

RESOURCES

Importance of Classroom Management: Effective Teaching, Behavior Management and Classroom Climate

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

By Patricia Kyle, PhD, University of Idaho; &
Larry Rogien, PhD, Boise State University



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Classroom management requires an orchestration of effective teaching, proactive preventive strategies, practical corrective strategies, and positive supportive techniques. This approach helps teachers motivate students through active involvement in their own learning *and* discipline processes with the goals of acquiring learning, self-management, and a repertoire of responsible behaviors. When these components are integrated in your classroom, effective teaching, management, and discipline complement each other to facilitate learning. This handout deals with *preventive strategies* in comprehensive classroom management.

Preventive Component

Long-term prevention strategies are the glue that holds the classroom management plan together. Planning and designing the class ahead of time to eliminate problems is an essential step to long-term success. Focusing on implementing management strategies in the first week of school comes next. Active involvement of the students in the process is critical. Continually maintaining and re-evaluating the management approach is also needed. When the appropriate PACE is set in the classroom, problems are prevented through having proactive options, accountability options, choices for students, and environment options.

Preventing problems before they occur is important to a comprehensive approach. As important as corrective strategies for the moment of misbehavior are, they are short-term solutions only. Without prevention strategies we are caught in an endless cycle of short-term solutions for the immediate situation. Establishing classroom rules, procedures, and accountability are the initial steps toward establishing the PACE in the classroom. The prevention component is essential to having long-lasting results.

The prevention component will not completely eliminate classroom problems, but it will surely make a difference in how many day-to-day discipline problems come up where we need to rely on our corrective interventions for the moment of misbehavior. Setting the PACE focuses on the main aspects of prevention.

Proactive options. Plan, organize, and design the class at the beginning, so that you are being proactive and not reactive. Planning and preparing reaps many benefits. You manage your lessons so that things run smoothly with little down time. You clarify expectations of all with the students.

Accountability options. Plan, organize, and design how you will hold students accountable for their learning tasks. How will you structure things so that students can be successful in your class? What standards (how well something has to be done) will you set for their work? The challenge is to manage student work so you and the students can keep track of it. Decide what to do about missed work. Plan techniques to have all students responding simultaneously at times. This will assist you in checking if they all understand the learning.

Choices. Involve students in appropriate curriculum decisions so they feel ownership of what they are learning. Provide them with structured choices as to how they do their assignments, which assignments they may choose from a list of potential assignments, or a combination of the two. Student choice also applies to setting the environment.

Environment options. Create a classroom climate conducive to learning. It needs to be predetermined, taught to the students, and jointly constructed, adopted, and maintained. Establishing the environment includes:

- Rules/code of conduct
- Procedures

- Arranging the room
- Working the room

When you put all four together—proactive options, accountability options, choices, and environment options—to set the PACE in your classroom, you have a well-developed prevention component. You avoid many problems before they even develop. You need to use less of the corrective intervention strategies for the moment of misbehavior.

Proactive Options

Planning and preparing to prevent problems. This means:

- Have materials ready.
- Develop procedures to pass out materials.
- Develop routines to deal with non-instructional tasks, such as attendance, lunch count, or book money.
- Develop procedures to deal with interruptions.

Preventive lesson management. It is important to:

- Develop “withitness,” an atmosphere in which the students feel that you are on top of the situation in the classroom. Teachers who are “withit” are aware of what is going on and deal with situations in a timely manner.
- Manage your lessons well, so you are keeping things moving smoothly from one part of a lesson to the next

Clarify expectations with the students. Clarifying expectations *with* the students rather than *to* the students creates a situation where you and your students are working together.

Accountability Options

Structure for student success. Design your accountability procedures with bringing about student success in learning as the main goal.

Manage student work. How will you:

- Set standards to guide students in succeeding
- Post assignments
- Collect and hand back student work
- Keep track of completed assignments
- Help students keep track of their own work in progress
- Hold students accountable for missing work
- Inform students who have been absent about assignments

- Give feedback to the students
- Help students self-manage

Simultaneous response modes. These options involve all students giving responses to questions at the same time in order to continually check their understanding of concepts and to keep them focused on the lesson:

- Choral responses, where all of the students answer in unison
- Individual whiteboards, where the students write down their answer and hold it up for you to visually see
- Whole class signals such as thumbs up and thumbs down or other appropriate gestures

Choices

Student involvement in curriculum choices. Having students involved in appropriate curriculum choices is a great way to get students actively engaged in the learning process. For example, “appropriate” can be choosing the order in a list of topics in social studies or choosing which activities students will like to do in the process of meeting standards.

Structured choices in assignments. Giving students choices in how they do their assignments is another critical strategy for preventing classroom problems. When students have a choice of two or three ways in which they can do their assignments, they are much less apt to choose not to do their assignments.

Environment Options

Conducive classroom climate. Options are:

- Pre-planned
- Constructed jointly between teacher and students, adopted and taught

Rules or code of conduct that establish a learning environment. Guidelines include:

- Three to eight rules
- Focus on the positive
- Understandable, reasonable, and attainable
- Posted in classroom
- Student involvement
- Consistency with school rules
- Support of effective learning principles

Procedures. Effective managers have procedures for the following:

- Entering and leaving the room

- Beginning and ending the day or period
- Getting students' attention
- Student interaction
- Using areas of the room: drinking fountain, pencil sharpener, supply shelves, and centers
- Bathroom use
- Working individually and together
- Obtaining help
- What to do when finished
- Taking care of the room: class responsibilities
- Interruptions
- Missing materials
- Using areas of the school

Arranging the room. There are six things to keep in mind:

- Visibility
- Accountability
- Communicability
- Understandability
- Usability
- Movability

Working the room. Move around interacting with students and monitor what they are doing. The more you use proximity in this way, the more on top of the situation you will be, and the more “withitness” you will have.

Resources

Kyle, P., and Rogien, L. (2004). *Opportunities and options in classroom management*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 0205324134.

Websites

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Safe and Responsive Schools Project—
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TeachNet—www.teachnet.com (see *Discipline Strategies*)

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Promoting and Teaching Responsible Behavior

The supportive component of classroom management focuses on promoting and teaching responsible behavior. When students are acting responsibly, it directly affects teaching: Students are more responsive, there are fewer distractions, and there is more cooperation. The supportive strategies focus on positive behavior, resulting in less need for corrective interventions.

The entire discipline and management program should be part of the process of teaching responsible behavior. Students learn from observing what teachers do and how they interact with their students, leading to an effective discipline system. The more teachers share with students the discipline strategies and their purpose and rationale, the more effectively the students will learn responsible behaviors.

Helping students to learn RESPECT for themselves, for other people in their communities, and for property becomes a pivotal feature of this comprehensive management approach. Giving students the support they need to choose appropriate behavior is vital to long-term success. Teaching responsible behavior, establishing classroom harmony, and actively involving students in the discipline process are keys to going beyond the immediate situation, resulting in desirable prosocial behaviors. Eliciting parent cooperation is an essential element to support students in choosing alternative behaviors to disruption. Infusing encouragement strategies throughout all aspects of the classroom is an on-going need. Helping students feel capable of performing classroom tasks supports learning. Positive teacher/student relationships form the foundation for classroom RESPECT.

Responsible Behaviors Intentionally Taught

The following list presents behaviors that teachers can teach intentionally to help create a supportive classroom environment. Teachers can partner with school psychologists, counselors, and parents to present a multifaceted approach for all students, and especially for certain students that need more intensive intervention.

- Character development
- Communication skills
- Social skills
- Anger management
- Conflict resolution
- Responsibility for ones' actions
- Self-control skills
- Decision-making skills
- Emotional intelligence development

Establishing Classroom Harmony

The second supportive option focuses on establishing a warm, supportive environment that has everyone feeling they are an important part of the class. The feelings of “our class” and the “learning community” are created through class building activities, team building activities, and class meetings. When students perceive that they are *valued* by teachers and other students, *included* in classroom activities, *accepted* in their classroom and school, have a sense of *belonging* to cooperative groups, and are *listened* to and *encouraged* by the adults in their lives, they develop respect for themselves and the authority figures in their lives.

- Valued
- Included
- Accepted
- Belonging
- Listened to
- Encouraged

Student Involvement

The third supportive option focuses on empowering students in helping them feel ownership of the class through active involvement in the discipline process. Student involvement helps students be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Involvement activities include:

- Classroom responsibilities
- Study buddies
- Homework buddies
- Peer tutors
- Peer mediators
- Peer counselors
- Peer recognition
- Student-led conferences

Parent and Staff Involvement

The fourth supportive option focuses on active involvement of parents and other staff in the discipline process.

Parent involvement. Parents are the central element or the keystone in this supportive arch. Parents can be an invaluable support if teachers implement an inviting approach that creates a feeling of being allies rather than adversaries. How teachers interact with parents—what teachers project to parents—does make a difference in what teachers get back from parents. Teachers want their interaction to be giving the message of “Let’s work together to meet the needs of your child.”

The tools needed to accomplish this are the “crucial C’s of parental support”: That is, parent/teacher:

- Communication
- Connection
- Collaboration

Staff involvement. Staff involvement in the classroom is also important if teachers are going to be able to meet the needs of their students. Teachers no longer operate in isolation from one another. They need to collaborate with many other educators in solving both learning and discipline problems. The special education teacher, the school nurse, the music and physical education teachers, the school social worker, the occupational therapist, the speech and language pathologist, the English as a Second Language and/or the bilingual teacher, the administrators, the school counselor, and the school psychologist are all support people in meeting students’ needs. The more they work together, the better they can serve students.

Encouragement and Effective Praise

The fifth supportive option focuses on student growth toward responsible behavior choices. Rather than wait for a finished product (praise), teachers can encourage positive steps, movement, improvement, progress of the student, and students’ efforts and strengths. Encouragement focuses on getting students to look within for validation and examine their own reactions to their accomplishments and their strengths. An example of encouragement (internally focused) is, “It looks as if you put a lot of effort into this picture. I’ll bet you are proud of it.”

Effective praise focuses on giving feedback to students about their accomplishments. Effective praise needs to be appreciative rather than controlling and informative rather than evaluative. Genuine, specific, non-verbal communication has to be congruent with the praise message and use a variety of phrases (Brophy, 1998). An example of effective praise (externally focused) is, “I admire the unusual way that you used colors in this picture. It creates a very pleasing effect.”

Capable Strategies

The sixth supportive option focuses on building up students’ sense of accomplishment. Building up the capability level of students is something that all students need, but students that have “I can’t” messages in their heads especially need these strategies. Lew and Bettner (1998) emphasize the

importance of helping students to feel capable. They suggest:

- Making mistakes a learning opportunity
- Focusing on improvement, not perfection
- Building on student strengths
- Allowing students to struggle and succeed within their ability level
- Acknowledging the difficulty of the task
- Analyzing past successes, and then focusing on the present
- Breaking the task into bite-sized instructional pieces
- Working on positive self-talk
- Celebrating accomplishments

Teacher/Student Relationship

The seventh supportive option focuses on choices in creating positive relationships between teachers and students. This is one of the primary motivators toward responsible behavior choices. The following list includes many options for building the teacher/student relationships:

- Give respect to get respect.
- Listen to the students.
- Involve them in class decision making; that is, give voice and choice; have a class suggestion box.
- Communicate positive expectations.
- Let enthusiasm for teaching shine through.
- Greet students by name.
- Show interest in their interests.
- Remember information about students' lives outside of school.
- Chat with students outside of class.
- Celebrate accomplishments.
- Eat lunch with students.
- Recognize students' birthdays.
- Keep lines of communication open.
- Use a collaborative discipline style.
- Look for and comment on students' strengths; use affirmations.
- Send positive messages to students.
- Model kind behavior.
- Be helpful.
- Attend student events.
- Have one-on-one time with the students.
- Focus on successes of all students.
- Display student work; let them choose which work is to be displayed.
- Accept individual differences, and value student diversity.

Supportive Solutions for Problem Behaviors

Distracting Misbehaviors

- Give attention for responsible behavior choices.
- Build positive teacher/student and student/student relationships.
- Use encouragement and effective praise.
- Incorporate capable strategies to adapt instruction to meet student learning modality needs.

Controlling Behaviors

- Provide legitimate avenues for power in the class.
- Assign classroom responsibilities.
- Involve students in the decision-making process.
- Provide choices.

Angry/Violent Behaviors

- Teach anger management skills.
- Establish a conflict resolution or peer mediation program.
- Teach pro-social responsible behaviors.
- Teach stress management strategies.
- Encourage positive teacher/student and student/student relationships.
- Encourage a connection and commitment to the school and extracurricular activities.
- Encourage increased parent/child communication.
- Anticipate student success.
- Involve the school counselor and/or school psychologist.
- Use effective teaching choices linked to learner interests.
- Establish a peer counseling program.

Summary

When students are supported in making responsible behavior choices, then teachers create a classroom where everyone wants to be and can learn. Teaching and classroom climate encourage responsible behavior. Best practices in classroom management help teachers create learning environments that motivate their students through active involvement in the learning and discipline processes with the goals of acquiring learning skills, self-management skills, and a repertoire of responsible behaviors.

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Corrective Strategies

Excellent teaching and proactive prevention keep a lot of classroom problems from developing, but reality indicates that these two approaches will not eliminate all problems. Being prepared with practical strategies to deal with the moment of misbehavior is also vital to a comprehensive approach. Recognizing the type of misbehavior that the student is choosing is necessary so that a corrective intervention strategy that fits the situation can be utilized. Attention, power, revenge, avoidance, impulsive, and unmotivated behaviors all need different strategies to effectively deal with the misbehavior.

There are two *keys of effective delivery* of corrective intervention strategies that are essential at the moment of misbehavior in order to model self-management: Use as few words as possible and control your reaction. We present the following options for dealing with different levels of misbehaviors: “A” options for distracting behaviors, “B” options for controlling behaviors, and “C” options for angry/violent behaviors.

“A” Options for Distracting Behaviors

Distracting misbehaviors are ones that sidetrack the teacher from the lesson and/or divert the attention of the students from the learning. These misbehaviors interrupt the lesson, stop the momentum, and get the focus away from important matters and annoy the teachers all at the same time.

Active Body Language

These strategies include:

- The “look”
- Proximity
- Body carriage
- Appropriate touch
- Signals and gestures
- Teaching pause

Attention-Focusing Strategies

- *Signals*: Auditory (including using the student’s name and changing the tone or volume of your voice) and visual cues.
- *Refocus notes*: A non-verbal option to deal with distracting behaviors. Instead of interrupting your teaching, you write what you want the student to stop doing on a note or Post-it and quietly put it in front of the student who is distracting.

- *Target–stop–do*: The *target* is the student who is enacting distracting behaviors. The *stop* is the distracting behavior that needs to be stopped. The *do* is the responsible behavior that needs to replace the misbehavior. For example, “Juanita, please stop tapping your pencil and get busy on your math problems.”
- *Grandma’s rule*: A verbal attention-focusing option that you use when utilizing incentives. They are delivered as “When ... then ...” statements.
- *Distract the distractor*: An attention-focusing option where you divert the student by asking a question without embarrassing the student or you ask the student to perform a task for you.
- *Coupon approach*: An attention-focusing option used to reduce a particular behavior but not eliminate it altogether. When a student asks an inordinate number of questions as an attention-getting device, you do not want to stop that student from asking questions completely but you do want that student to learn how to manage the multitude of questions and to develop the skill to think before asking the question or to seek the answer on his or her own. You meet with the student to determine the number of question coupons.
- *“I” statements*: An effective way to communicate about negative behavior. It includes the following three parts: “I feel _____ (feeling word) when you _____ (specific behavior) because _____ (the effect of the behavior).” A fourth optional part adds, “I would prefer that you _____ (specific responsible behavior)” or “I would appreciate if you would _____ (specific responsible behavior).”

“B” Options for Controlling Behaviors

Students who choose controlling misbehaviors are quite adept at pushing the teacher’s buttons. They seem to know instinctively what will get a rise out of us. Being prepared both mentally and with strategies to deal with their button pushing is the first step to being successful with students who engage in controlling behaviors. The button-pusher escape strategies are designed to help you deal with the initial situation when students are pushing your buttons to provoke a power struggle. Brief choices and business-like consequences are other useful options for dealing with controlling behaviors.

Button-Pusher Escapes

- *Acknowledge the student’s power*: This can be used when you are working with students who choose controlling behaviors that indicate, “You can’t make me.” This strategy is designed to sidestep a power

struggle about whether or not you can make the student do something. You agree that you can’t make them do it, but then focus on what their choices are if they do not. “You are right, I can’t make you. But remember what your choices are.”

- *Table the matter*: This can be used with students choosing controlling behaviors that indicate the need to close things down for now. You leave the door open to discuss the problem at a later time, but you indicate that now during the lesson is not the appropriate time. “We need to discuss this later, not during our math lesson.”
- *Let’s chat*: This helps you to change the dynamics from having a heated discussion while class is going on. You acknowledge the student’s frustration and offer him or her a definite later meeting time. “You sound frustrated. We can meet at 10 o’clock or at 11 o’clock to discuss the problem.”
- *“To you to me” statements*: This is when you recognize the student’s perspective in the problem situation, but then offer your perspective. This gives you an opportunity to deal in the moment with the student’s challenging remark without taking it personally or fighting with the student. “To you this is a boring lesson. To me it’s an important part of the learning process.”
- *Other options*: These include humor, redirection, and asking responsible-thinking questions.

Brief Choices

Brief choice language is an option where brief interaction is combined with choices, and this gives students a sense of control over their lives. First you explicitly state the appropriate responsible behavior. Then you use the word “or” and follow that by what the consequence will be if the student continues to choose an inappropriate behavior. “I need you to work on these math problems *or* you’ll be working on them later during choice time.”

Business-Like Consequences

This is a corrective strategy used with controlling and angry/violent behaviors. It holds students responsible for poor behavior choices by having a consequence for their actions. The five consequences are: related, reasonable, respectful, reliably enforced, and real participation.

“C” Options for Anger/Violent Behaviors

Angry/violent behaviors are the highest level of seriousness of misbehavior. These are the behaviors that trigger the strongest reaction in teachers. These are the behaviors that sometimes provoke a reaction at the

sizzling level. Our natural impulse is to strike back, to retaliate, or to escape. Responding to angry/violent behaviors tends to kick in our flight-or-fight reaction. The challenge to *control your reaction* is at an all time high. Strategies include behavioral contracts, chill-out time, consequences, chat time, and curbing violence.

Chill-Out Time

This is a corrective strategy for dealing with the initial situation with a volatile student. Dealing with their angry feelings is their main need, so chill-out time helps the student recognize anger and calm down when it is starting to build up. You have a definite place and process pre-arranged with your students for them to calm down when they are losing control and to process their misbehaviors.

Consequences (Restitution)

Restitution is an option used when students are choosing angry/violent behaviors and is focused on repairing the damage that was done. Students should make reparations for hurtful, destructive behaviors. If a student messes something up, the student cleans up the mess. If a student breaks something, then the student fixes or replaces the broken item.

Chat Time With Students

This is one of the options for working on long-term solutions with angry/violent students. This strategy involves getting together with the student and having a conversation about the problem to actively involve the student in the discipline process. Chat time can be simply pulling a student to the side or scheduling a time to have a more in-depth chat.

Curbing Violence

These are options for dealing with angry/violent students during a volatile episode: control your reaction; use button-pusher escapes; send for help, back up, and support; use slow, deliberate, authoritative language (“Stop now!”); schedule follow-up chat time to develop a contract; and choose supportive strategies (see “Resources” below).

Resources

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- TeachNet—www.teachnet.com (see Discipline Strategies)

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