

## **Classroom Management Strategies**

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### **Introduction**

This discussion will help new teachers be successful teachers. Effective teaching requires considerable skills in managing tasks and situations occurring in the classroom each day. Classroom management involves a variety of skills and techniques teachers can use to keep students organized, active attentive, and productive in class. When classroom management strategies are executed effectively, teachers minimize behaviors that impair learning for both individual and groups of students. Effective teachers tend to display strong classroom management skills, while the hallmark of an inexperienced or a less effective teacher is a less organized classroom with students less attentive and engaged. This work discusses the best practice theories from Wong & Wong's "First Days of School", Canter's "Assertive Discipline" and Redl & Wattenberg's "Group Dynamics". The article focuses on differences between rules and procedures, what to do before the class, what to do on the first day of class, ways to build relationships with students, the art of questioning, the significance of staying calm, and the importance of positive expectations.

### **Literature Review**

It is important to understand and value the concept of classroom management and to master a wide variety of instructional and organizational strategies to ensure a valuable learning environment. Effective classroom management can be enhanced by ideas, helpful considerations, hints, and suggestions from experienced educators. Effective classroom management also requires an understanding of group dynamics and educational psychology concepts. Peer pressure can have a significant impact on a learning environment. Well-developed classroom procedures and rules, understanding students with special needs, and discipline plans are key ingredients for effective classroom management. Reviewing each of these models will help effectively address many common concerns. It is essential to understand different personality types among students and the strategies that help manage a classroom. It is important to acknowledge that many "unique" situations may not be unique and that others have already developed effective methods for addressing these situations.

Lee and Marlene Canter have made several major contributions to the concept of classroom discipline. They focused on "the concept of rights in the classroom – the rights of students to have teachers help them learn in a calm, safe environment and the rights of teachers to teach without disruption" (Charles, 1994, p. 38). For many years the Canters

have been refining their "Assertive Discipline" system. "Assertive discipline is a structured, systematic approach designed to assist educators in running an organized, teacher-in-charge classroom environment" (Charles, 1994, p.42). Research by Canter and Canter (2009) found that many teachers were not able to manage the unpleasant behavior that occurred in their classrooms, when consulting for school systems. The Cantors identified areas to consider for improvement. The main deficit was a lack of teacher training regarding behavior management. Based on their investigation into assertiveness training and applied behavior analysis, "they developed a common sense, easy-to-learn approach to help teachers positively influence classroom learning through leadership" (Canter, p.43, 2009). Today, it is a widely used "commercial" behavior management program. Assertive discipline has evolved since 1970s from a rather authoritarian approach to one that is now more participative.

The Cantors suggest students have a need for and the right to a warm, supportive classroom environment, where teachers strive to help students succeed. They believe teachers have the right to identify what is best for students, and to expect adherence. No students should interfere with teaching or student learning. Student adherence is necessary for creating and maintaining an effective and efficient learning environment. To reach this goal, teachers should react confidently, as opposed to aggressively or non-assertively.

Effective teachers react confidently and immediately to manage student's behavior. To manage the classroom a few clearly stated classroom rules that have been explained, practiced, and enforced consistently will help avoid student misbehavior. Teachers give clear directions to students who need of guidance for proper behavior. Students who disobey rules and directions receive negative consequences (Canters, 2009).

"Assertive teachers clearly, and consistently model and express class expectations and they work hard to build trust. Assertive teachers believe that a firm, teacher-in-charge classroom is in the best interest of students. They believe that the students wish to have the personal and psychological safety experienced when their teacher is highly competent in directing behavior" (Canter, 2009). The Canters suggest society demands appropriate behavior to be accepted and successful and that no one benefits when a student is allowed to misbehave. The Canters suggest that teachers show their concern by demanding and promoting appropriate classroom behavior (Canters, 2009).

There are five steps of Assertive Discipline to help recognize and remove roadblocks to assertive discipline. Teachers should avoid negative expectations about students. Often teachers fail to recognize the value of positive and assertive reinforcements in extreme discipline or motivation cases. Many new teachers perceive that they operate alone and with no support mechanism. A second step is to practice assertive response styles which minimize opportunities for confrontation. Teachers should not create hostile environments while being assertive. A third step is to set limits. It is important to request appropriate behavior, deliver the verbal limit, and use a broken-record technique. A

fourth step is to always follow through with all established consequences. It is important to set appropriate consequences beforehand, always apply them and practice verbal confrontations that call for follow through. A final step is to implement a system of positive consequences such as personal attention, positive notes to parents, special awards, and special privileges.

Many professionals entering into CTE education based on work experience often do not trust the ideas of others, especially those no longer in secondary classrooms. This can be a very dangerous approach to education. All teachers, even the most effective, can learn valuable ideas and strategies from other experienced teachers. Research into best practices often suggests that teachers benefit from help from other educators, administration, and parents.

According to Lubbers and Martin, who wrote a white paper on the R & W model of group dynamics, Redl and Wattenberg promote the concept of Group Dynamics. "If we can reduce the occurrence of behavior inimical to work involvement there will be less need for the teacher to spend time on behavior modifications, understanding individual and group behaviors and have more time and energy available to plan a less and directly help students with their studies" (Lubbers & Martin, 2015). Like Redl, Wattenberg also took a vested interest in understanding delinquents and the nature behind the individual. It was this interest that encouraged both Redl and Wattenberg to work together to develop the model for dealing with groups (Lubbers & Martin, 2015).

The main focus of this study describes the difference between group and individual behaviors. Teachers can learn to use influence techniques to deal with undesirable aspects of group behavior. There are influential techniques a teacher can utilize to maintain group control. Self-control is a useful technique that addresses situations before they become serious. Examples of this technique include direct eye contact, moving closer, humor (but not sarcasm), etc. These are examples of teachers who maintain "withitness" (Lubbers & Martin, 2015).

#### Rules vs. Procedures

Herry Wong says "the function of a rule is to prevent or encourage behavior through the use of consequences for good or poor behaviors" (Wong, 2009, p. 34). Rules normally have clearly defined consequences for undesired behaviors. For instance: "keep your hands to yourself" with a consequence of timeout or time in the school office. While a "procedure is simply method or a process for how things are to be done in the classroom" (Wong, 2009). They just result in success or lack of success if a procedure is not followed. Procedures have no negative consequences based on outcomes. Examples of a procedure are at the cleanup bell and homework collection.

#### Cleanup bell procedure:

1. Put away all materials.
2. Clean-up work area.

3. Wait quietly to be excused

Homework collection procedure:

1. Turn in homework before class starts.
2. Put homework inside blue folder.
3. Pass homework to the front of the classroom.

The major difference between a rule and procedure is rules control student behavior and procedures outline the process which will become routine. Rules require consequences but procedures never have consequences other than not successfully completing a task. Rules address undesirable behaviors but procedures just describe how to complete a task.

A procedure is a set of steps for completing a task. There are many procedures a teacher can introduce to improve classroom operations. Use of many procedures can free significant teacher instructional time by reducing discipline issues and questions about what, when, and how to do routine tasks. Classrooms not using procedures are often easy to recognize, they appear to have the least teacher control, students unengaged, or students asking repeated questions about simple tasks. It is important to understand that not successfully completing a procedure should not receive a negative “behavioral” consequence (e.g. detention, etc.). Students should know that procedures are designed to help them to successfully complete a task. They just review and repeat the procedure until they succeed.

There are nearly limitless opportunities for useful procedures. For example: “Formatting papers”, “Using the restroom”, “Submitting assignments or tests”, “Cleaning workstations”, “Dismissing class”, or “Asking questions”. Safety is a topic for which procedures are especially useful.

Procedures should be gradually introduced to students. It is most useful to introduce new procedures as they are needed over an entire year and not at one time. Don't introduce a new procedure in September that will not be used until February. This way, students may learn dozens, even hundreds of procedures over a full school year without being overwhelmed. Procedures should be for single small tasks and not combinations of tasks. It is important to keep the procedure steps simple and easy. With long and complex procedures, the training time may increase exponentially, if they can be mastered at all.

Each procedure normally requires practice, eventually becoming routines. When a procedure becomes a routine, students will follow it automatically and without direction. Turning a procedure into a routine is an ultimate goal because it can free up class time for a teacher and make the teaching process more efficient. Students may question the need for a procedure when it is introduced, because it is new, but will often stop challenging as they become routine.

### **Before the class**

Prepare an outline for the first day of the school. As a new teacher, one will probably be as nervous as students, Wong & Wong recommend using a written script for the first day of class (Wong, 2009). However, it might be a better option to use a written outline instead of a script. If a full script is used teachers tend to read word for word from the script, which can be distracting, reducing student interest or attentiveness. An outline only requires a glance to determine the next content to present. A teacher should rehearse a presentation but not memorize word for word. A teacher should sound natural and not too rehearsed, vary the tone of the voice, and avoid overusing any particular words or phrases.

A lengthy presentation often is a daunting task even for experienced teachers or students. There are different mnemonic techniques that can ease remembering a presentation in a more effective way. For instance, use of acronyms and acrostics can be helpful when remembering words in a specific order. Acronyms are formed by using each first letter in a sequence of words to form a new word. Acrostics are similar to acronyms, but instead of forming a new word, letters are used to form a sentence. Here is an example: "My Dear Aunt Sally". This acrostic is used to remember the mathematical order of operations: Multiply and Divide before you Add and Subtract (Mallan & McLain and Remhof, 2008).

Another technique to remember a lengthy presentation is called Method of Loci. Loci is a plural for location (Hodges, 1982). To use this method, think of a path taken regularly like from a parking lot to a classroom. The key is the path has to be familiar enough to easily remember objects along the path. Imagine walking down the path identifying landmarks along the way. Associate these landmarks to points from a class outline, then mentally walk the path relating landmarks to the assigned points.

It is important to plan and outline the daily material taught. It is also critical to fully understand material before introducing it. The first day of class will determine the students' attitude for the rest of the term. If one is not well-prepared and won't engage students in a meaningful manner on the first day of class, it will be very difficult to recover their attention in the subsequent classes (Wong, 2009). Students quickly draw early assumptions that may last for an entire course. As professor Wong suggests: "If you do not structure your classroom, the students will structure the classroom for you" (Wong, 2009, p. 111). Establish an appropriate tone in the classroom early. Having a written outline and engaging content along with being well prepared will help organize one's thoughts, reduce anxiety, and help set the cornerstone for structuring the class. It is good practice to help students recognize how a course or topic is important and applicable to them at the start, otherwise many will not see the need to participate or pay attention. This is especially effective if they can be shown instead of just told of the importance. Use engaging methods that do not have them passively listening, such as asking many questions or having students demonstrate while teacher directs (Wong, 2009).

It is important to try to memorize student's names. One technique to help facilitate memorizing student's names is the use of assigned seats. On the first day, create a seating chart and have students use the same seats every day. After the chart is drafted with student names, spend some time memorizing the chart. Within a few classes, it will be easier to refer to students by name. Sometimes, though, it may be advisable to separate specific individuals wanting to sit together (close friends are especially effective at distracting each other). A seating chart also helps minimize time wasted taking attendance, which is often a disruptive period. With a chart, at a glance, a teacher can identify who is missing.

### **First day of class**

Wong describes things a new teacher should pay attention to during first days of class and going forward. One item Wong emphasizes is that on the first day of class a teacher must establish procedures that will lead to effective classroom management. Wong provides the following definition: "Classroom management consists of practices and procedures that a teacher uses to maintain an optimum environment in which instruction and learning can occur" (Wong, 2009, p. 167). "Classroom management refers to the wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class" (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). Note this definition doesn't suggest effective classroom management requires disciplinary reactions. The classroom should be managed, not disciplined. Disciplining students is a short-term solution. Establishing procedures, on the other hand, yields longer-term positive results.

Wong describes that a teacher must establish control over the classroom, yet control doesn't necessitate punishing or intimidating students. Establishing control means that teacher is intimately aware of his or her professional responsibilities, knows the material, and establishes sound procedures (Wong, 2009). Establishing good procedures leads to consistency. Consistency is what reinforces well-managed classroom. Predictability of events in a classroom leads to low levels of disruptive behavior (Kern & Clemens, 2007; Parsonson, 2012). How does one teach students consistency? Research shows that it takes 8 repetitions for students to learn a new behavior, and 28 repetitions to unlearn an old behavior and replace it with a new one (Hunter, 2004).

Whether it is the first day of class or the hundredth, there is one common denominator to having a successful day: preparation. Teachers should have their classrooms ready, every day. Clutter in a classroom or lack of preparation sends negative signal to students who in turn may respond with disruptive behavior.

### **Building Relationships with Students**

A successful classroom environment cannot be achieved by purely setting rules and creating procedures. An integral part of effective classroom management is to build relationships with students. As Wolk suggests, teachers must "win their students' hearts while getting inside their students' heads" (Wolk, 2003, p.14). Research suggests that

developing relationships with students leads to fewer disruptive behaviors and an increase in academic performance (Decker, Dona & Christenson, 2007; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Research also shows that decline in student motivation is primarily linked to poor relationships between teacher and students (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Therefore, it is imperative for a vocational teacher to spend time learning techniques to build successful relationships with students. Contrary to common notion, all students must not be treated the same way. Research shows that using different strategies with different types of students leads to more effective classroom management (Brophy, 1996; Brophy & McCaslin, 1992). A successful teacher often incorporates in their schedule time to meet students one-on-one. The successful relationship building process happens through personal interactions as suggested by Haberman (1995). Kern and Clemens (2007) suggests frequent use of praise, whether verbal or non-verbal, leads to better classroom experiences. Recognizing desired behaviors with positive feedback augments such behaviors. Kern and Clemens (2007) suggest using the ratio of 4 to 1 regarding delivering praise and rebuke. Another strong technique to build effective relationship is the use of empathy. Everyone likes to be heard and appreciated and this is no different for students. The goal of this strategy is make the student feel understood (Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green & Hanna, 2010). It is important to communicate this understanding in such a way that builds empathy, and doesn’t steer the student further away from the teacher. Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green & Hanna, provide a great example of dealing with a difficult female student in middle school from which a valuable lesson can be derived. This student shared with the teacher that she had issues at home and it was difficult for her to prepare for class. To that the teacher responded: “Well, you have to get past it, and study anyway”. This response distances the student from the teacher as there is little empathy embedded in the response. Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green & Hanna recommend a more empathetic response as follows: “It must be difficult for you to study and deal with the issues at home at the same time”. Such a response wouldn’t alienate the student, and would set a great foundation for further discussion to find ways help the student improve personal performance. Research consistently shows that building relationships will lead to better classroom experiences. When building relationships even small and negligible items matter. For instance, a research conducted by Allday and Pakurar (2007), show that by simply greeting each student by name at the classroom door, teachers were able to significantly reduce disruptive behavior in class.

Sometimes building empathy with difficult students may lead to situations for which a teacher has to acknowledge a negative attitude. It might sound wrong at first, however, it’s based on theory called positive psychology (Seligman, 1999). The idea behind this approach is to acknowledge student’s skill he or she might have been developing since early childhood and then redirect it in a positive direction.

### **The Art of Asking Questions**

The importance of asking questions cannot be underestimated, especially in a teaching environment. The Socratic Method of inquiry and discussion has been around for a very long time and is proven to be an effective instructional strategy. The reason we ask

questions is to get students involved, help students understand the material, and evaluate whether or not the students comprehended the material. The teacher's goal is to promote lively discussions, having students ponder a particular question from several angles, and teach students how to critically evaluate ideas and conflicting theories. To achieve this goal, teachers should plan their questions beforehand. A successful teacher asks thought-provoking questions that probe the content and stir the interest of the students. Therefore, preparing questions for a particular class should become a part of your normal routine.

To encourage student's interest, consider opening the class with a question that may not be answered until the end of the class. This will encourage students to be engaged throughout the class while trying to discover an answer to a pressing question. Also, ask questions that don't have an answer. These are the questions that are currently being debated within the field or area of study. A question that cannot be answered is generally more interesting than the one that has an easy answer. The goal is to intrigue students and have them brainstorm of possible answers.

Avoid asking "Yes or No" questions as these questions do not provide a foundation for a lively discussion. Instead ask open-ended questions. When asking open-ended questions teachers should not expect receiving an exact answer they had initially in mind. Teachers should be flexible with responses and should guide the conversation instead. Otherwise teachers might strengthen the idea that there is only one correct answer, and a student might be discouraged to participate in further discussions.

It is usually more effective to call out a specific student for each question by name. This way a teacher is able to control the level of participation among students and ensure that every student is given a chance to participate in a discussion. When calling out students by name, rotate randomly through the class in a non-predictable manner. This will encourage students to remain more attentive since they can't anticipate when they will be called next.

### **The Art of Emotional Intelligence**

One must not forget that a teacher is also a human and is subject to human inclinations caused by his or her environment and emotional state. Majority of scholars agree that emotional intelligence is equally, if not more, important than other skills to be a successful teacher (Garner, P. & Moses L., 2013; McAllister, Wilson, Green, & Baldwin, 2005). The reason it is important is because individuals who are new to the teaching profession are at high risk to burnout, empathy fatigue and other behavior that might lead to an inadequate emotional response to difficult or stressful situations in a classroom (Chang, 2003; Garner, P. & Moses L. 2013; Garner, 2013).

But what is emotional intelligence? Maguire defines emotional intelligence as follows: "[Emotional intelligence] is a collective group of qualities about a person with certain "character" or "personality". It signifies several qualities including a person's ability to self-regulate one's emotions and feelings, to delay gratification and to motivate oneself. [It] also involves a metacognitive quality where the individual is able to internally

discriminate among other emotions, monitor one's feelings with respect to others and use this self-regulation quality to guide one's thinking and actions" (Garner, P. & Moses L. 2013, p. 423). In another words, an individual is considered to be emotionally intelligent if he or she is capable to control his or her emotions.

There are various ways to find and maintain one's inner balance, from Yoga exercises to various diets. In this article we recommend to build the emotional intelligence with a simple step – when a teacher enters a classroom he or she must leave his or her ego behind the door. Students are quite perceptive as to what irritates a teacher and may take advantage of it. Once a teacher gives in to the turmoil of emotions, teacher's efficiency in a classroom is impaired, or worse, the chaos is imminent (Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green & Hanna, 2010). In addition, there is no room for empathy or relationship building if a teacher is angry, or shows frustration towards a student or the whole classroom. Every individual has weak points which if triggered cause a strong emotional response. A teacher must be able to analyze and identify one's vulnerabilities and be aware of those. When students push those buttons, a teacher must be able to respond strategically using relationship building techniques described in the Building Relationship with Students portion of their recommendations, such as building empathy and admiring negative attitude.

### **Setting Positive Expectations**

According to Wong, expectation is "knowing what you can or cannot achieve" (Wong, 2009, p. 37). Therefore, setting expectations should start with the teacher. Teacher must buy in to the idea that he or she is going to be a great teacher. In addition, teacher must expect that his students will succeed. The research proves the power of positive expectations. For instance, Wong in his book cite the research conducted by Harvard University where teachers in certain classes were fed erroneous data that 20% of their students were special. After the trial period, students who were erroneously identified as special (in reality, these students were picked at random) were tested and showed a significant gain in academic performance compared to their peers.

With that an effective teacher should create a classroom environment in which high and positive expectations are set both for students and for the teacher himself. A teacher must believe that he or she is capable to make a difference in lives of his or her students. One of the best things a teacher can do is to persuade a student that he or she is capable of success.

The goal behind setting high expectations is to motivate students to learn and grow. While there are numerous factors that may impact student's motivation level which are outside of a classroom and are not under the teacher's control, there are some that a teacher can control and should use to his or her advantage in a classroom. For instance, according to Madeline Hunter, to manage students' motivation teachers should make students feel personally important or significant in a classroom, or celebrate students'

efforts. Even small things like moving around the classroom and getting closer to a student who is not quite focused on an assignment yields positive results.

#### Recommendations

1. Be effective and assertive teacher
2. Apply the organizational strategies
3. Distribute the concept of rights in the classroom
4. Have assertive discipline system
5. Remember 5 steps of Assertive Discipline
6. Learn from experienced teachers
7. Understand the difference between rules and procedures
8. Establish useful procedures
9. Be prepared before the class
10. Plan and outline the daily material taught to students.
11. Execute “Teach-Rehearse-Reinforce” model
12. Build relationships with students
13. Use frequent praise
14. Build empathy
15. Prepare questions
16. Avoid yes/no questions
17. Maintain inner balance
18. Control emotions
19. Set positive expectations
20. Motivate students to learn and grow

#### Conclusion

This article is intended to help CTE teachers become better ‘managers’ of classrooms. The article summarizes various techniques aimed to create a positive and effective environment. The five steps of Assertive Discipline, Group Dynamics Theory, and the importance of rules and procedures have been discussed. Other topics explored included: What to do before the class, remembering lengthy presentations, the effect of first impression, the importance of learning students’ names, and building student relationships. Techniques discussed are easy to learn and master. Applying these techniques on daily basis will positively influence classroom learning

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