

Professional Development Program

Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is necessary for all teachers and facilitators. Classroom management involves all aspects of what is going on in the classroom while a lesson is being taught. Not only does classroom management include how the teacher or facilitator delivers the curriculum, but also how the students interact with the teacher and with others in the classroom, and extends into the classroom environment in which students learn as well. Students cannot learn in chaos. Classroom management includes elements of classroom discipline, but focuses more on creating a peaceful learning environment that is comfortable, organized, engaging, and respectful for both the teacher and the students.

The Teacher In The Classroom

Our physical presence can play a large part in our management of the classroom environment. The way we move and stand, and the degree to which we are physically demonstrative can have a clear effect on the management of the class. Most importantly, the way we are able to respond to what happens in class, the degree to which we are aware of what is going on, often marks the difference between successful teaching and less satisfactory lessons. There are a number of issues to consider which are not just matters of personality or style and which have a direct bearing on the students' perception of us :

I. Proximity

Teachers need to consider how close they should be to the students they are working with. Some students are uncomfortable if their teacher stands or sits close to them. For some, on the other hand, distance is a sign of coldness. Teachers should be conscious of how close they are to their students, should take this into account when assessing their students' reactions and should, if necessary, modify their behaviour.

II. Appropriacy

Deciding how close to the students you should be when you work with them is a matter of appropriacy. So is the general way in which teachers sit or stand in classrooms. Many teachers create an extremely friendly atmosphere by crouching down when they work with students in pairs. In this way, they are at the same level as their seated students. Some teachers are even happy to sit on the floor, and in certain situations this may be appropriate. But in others it may well lead to a situation where students are put off concentrating. All the positions teachers take, make strong statements about the kind of person the teacher is. It is important, therefore, to consider what kind of effect such physical behaviour has so that we

can behave in a way which is appropriate to the students, and the relationship we wish to create with them.

III. Movement

It is worth remembering that motionless teachers can bore students, while teachers who are constantly in motion can turn their students into tennis spectators, their heads moving from side to side until they become exhausted. Most successful teachers move around the classroom to some extent. How much we move around in the classroom will depend on our personal style, where we feel most comfortable for the management of the class and whether or not we want to work with smaller groups.

IV. Awareness

In order to manage a class successfully, the teacher has to be aware of what students are doing and how they are feeling. This means watching and listening just as carefully as teaching. Awareness means assessing what students have said and responding appropriately. **“The teacher’s primary responsibility is response-ability”**. This means being able to perceive the success or failure of what is taking place in the classroom, and being flexible enough to respond to what is going on. We need to be as conscious as possible of what is going on in the students’ heads. We also need to be self-aware, in order to try to gauge the success of our behaviour and to gain an understanding of how our students see us.

• Giving Instructions

The issue of how to talk to students becomes crucial when we give them instructions. The best activity in the world is a waste of time if the students don’t understand what it is they are supposed to do. There are two general rules for giving instructions: They must be kept as simple as possible, and they must be logical. When teachers give instructions, it is important for them to check that the students have understood what they are being asked to do.

• Talking To Students

Rough-tuning is the simplification of language which both parents and teachers make in order to increase the chances of their being understood. They are able to adjust their language use- in terms of grammatical complexity, vocabulary use and voice tone- when their listener shows signs of incomprehension. Teachers need to be aware of three things: Firstly, they should consider the kind of language that students are likely to understand. Secondly, they need to think about what they wish to say to the students and how best to do it. Thirdly, they need to consider the manner in which they will speak. Apart from adapting their language, teachers also use physical movements and gestures. They use facial expressions to show emotions, and mime to demonstrate actions.

Below you will find information on several topics that will help you develop or strengthen your classroom management strategies:

1- Classroom management and curriculum fidelity

Classroom management strategies need to be planned, be thoughtful, and in line with curriculum fidelity. While some classroom management strategies focus more on setting clear rules and some focus more on transitions, the strategies should not change how the lesson is taught. Classroom management strategies should add organization for the students and classroom, but not change the content of the lessons or the fidelity of the curriculum.

2- Developing a classroom management plan

A classroom management plan is where clear rules are set, class norms are developed, expectations are stated, and consequences are defined. The classroom management plan does not have to be lengthy, complex, or intricate. A simple set of rules or class norms and consequences hand-written on a piece of flip chart paper is all you need to create your plan. The classroom management plan, also referred to as a classroom management contract, is a contract you create with your students focusing on providing for their needs in the classroom and a commitment to help students learn without interference and disturbances. Once the classroom rules or norms are developed, the contract is presented to the class and is the document that defines the classroom norms. The contract should be followed at all times and requires teachers and facilitators to hold students and themselves accountable at all times.

3- Class-wide Strategies:

➤ **Create a classroom management plan.**

➤ **Understand the power of day 1**

Day 1 is the first day you are in the classroom with the students. Day 1 is the most important day you will spend with students because you set the tone for the classroom and the rules and class norms are established. Work to create a classroom that is warm, inviting, and inclusive. Show enthusiasm for the lessons you are teaching and show students you are excited about being able to spend time with them.

➤ **Access a seating chart ahead of time**

Young people want to be addressed by name. If at all possible access a seating chart ahead of time so you can make name tents for each student to grab on their way into class and take to their desks or arrange with the classroom teacher a time before your

lesson starts for students to create their own name tents on a piece of paper. These name tents should be used each time you have class and will not only assist in you learning the students names, but will eliminate the need to reference a seating chart and take time and attention away from the students.

➤ **Greet students as they enter the classroom**

Simple phrases like, “I am glad you are here today” or “welcome to class” can help students feel connected and engaged. Also, to show students you enjoyed your time with them and look forward to seeing them again, always say good bye and reference when you will see them again for the next lesson.

➤ **Create an agenda for each day**

Start each lesson on time and quickly review what is listed on the agenda for the lesson. Check off agenda items as they are completed to build on a sense of accomplishment and to help students know what is coming up next. This helps students understand there is a routine followed during your class time and a predictability of what is coming up next.

➤ **Be genuine and sincere with praise**

While praise is very important and is often times a great prompt to the class acknowledging appropriate behavior, empty praise or praising for small tasks or less than adequate work can actually cause students to disengage and lose interest in your feedback. Be thoughtful in what you say to students and work to find ways to offer genuine praise and feedback. Always try to focus genuine praise on the work and behavior of a student and not the student themselves.

➤ **Balance teaching and facilitating**

Look for ways to balance teaching and facilitating. Teaching is typically the class listening to the information being shared by a teacher or facilitator, while facilitating involves sharing knowledge and including the audience in the lesson. Look for opportunities to have students actively respond and participate. Offer opportunities for students to read aloud, write on the board/smart board, answer questions out loud, and assist you during the lesson. Depending on the student’s learning style they may learn best when reading, listening, writing information down, or maybe even moving around the classroom a bit. While we can’t accommodate each student’s learning style each time, we can make an effort to allow students opportunities to actively respond.

➤ **Circulate the room**

Facilitators should circulate the room as a way to keep students engaged and attentive. Not only do students have to pay attention and follow where you are, but it allows you the opportunity to check to make sure students are on-task.

➤ **Find a seating arrangement conducive to learning**

During activities promoting or encouraging student engagement a u-shape or circle might be effective, but overall other arrangements may help with managing disruptive behaviors. The teacher may already have a seating assignment that works and has certain students in certain seats.

➤ **Be effective when giving instructions**

It is important when giving instructions to provide information in a way that is clear and concise. Once we have gained the student's attention it is important to:

1. Wait until students are seated and not moving around the room.
2. Give one instruction at a time.
3. Use a clear firm voice and repeat each instruction.
4. Wait for student compliance.
5. Provide an opportunity for students to acknowledge understanding of the instruction given. This can be done by asking for thumbs up or thumbs down and answering questions or concerns of the students with their thumbs down.
6. If a class is struggling with following verbal directions you might want to write out ahead of time and post directions for an activity. Having a posted copy of the instructions allows students to refer to this information if they are confused or have questions or concerns.

➤ **Avoid answering too many questions and stalling the lesson**

Always have a way students can get questions answered, even when there isn't time in class. You can provide a "parking lot" flip chart sheet that is posted in a certain location in the classroom during each lesson and post-it sheets with pens near the paper and students can write questions and post them to the sheet to be answered next class period.

➤ **Handle disagreements with respect**

Create a classroom atmosphere where students know it is ok to disagree, but disagreements are always to be respectful.

➤ **Integrate students' interests when appropriate**

During activities, such as role plays, try to use language youth can connect with and names they connect with as part of their culture.

➤ **Be willing to give a little to get a lot**

Some days students enter the classroom and you can tell the energy level is high and it is going to be an enormous challenge to keep students focused and on-task. Whether it's the weather, a school holiday or break is coming up, or a student has a birthday, offering a small incentive might be just the key to get students to tune in and be alert. Incentives don't have to cost money, but can offer students an opportunity to interact with each other and relax.

➤ **Student Talk And Teacher Talk**

Over use of TTT is inappropriate because the more a teacher talks, the less chance there is for the students to practise their own speaking- and it is the students who need the practice, not the teacher. A good teacher maximizes STT and minimizes TTT. We should not talk simply about the difference between STT and TTT, but also consider TTQ. Teachers who use language which is not useful or appropriate, are not offering students the right kind of talking, whereas teachers who engage students with their stories and interaction, using appropriate comprehensible input will be helping them to understand and acquire the language.

How to Handle Discipline Problems with Effective Classroom Management

Discipline problems are listed as the major concern for most new teachers. What can teachers expect and how can they effectively handle discipline problems? Classroom management combined with an effective discipline plan is the key.

Here is how :

- Begin each class period with a *positive attitude* and high expectations. If you expect your students to misbehave or you approach them negatively, you will get misbehaviour. This is an often overlooked aspect of classroom management.
- Come to class prepared with lessons for the day. In fact, over plan with your lessons. Make sure to have all your materials and methods ready to go. *Reducing downtime* will help maintain discipline in your classroom.
- Work on making transitions between parts of lessons smooth. In other words, as you move from whole group discussion to independent work, try to minimize the disruption to the class. Have your papers ready to go or your assignment already written on the board. Many disruptions occur during transitional times during lessons.
- Watch your students as they come into class. Look for signs of possible problems before class even begins. For example, if you notice a heated discussion or problem before class starts, try to deal with the problem then. Allow the students a few moments to talk

with you or with each other before you start your lesson to try and work things out. Separate them if necessary and try to gain agreement that during your class period at least they will drop whatever issue they have.

- Have a posted discipline plan that you follow consistently for effective classroom management. Depending on the severity of the offense, this should allow students a warning or two before punishment begins. Your plan should be easy to follow and also should cause a minimum of disruption in your class. For example, your discipline plan might be - First Offense: Verbal Warning, Second Offense: Detention with teacher, Third Offense: Referral.
- Meet disruptions that arise in your class within kind measures. In other words, don't elevate disruptions above their current level. Your discipline plan should provide for this, however, sometimes your own personal issues can get in the way. For example, if two students are talking at the back of the room and your first step in the plan is to give your students a **verbal warning**, don't stop your instruction to begin yelling at the students. Instead, have a set policy that simply **saying a student's name** is enough as a clue for them to get back on task. Another technique is **to ask one of them a question**.
- **Try to use humour** to diffuse situations before things get out of hand. Note: Know your students. The following example would be used with students you know would not elevate the situation to another level. For example, if you tell your students to open their books to page 51 and three students are busy talking, do not immediately yell at them. Instead, smile, say their names, and ask them kindly if they could please wait until later to finish their conversation because you would really like to hear how it ends and you have to get this class finished. This will probably get a few laughs but also get your point across.
- If a student becomes verbally confrontational with you, remain calm and remove them from the situation as quickly as possible. Do not get into yelling matches with your students. There will always be a winner and a loser which sets up a power struggle that could continue throughout the year. Further, do not bring the rest of the class into the situation by involving them in the discipline or the writing of the referral. More on dealing with confrontational students in your classroom.
- If a student becomes physical, remember that the safety of the other students is paramount. Remain as calm as possible; your demeanour can sometimes diffuse the situation. You should have a plan for dealing with violence that you discussed with students early in the year. You could also have a student designated to get help from another teacher. Send the other students from the room if it appears they could get hurt.

If the fight is between two students, follow your school's rules concerning teacher involvement as many want teachers to stay out of fights until help arrives.

- Keep an anecdotal record of major issues that arise in your class. This might be necessary if you are asked for a history of classroom disruptions or other documentation.
- Let it go at the end of the day. Classroom management and disruption issues should be left in class so that you can have some down time to recharge before coming back to another day of teaching.

Tips:

- Recognize the warning signs of disruption. Obviously this comes with practice of classroom management. However, some signs are fairly obvious.
- **Consistency** and **fairness** are essential for effective classroom management. If you ignore disruptions one day and come down hard on them the next, you will not be seen as consistent. You will lose respect and disruptions will probably increase. Further, if you are not fair in your punishments, making sure to treat all students fairly then students will quickly realize this and lose respect for you. You should also start each day fresh, not holding disruptions against students and instead expecting them to behave.
- It's easier to get easier. Start the year very strict so that students see that you are willing to do what it takes to have your classroom under control. They will understand that you expect learning to occur in your room. You can always let up as the year goes on.
- **Classroom rules** must be easy to understand and manageable. Make sure that you don't have such a large number of rules that your students can't consistently follow them.

Strategies to increase the engagement of all students include:

1- Seating arrangements

2- Effective instructions and commands need to be preceded by getting the pupils' attention, and then presented clearly one at a time.

3- Sequencing of activities, so that easy and brief tasks are interspersed with longer and more demanding ones, enhances engagement and learning as well as reducing disruption.

4- Pace of instruction is best if it is brisk.

5- Choice and access to preferred activities increases engagement and reduces problem behaviour.

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