what I have said.		
Assertiveness I come across as being in charge of the meeting with clear ideas of how to improve any situation.		
Flexibility I am able to change my mind when corrected and able to come up with alternate plans.		
Inclusion Whenever possible, I include the child when I am discussing future plans that include him/her.		
Knowledge I understand my curriculum and am able to present it in layman's terms. I also know several strategies for working toward the student's future growth.		

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We, as teachers, cannot successfully reach all students effectively without parental support. When schools and families work together to support a student's learning process, the student generally does better in school tasks, stays in school longer and enjoys school more (Henderson and Mapp 2002). As the teacher learns how to invite and incorporate parents into the classroom, he or she can reflect on the strategies that work best and the techniques that seem to have the most positive effect on students. If learning and behavior problems are involved, students are most likely to succeed in solving these problems when parents work with the teacher and student in solving the issues (Michigan Department of Education 2002). Figure 7.8 provides ways to involve families in the student's learning process.

Figure 7.8 Suggestions to Involve Families in the Student Learning Process

- It is essential for teachers to help parents discover how to guide their child's learning process and provide continued mentoring in this area.
- Teachers should work to share ideas with families so that the school is better connected with the community.
- It is important for teachers to develop a relationship with the families of their students.
- Teachers need to know that families can work to enhance their child's school performance.
- Parents and teachers must understand that they are a partnership when it comes to student learning.
- Teachers need to work with families to show them ways in which they can become better connected to the school.
- Teachers need to know that working with a student's family is essential to learning growth.

(Adapted from Henderson and Mapp 2002)

Written Communication

Communication with parents is paramount to having a successful year. Written communication can be one of the most effective ways to communicate with parents. These types of written messages are often perceived as more personal and can go a long way in building relationships with families. They can come in various forms from written notes, emails, and even text messages.

The first written letter parents should receive is a personal letter from the teacher. These are often distributed the first day of school or even before school if possible. Personal letters should begin by introducing the teacher. Teachers often tell parents their goal for the year and how excited they are that the new school year is beginning. This first letter is often a great way for the teacher to let parents know how he or she will be communicating throughout the year. The teacher can also let them know the various policies in his or her classroom such as discipline and homework. Teachers should be sure to provide parents with some sort of way to contact them whether it be a phone number, email, or other method.

Other written notes can be used to let families know their child's academic progress in class. Teachers might write notes to inform parents about behavior. As previously mentioned, it is always good to make the first few notes home positive ones. Some teachers prefer to handwrite the entire note and to use stationary or cards.

Other teachers use form notes to help in the expedition of note writing, especially if the note is about an incident at school. A form note keeps the information short and to the point. Teachers can follow up the form notes with a phone call or conference to answer any other important questions the parent has about the incident. The following are a few sample form letters.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

_____ had a wonderful day at school today! Just wanted to let you know about _____. Be sure to celebrate tonight!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Smith

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I'm writing to inform you that _____ had a difficult day at school today. I would appreciate your help in resolving this issue.

For our classroom to be at its best, all students have to work together to avoid certain behaviors. _____ is having problems in the follow areas:

_____ excessive talking

_____ lack of effort

_____ lack of attention

_____ disrespectfulness toward others

_____ incomplete assignments

_____ late assignments

_____ missing assignments

_____ poor grades

Please call at your convenience to schedule a conference to talk about this further.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Smith

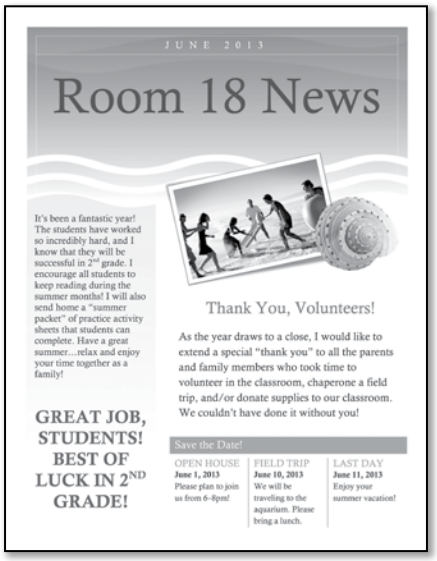
Some teachers send home a weekly email for communication. Perhaps the most important element of this type of communication is consistency. Parents willingly sign up for this type of communication and recipients should be blind copied so that their email addresses are not shared with the entire group. Emails sent at the beginning of the week should explain what the students will be doing for that week as well as include reminders for that week. Emails sent at the end of the week tend to explain what the students have done during the week as well as reminders for the upcoming week. Teachers should decide which one works best for their classroom and be consistent so that parents feel they are kept in the loop.

Another way to communicate reminders is via group text messages. This helps teachers when they need to send short messages to the subscribed group. A parent or guardian subscribes to a group and any time a reminder goes out, the subscribed group receives it. If a parent or student wants to unsubscribe, they can do this. Teachers can schedule these reminders far in advance and have them sent on specific days. For example, teachers can send a message reminder about an upcoming test or a reminder to bring a book for independent reading the following day. Many teachers prefer this form of communication for written reminders because of the time that it saves them. As far as communicating with parents for behavioral or academic reasons, phone calls and written notes are often the best venues.

Newsletters

Newsletters are one of the tools used to enhance the home-school connection. Chrispeels, Boruta, and Daugherty explain "classroom newsletters are an excellent way to keep in touch with parents and help them be a part of their child's education. Frequent and regular class newsletters enable parents to sense the feeling of momentum of the class and gain insights into what their child is learning" (1988, 1). Newsletters can look many different ways, but it is important to remember that the purpose behind them is to serve as a communication tool. The format of the newsletter should be kept simple, easy to read, and use minimal graphics or pictures so as to not distract the reader. Figure 7.9 shows a sample classroom newsletter that could be used.

Figure 7.9 Sample Classroom Newsletter



A newsletter is an easy and effective way to communicate daily, weekly, and/or monthly happenings within a classroom or school. Sample items to place in a newsletter include but are not limited to: upcoming field trips, a "save the date" section to remind families of events such as open house or parent-teacher conferences, and curricula areas being studied.

There are many ways to create a simple and informational newsletter. Probably the simplest way to do this is through the use of a word-processing program. However, there are many websites that offer free newsletter creators. For example, WordDraw® and Education World® are free resources for generating newsletters, as they offer pre-made templates so teachers can simply input their information and not worry about "designing" a newsletter.

Keep in mind that newsletters sent home in the paper format are generally the most widely used. However, as technology use continues to increase within schools, teachers can move toward emailing or posting their newsletters on a website or homepage. There are many advantages to an electronic version of a newsletter. First and foremost, it cuts back on the time to photocopy, not to mention helping to save paper. Some parents even prefer to receive an electronic version of a newsletter, as they most

likely have their electronic device with them at all times and it is easily accessible anywhere they may be.

Class Websites

The use of a class website can also help facilitate communication between home and school. Additionally, the connection between home and school is extremely important for student success. Specifically, Huseth found that "When schools work with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school but throughout life" (2001, 17).

Many times, the use of traditional communication (e.g., phone call, note home) can prove to be frustrating for parents and teachers alike. Hernandez and Leung state "At times, these forms of communication can be time consuming and unsuccessful with messages sometimes not reaching the parents" (2004, 136). Notes that are sent home with students often are misplaced or found at the bottom of a student's backpack, never to be seen by the parent.

The creation of a class website could seem daunting at first to a classroom teacher. However, there are many tools that can be useful in the development of a classroom website. It would be best to first check with a technology specialist within the school or district if one is available. Many schools and districts already have websites that are "ready-made" and allow the teacher to input his or her information within the template.

The other way to create a website for one's class is to utilize any number of free Internet resources for this purpose. For example, http://wix.com and http://weebly.com are online tools designed specifically for the creation of a website. Both are completely customizable and only require the teacher to create an account to get started.

One of the most important points to remember about a class website is that it should be simplistic in nature and be easily accessible to students' families. The goal of a website is to communicate important information about the class. Common features of a class website typically include: a calendar of events, links to online resources such as textbooks or websites to practice academic skills, interactive spaces for students to exchange ideas

with others, and information about current projects and assignments in the classroom.

A classroom website can be helpful for communicating important information to students and their families and therefore help to facilitate classroom management. It is important for teachers to provide this information on a clearly designed website that is easily accessible to all.

Home Visits

Home visits often send the message to parents that the teacher is so invested in their child's education that he or she would take the time to swing by their home. It's often best if these visits are scheduled beforehand. Teachers shouldn't feel the need to go inside; often just a door visit is sufficient. Some teachers plan on this type of visit before the school year begins. This is also an ideal time to drop off a personal letter of introduction as well as any other important letters or notes about the school year. Some teachers use this as an opportunity to invite parents to the annual open house at school.

To have the most successful home visit, follow these basic guidelines.

1. Let parents know the scheduled time frame (between 5–7 pm)
2. Be brief and friendly
3. Provide contact information
4. Leave a friendly letter (this works well if no one is home)
5. Stay outside the home unless invited or scheduled to come inside so that parents do not think you are there to snoop around

Home visits can provide parents the reassurance that you, as the teacher, care about forming strong partnerships with them in their child's education. This can go a long way in having successful relationships with parents and having a great year with the students.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are successful strategies you already have in place to strengthen the teacher-parent relationship?

2. In what areas can you further strengthen your effectiveness in your relationship with parents?

3. Evaluate your current use of the various ways to communicate with parents. What is working well for you and what improvements could be made to enhance communication?

4. How could you envision a class website being utilized in your classroom? What elements would make the website user-friendly?

Chapter 8

Collaborating with Peers

There is no individual teacher who can do it all, know it all, or make all the right decisions in every situation. Just like everyone else, teachers make mistakes, try too hard, or come up short. It is natural to require additional help at times, so knowing how, and to whom to ask for support is important in order to effectively manage the classroom.

One of the best and least intimidating ways to get support is through consultation with other teachers. According to Blase and Blase (2006) peer consultation capitalizes on teacher expertise and is an effective approach for strengthening trust and respect among teachers. It creates a positive learning environment for teachers as learners, and creates a positive impact on instruction, resulting in teacher growth, confidence, and school improvement.

Peer consultation may be appropriate when a teacher is considering an area of teaching or class management where growth is desired. It can be a one-time request, but there are also many teachers who access ongoing personalized assistance and peer coaching from another teacher. This is someone with whom to talk to when there are general questions over a longer period of time. This would be effective when a teacher desires to see modeled lessons by another teacher who has found an easier and more effective method of teaching.

Additionally, small groups of teachers may meet to plan units of study or a month of activities. These groups can also work together to discuss strategies for dealing with typical student problems. Often, teachers who are at the same grade level or teach the same subjects can participate in this kind of collaboration. This process of collaboration can decrease the feelings of

isolation and the overwhelming need to get everything done. When it comes to teacher collaboration, administrative support varies by school, district, and state. Sometimes planning time is designated for minimum days with less instructional student time, or as part of professional-development-based staff meetings. Other times, principals offer roving substitutes and release times in order to cycle through various classrooms and offer planning time for groups of teachers or observation time for sets of coaching partners. Attending a professional development seminar can also be a great help. As a further support, many districts offer assistance from curriculum specialists. It is important for teachers to seek out what assistance is available from their districts or school sites.

In what situations would peer consultation be helpful to you as a teacher?

Mentoring and Peer Coaching

Each state, district, and even school site may have different programs in place, as well as requirements and terminology for mentoring and coaching. These programs often refer to mentors, coaches, consultants, collaborators, or colleague support. Mentoring is assistance offered through districts and usually includes peer coaching. This type of help uses experienced teachers who support and assist both novice teachers and experienced teachers new to the district. Sometimes a district offers a formal mentorship period of one to two years. Many states now mandate new teacher coaching programs for all first- and second-year teachers. For example, California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program provides formative assessment, individualized support, and content-area collaboration in the form of experienced and trained coaches who help new teachers effectively transition into the teaching career (California BTSA 2014).

New York requires participation in a one-year mentoring program for all new teachers with their initial certification. The goal is for the new teacher to have support from an experienced teacher in order to gain skillfulness and to assist the new teacher in making the transition to his or her professional teaching experience (New York State Mentor Teacher Internship Program 2012). There is also the highly acclaimed new teacher support program called The New Teacher Project (2006), which has

worked in over 200 school districts in 22 states to give students excellent educational experiences through highly qualified teachers. Programs such as these offer ongoing training for the coach teachers and many resources for the teachers being coached.

In addition, there are programs for teachers who are not new teachers but who request to take part in coaching-funded programs. California has a program entitled Program Assistance and Review (PAR). Other states have similar programs in place as well.

In peer coaching, teachers receive support, feedback, and assistance from fellow teachers. This leads to shared collaboration and commitment toward using effective teaching practices and improving learning for all students (Carr, Herman, and Harris 2005). Carr, Herman, and Harris (2005) differentiate the terms "mentoring," "coaching," and "collaboration" in their book *Creating Dynamic Schools through Mentoring, Coaching, and Collaboration*. Mentoring has the purpose of new teacher induction support from experienced teachers, using the methods of observation, feedback, and co-planning. Coaching matches all levels of experienced or new teachers for the purposes of instructional improvement and professionalism, working beyond the beginning support into how teachers can improve instruction and assessment. With coaching, rather than just the new teacher gaining support, both teachers in the pairing receive and give mutual support. Collaboration can also include the element of the administration working with teachers for the purpose of organizing school programs. Collaboration also results from teachers serving on committees, departmental teams, or advisory councils in leadership roles, for the purpose of planning instruction, assessment, and making recommendations for school-site issues.

The most common method usually involves (but is not limited to) teachers observing teachers. In *mirror coaching*, the coach records only information in a particular area identified by the person being observed. After the observation, the coach turns any collected information over to the observed teacher for the purpose of analysis, reflection, and change. The teacher then reflects and plans without further assistance. *Collaborative coaching* is identical to mirror coaching with one difference—the other teacher still collects only the data asked for, but will also meet with the observed teacher to go over the observation. The coach in this situation will guide self-reflection by asking questions, which help the observed teacher to analyze whether or not the lesson objectives were met. Yet another method

is *expert coaching*, in which a master teacher serves as the coach. The expert may be a mentor who works exclusively with a novice teacher or a teacher new to the district. The expert is free to collect any information he or she thinks is important. Afterward, there will be a post-observation during which the mentor will guide the discussion. Any well-established model should stipulate that peer-coaching evaluations are confidential and not to be combined with official administrative evaluations as a part of a teacher's permanent professional file. Through cooperative efforts, all teachers can draw on more experienced teachers to help them develop new skills.

There are many benefits when teachers participate in coaching and mentoring relationships. These benefits foster professional growth and development for all teachers involved in the process (Holloway 2001). Well-implemented coaching programs offer a reduced sense of isolation, an ability to implement new teaching strategies effectively, and a revitalized sense of effectiveness. The best programs offer focus and structure. The most helpful models are supported by the administration with time allotted for planning, meeting, observing, and analysis. Effective coaching relationships produce clear positive results (Hall and Simeral 2008). These benefits include, but are not limited to, the expansion of the teachers' instructional capacity, and as a direct consequence, the school's progress toward its ultimate goal of increased student achievement. Many programs also offer training for the coaches. On the individual level, these programs can improve actual teaching practices, and on the school-wide level, these programs can lower the rate of teachers leaving the profession or school (Holloway 2001). More benefits include strategically planned instructional time, higher levels of teacher reflection on his or her own teaching practices, and more emphasized goal-setting for the academic success of students in the classroom.

As a new or experienced teacher, how might you approach your administration about getting peer assistance?

Whom Should You Ask?

If a district does not assign new teachers a coach or mentor, the teacher needs to ask a teacher role model to be his or her peer coach or mentor. Whom should they ask to be their peer coach? This is a very important decision, and one that takes some thought. Teachers will usually find that there are various possibilities. According to authors Pete Hall and Alisa Simeral (2008) peers and mentors assist or serve new teachers in many different ways. They have been consolidated and listed below:

- Work as a peer not a supervisor
- Assist in goal setting
- Provide constructive feedback
- Model lessons and provide professional development
- Serve as counselor
- Serve as motivator

One opportunity may be to ask other teachers in the district who have been specifically trained to be peer coaches. The principal or district office should provide a listing if such help is available. Often teachers feel more comfortable with a respected, successful, and effective teacher at the same grade level or content area. Certainly the chosen person should be one who treats others with respect and confidentiality. The new teacher may decide to informally ask someone for assistance and support when needed. These collaborative relationships will take time, so commitment will be vital. Another option is for teachers in a particular grade level or subject area to pair off in teams for coaching opportunities.

It is normal for beginning teachers to question themselves when they first think about getting help from someone else. These thoughts might include "What will the other teacher think of me?" "What can I learn?" or "Will this be a bad reflection on me to my principal?" Initially, all teachers may consider similar fears concerning this process. However, the process of collaborating with colleagues should be seen as just another learning experience. Just as teachers do not require students to come in knowing everything, they should not expect the same of themselves and other teachers.

What is a way to support teachers who want to refine their skills as a teacher in your school or district?

What Should You Expect from Peer Consultation?

Blase and Blase (2006) outlined a Peer Consultation Model based on five skills or abilities that a quality peer must possess. These skills and abilities are: building healthy relationships by communicating, caring, and developing trust; exploiting the knowledge base; planning and organizing for learning; showing and sharing; and guiding for classroom management.

The peer consultation process can be broken down into three simple steps:

1. **Take some time to meet with the peer coach.** This should be a convenient time when both teachers can sit down and be honest and reflective. Perhaps the teachers can pick a set time each week. This needs to be a time when students are not in the room. During this time, they might open with concerns about teaching, management style, or perhaps recent evaluations. If trust and respect have been established, both teachers can be open.

2. **Schedule observation time.** Both teachers will benefit from observing each other. A more experienced teacher will be better able to help a new teacher if he or she has seen the newer teacher's practices in action. A less experienced teacher will learn a lot from seeing experience in motion. During the observation, the teachers might want to identify an area of need, possibly related to keeping the students on task, lesson pacing, transitions, or organizing a particular subject matter. Many times teachers find they need help handling difficult students or something as seemingly simple as test taking. Whatever the questions, most veteran teachers have had to work through identical problems at some time, and they can offer support in these areas, once they see where support is necessary.

The biggest challenge in classroom observations is finding the time to collaborate. Some suggestions are to coordinate with administration for

a half-day substitute teacher to watch the class (the substitute can change classrooms so that both teachers have a chance to observe the other), or do it during the prep period or differing breaks. Sometimes, an administrator can be asked to fill in for a short period. Some create this time by combining the two classes and trading teaching.

3. **Allow time for reflection.** This is time for both teachers to analyze what was seen during the observation, discuss problem areas, reflect on needed changes, and make plans and goals for improvement. If an area of concentration has been chosen, this time can remain focused on that. It is best if the teachers can meet on the same day as the observation, but with some time for personal reflection and even note-taking before the discussion.

Peer coaching and mentoring will probably not solve all of the teacher's problems at once. It is important to consider taking incremental steps toward becoming a more effective, reflective, and strategic teacher. Becoming an educator who is reflective is a process and one that takes a great deal of practice. It is important that the teacher and his or her peer or mentor schedules as many conference or observation times as needed throughout the process. Patience is the key for success when it comes to being a reflective teacher.

Questions for Reflection

1. How would it be helpful to you to have a peer coach?
2. In what areas of your overall teaching practices would you most desire support and feedback?
3. In what areas of your overall teaching practices do you feel you could offer support and feedback to others?
4. How do school-wide peer coaching programs benefit students overall?

Chapter 9

Creating Your Management Action Plan

You might not have thought of this when you took your first position as a teacher, but you took a job as a manager—a classroom manager! Think of all the things you do as a teacher. You are in charge of providing a positive learning environment; preparing for a system of rules, consequences, and rewards; keeping students on task; and dealing with everyday problems. You also communicate with families and work with other teachers to improve overall instructional practices. These tasks require the skill of an effective manager.

We know now that there is a high correlation between student behavior and academic progress. This knowledge can provide us with the enthusiastic motivation to be effective classroom managers. As this book has established, success in classroom management, and indeed teaching as a whole, begins with a classroom management plan. This chapter will work through the process of establishing a successful plan to prepare teachers in creating a good working and learning environment for students.

An effective plan needs to be based on the students' and the teacher's genuine respect for one another and an understanding of one another's needs. Anticipation of appropriate behavior, responsibility, and individual autonomy creates an atmosphere in which rules are understood and followed. The teacher and students alike should be able to acknowledge good decisions and positive actions. With a well thought out management plan, the teacher can reinforce and redefine expectations. Thinking through and setting the limits may be challenging, but it is a necessary step toward classroom management.

Different Models for Consideration

When preparing a management plan, teachers should first consider their overall objectives and options. There is no single proven way to manage every class and get every student to behave and stay on task. One of the reasons for this variance is wide diversity of what support teachers are given in management practices, professional assistance, and mentoring. Before teachers can start to outline a plan, they have to know what their school or district will permit. Only then can teachers establish their own policy that will fit inside the school plan.

As you read through the following classroom management models, look for things you think will work for your class and your personality. Research does not point to one model that works for every teacher, student, and situation. Therefore, you need to evaluate different components and implications involved in choosing from the different models. Remember, it can be useful to try new approaches, especially if what you are currently doing is not working.

While you are designing what you want in your class, remember to put your effort toward reducing problems, not toward eliminating them altogether. Every teacher experiences management problems from time to time. Remember, students are unpredictable and learning required behaviors in the classroom and school is like anything else we teach them—it takes a lot of time and repetition.

What follows is a short synopsis of different methods for creating positive classroom management systems. Look at all of the plans and decide which elements speak to you. If you feel that components from several of them might work, keep those in mind as you create your own plan.

The Ginott Model—Addressing Misbehavior with Modeling

Dr. Haim Ginott, a well-known author on effectively addressing children's needs and feelings, wrote the revolutionary books *Between Parent and Child* (2003) and *Teacher and Child* (1993). He felt that discipline is best taught in small steps and with the teacher's self-discipline in the forefront. Teachers are to model the behavior they want in their students and address

the student behavior, not the actual student. Along the same lines, praise can be dangerous; it should be geared toward student behavior, not the student. Ginott further believed that teachers are at their best when they help pupils develop their self-esteem and to trust their own experiences (Allen 1996).

The Glasser Model—The Class Meeting

William Glasser wrote a great deal about holding class meetings in order to develop discipline on a whole-class starting point (Glasser 1998a, 1998b, 2000). Rather than teachers imposing discipline over the class, Glasser believed that students are rational and capable of controlling their own behavior if given the chance (Allen 1996). If the teacher helps students learn to make good choices, it will produce good behavior. Teachers should not accept excuses for bad behavior, but instead ask students about the choices they have, why they make certain choices, and how they feel about the results (Allen 1996).

The Canter Model and the Jones Model—Assertive Discipline

Lee and Marlene Canter (1992) and Fred Jones (2000) have each worked on assertive discipline models, which are based on observing what successful teachers do. They base their similar theories on several principles, and both models are used in many schools. Assertive discipline basically states that teachers should have firm and consistent control and that their discipline plans should be posted early so that all students know what is expected of them. This includes firm, positive insistence, limit setting, and providing clear expectations. It asserts that lost time can be avoided by systematically employing effective body language, incentive systems, and efficient individual help. Specifically, the Canter Model highlights teachers' rights as educators, as well as students' rights as learners; while the Jones Model highlights incentives, body language, and setting the stage for effective management (Allen 1996).

The Skinner Model—Reinforcement of Behavior

B.F. Skinner is commonly known as the father of the behavioral school of psychology. A recently accepted product of Skinnerian behaviorism is known as Behavior Modification, which states that behavior is conditioned by its consequences and strengthened if followed instantly by reinforcement. By this same reasoning, the behavior is weakened if it is not reinforced or if it is punished. Skinner further asserts that behavior can be maintained by irregular reinforcement, such as verbal approval, smiles, and good grades (Allen 1996).

The Fay Model—Love and Logic

Jim Fay's Love and Logic teaches nine simple, easy to learn techniques that provide limits, boundaries, and expectations. When consequences are necessary they are delivered in a manner that maintains the dignity of both the adult and the student. Love and Logic provides high expectations for responsible behavior while maintaining an emphasis upon relationship and prevention. The nine essential techniques are designed to make all other programs work better.

The Bailey Model—Conscious Discipline

Becky Bailey's Conscious Discipline (2001) is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates social-emotional learning and discipline. It empowers teachers to consciously respond to daily conflict and to utilize this as an opportunity to teach critical life skills to their students. Conscious Discipline addresses not only student behaviors, but also the teachers', in how they react to the challenging behaviors that the student is displaying.

Which plan best fits your management style?

Creating an Effective Plan

As previously mentioned, there are a variety of approaches from which to work, and it is important to decide which approach might work best for you. The hopeful outcome is that something presented will work in your classroom with your students and your teaching style.

But this by itself will not be enough. Even the best plan is useless unless followed consistently. Do not be surprised if students test the established plan as well as your consistency in implementing the plan. Inconsistency can lead students to try to take advantage of the situation. But understanding these four tenets of human nature will help you to set up and sustain your plan (Allen 1996).

1. Students will often question and resist what others want them to do.

2. Everyone tends to question authority.

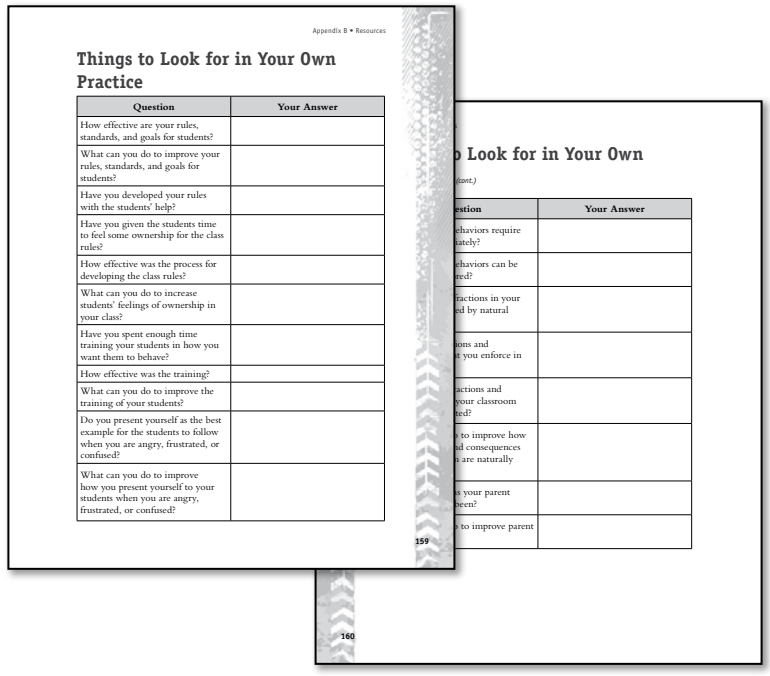
3. Everyone is different with various tastes, likes, abilities, values, and styles.

4. Part of the process of learning to think for yourself is the tendency to push the limits to see what is valid.

All four of these things are natural and beneficial in the larger scope of life as students work toward learning self-discipline and self-control.

In order to create an effective management plan, evaluate the effectiveness of current discipline patterns and your preparation for valuable alterations by answering the questions in Figure 9.1. A full size version of Figure 9.1 can be found in Appendix B. Upon critical reflection, you should then be able to analyze the findings and make important decisions toward improving your classroom dynamics in order to improve student behavior.

Figure 9.1 Things to Look for in Your Own Practice



Appendix B • Resources

Things to Look for in Your Own Practice

Question	Your Answer
How effective are your rules, standards, and goals for students?	
What can you do to improve your rules, standards, and goals for students?	
Have you developed your rules with the students' help?	
Have you given the students time to feel some ownership for the class rules?	
How effective was the process for developing the class rules?	
What can you do to increase students' feelings of ownership in your class?	
Have you spent enough time training your students in how you want them to behave?	
How effective was the training?	
What can you do to improve the training of your students?	
Do you present yourself as the best example for the students to follow when you are angry, frustrated, or confused?	
What can you do to improve how you present yourself to your students when you are angry, frustrated, or confused?	

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o Look for in Your Own

(cont.)

estion	Your Answer
ehaviors require iately?	
ehaviors can be red?	
ractions in your ed by natural	
ions and t you enforce in	
actions and your classroom ted?	
s to improve how ed consequences t are naturally	
s your parent been?	
s to improve parent	

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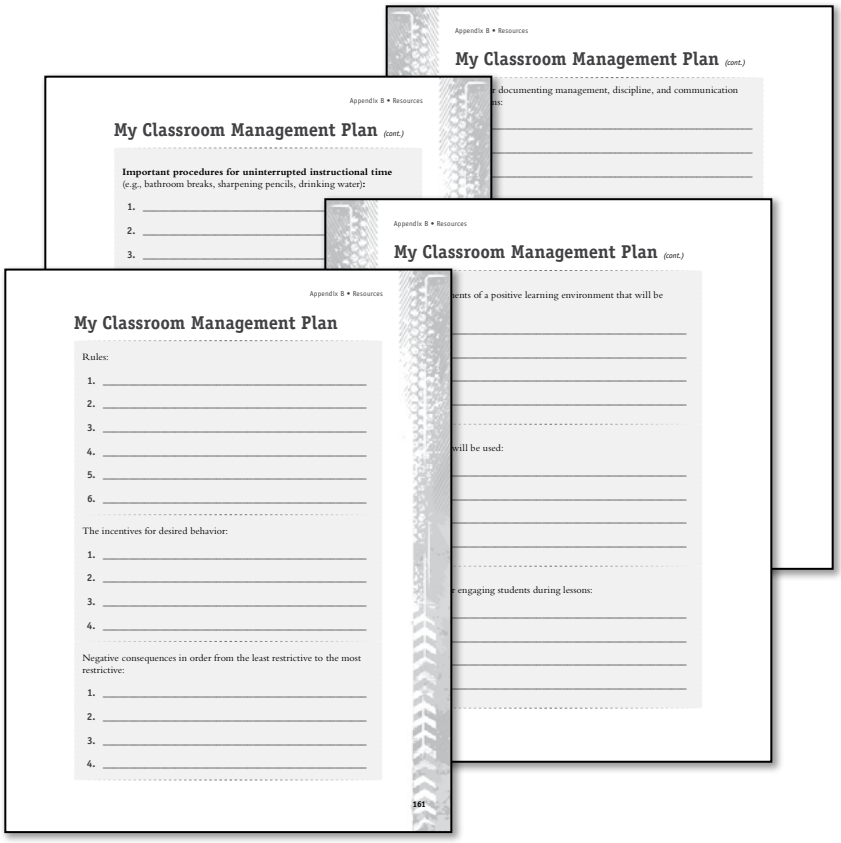
Once you have answered and reflected on the questions from Figure 9.1, you can begin to outline your actual plan on a form similar to what is shown in Figure 9.2. A full size version of Figure 9.2 can be found in Appendix B. Consider effective rules that you want to establish at the onset of the school year and the desired levels of reward and consequence. Be specific about the considerations surrounding each planned component.

Figure 9.2 My Classroom Management Plan



Guiding students in their academic learning journey begins with a well-established classroom management system. Research repeatedly shows that the classroom environment directly affects student behavior; this environment includes the physical layout as well as the established routines, classroom procedures, and instructional lessons (Taylor 2009). The ultimate goal is to develop students' self-control so that they are in command of their own learning progress. This type of student self-control frees the teacher to move away from external, authority-imposed management and toward teaching them to learn. This classroom management plan that you have just developed can support this transition and should actually seem to fade into the woodwork as it becomes a natural part of the classroom environment.

Questions for Reflection

1. How did your responses to the questions from Figure 9.1 help you select a management system that works for you?

2. Which management system speaks most to your teaching style and why?

3. What has changed in the way you view your overall management system after reading this book?

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Resources

This appendix contains a number of resources mentioned in this book for your use with students and families pertaining to classroom management. Although blank templates are provided, these forms can easily be adapted to meet the needs of your classroom.

Additionally, located at the back of this appendix are resources for establishing, enhancing, and evaluating your own classroom management practices.

Pre-Referral Form

To: Office **From:** _____

Date: _____

_____ is being sent to the office for the following reasons(s):

_____

_____

_____

_____

The following steps have been taken <u>before</u> sending this student to the office:

1. _____ Verbal Warnings
2. _____ In Class Time-Out Date: _____
3. _____ Time-Out in Another Classroom Date: _____
4. _____ Parent/Guardian notified of Ongoing Behavioral Concerns

   Date: _____
5. _____ Peer Mediation / Guidance Counselor Date: _____
6. _____ Extreme Circumstances—Superseding previous steps
   (Teacher will notify parent/guardian ASAP)

Pre-Referral Form *(cont.)*

Office Use Only

Disciplinary/Referral Action:

_____ Parent/Guardian notified _____ Referral written

_____ Work detail _____ Out-of-School Suspension

_____ In-School Suspension _____ Referred to Student Services

_____ Other _____

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Phone Communication Log

Student's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name(s): _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Date	Subject	Concerning	Response/Action	Follow-Up Information

Student-Led Conference Checklist

Directions: Follow the steps below. Check off each step as you complete it.

1. _____ Bring your parents in and introduce them to your teacher.
2. _____ Lead your parents to your desk.
3. _____ Take out your portfolio and share your work.
4. _____ Share your goal sheet with your parents.
5. _____ Share your reflection sheet with your parents.
6. _____ Wait for your teacher to sign the bottom of this page.

Teacher Signature: _____

Questions Parents Could Ask During Parent-Teacher Conferences

Student's Name: _____ Class: _____

1. How is my child doing?
2. What is my child's overall behavior like?
3. How does my child get along with others?
4. What is my child going to learn this year?
5. Is my child progressing as well as expected?
6. What are my child's notable strengths?
7. What do I need to do as the parent to help my child?

Other questions I am often asked by parents:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Information Organizer for Conferences

Student's Name: _____ Date: _____

Thus far in this reporting period, we have had _____ assignments, tests, and quizzes.

Your child's scores are:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Therefore, the overall current grade is: _____

This grade is not final and is subject to change depending on make-up work and/or future work. If this score is unsatisfactory, there is still sufficient time to bring it up to an acceptable level.

Teacher's comments: _____

_____

_____

Parent's comments: _____

_____

_____

Parent's signature: _____

Strategies for Successful Parent Conferences

Directions: Rate yourself on a scale of 1–5 in each area, where "1" is an area of growth and "5" means this is something you already do.

Area	Score (1–5)	Comments
Clarity I say exactly what I mean and check to be sure that I am understood.		
Professionalism I am friendly, yet businesslike. I never discuss others negatively or compare one child with another.		
Positive Attitude I build up the adult's ability to parent and the child's capability to learn.		
Documentation I plan ahead so that I have work samples to back up what I have said.		
Assertiveness I come across as being in charge of the meeting with clear ideas of how to improve any situation.		
Flexibility I am able to change my mind when corrected and able to come up with alternate plans.		
Inclusion Whenever possible, I include the child when I am discussing future plans that include him/her.		
Knowledge I understand my curriculum and am able to present it in layman's terms. I also know several strategies for working toward the student's future growth.		

Things to Look for in Your Own Practice

Question	Your Answer
How effective are your rules, standards, and goals for students?	
What can you do to improve your rules, standards, and goals for students?	
Have you developed your rules with the students' help?	
Have you given the students time to feel some ownership for the class rules?	
How effective was the process for developing the class rules?	
What can you do to increase students' feelings of ownership in your class?	
Have you spent enough time training your students in how you want them to behave?	
How effective was the training?	
What can you do to improve the training of your students?	
Do you present yourself as the best example for the students to follow when you are angry, frustrated, or confused?	
What can you do to improve how you present yourself to your students when you are angry, frustrated, or confused?	

Things to Look for in Your Own Practice *(cont.)*

Question	Your Answer
Which student behaviors require attention immediately?	
Which student behaviors can be temporarily ignored?	
Are rules and infractions in your classroom followed by natural consequences?	
List some infractions and consequences that you enforce in your classroom.	
How are the infractions and consequences in your classroom naturally connected?	
What can you do to improve how the infractions and consequences in your classroom are naturally connected?	
How effective has your parent communication been?	
What can you do to improve parent communication?	

My Classroom Management Plan

Rules:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

The incentives for desired behavior:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Negative consequences in order from the least restrictive to the most restrictive:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

My Classroom Management Plan *(cont.)*

The components of a positive learning environment that will be established:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Signals that will be used:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Strategies for engaging students during lessons:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

My Classroom Management Plan *(cont.)*

Important procedures for uninterrupted instructional time (e.g., bathroom breaks, sharpening pencils, drinking water):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Plan for communicating with parents:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Plan for peer consultation, when needed:

_____

_____

_____

My Classroom Management Plan *(cont.)*

Plan for documenting management, discipline, and communication problems:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Plan for the room arrangement:

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Thank you for helping us create a world in which children love to learn!

5301 Oceanus Drive ▪ Huntington Beach, CA 92649-1030 ▪ 800.858.7339 ▪ FAX 714.230.7070 ▪ www.tcmpub.com