

Classroom Management

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Today, more is understood about teaching than ever before. Research has shown that teachers' actions in the classroom have twice the impact on student achievement than school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement (Marzano, 2003). Additionally, one of the teacher's most crucial functions is managing the classroom effectively. Consequently, this paper will examine three important aspects of classroom management. First, teachers should create and establish clear expectations and consequences for the students. As a result, the student will know what is expected of them as well as the repercussions of not meeting the stated expectations. Second, teachers should take a personal interest in their students. This provides students with a feeling of belonging and gives them more confidence to succeed. Lastly, the teacher must create a well-planned lesson prior to each class.

Establish Clear Expectations and Consequences

One of the unfortunate realities of teaching is that some students do not want to be in the class, are not excited to learn, and are not interested in learning English. They are only there because it is mandatory. Unfortunately, these students may distract other more eager students. To counter this problem, a teacher should establish expectations in two ways: by creating clear standards and procedures and by mandating consequences for student behavior. If students do not comply with established standards and procedures, consequences should be swift, fair, and consistent.

Research in the 1980s alluded to the importance of establishing standards and procedures for general classroom behavior, group work, interruptions, and the use of materials and equipment (Emmer, 1984; Emmer, Sanford, Evertson, Clements & Martin, 1981; Evertson & Emmer, 1982). Ideally, the teacher and students should collaborate to create these standards and procedures through discussion and mutual agreement; the agreed-upon standards should be implemented at the beginning of the school year or semester (Glasser, 1969, 1990).

Regardless of the standards that are implemented, it is important that the wording is simple and unambiguous to reduce misunderstanding. Also, there should be a clear distinction between academic policies and procedures and behavioral standards. Academic policies and procedures would include consequences for areas of study such as learning, homework, and classroom activities. Some examples of situations that could have stated repercussions include the consequence for using cell phones in the classroom, not completing a homework assignment, or the lack of input a student puts into a group activity. Behavioral standards could address issues such as tardiness and standards for respectful interactions with other students. Regarding tardiness, teachers should dictate how many minutes a student can be late without being considered absent, and they should establish consequences for being tardy on multiple occasions during the semester. For example, a teacher could establish that being late for class twice equates to being absent once, and being absent more than a specified amount of times in the semester will result in an automatic failure of the course. An example of a behavioral issue could be a student discussing non-lesson topics with another student or speaking in a loud enough voice that other students in the classroom are disturbed. When both the teacher and students have a clear understanding of the expectations, it is less likely that disturbances will occur during class. The teacher will then be able to devote their full attention to the students' learning.

Take a Personal Interest in Students

The simplest way to elicit student buy-in during the learning process is to take a personal interest in each student. As McCombs and Whisler (1997) noted, all students desire personal attention from their teachers. In 2002, neuroscience research conducted by J. Zull demonstrated a strong correlation between emotion and cognition. Consequently, students have an increased learning capacity when they receive positive encouragement, motivation, and care from their teachers. This theory is reinforced by research conducted by Richard Light in 2001. Light (2001) notes, “Students repeatedly mention the importance of one-to-one interaction with instructors in supervised projects and the closer interactions with other students and instructors in small classes as important factors in their learning.”

Teachers can have a positive impact on their students’ learning by taking a personal interest in them. There are several ways in which a teacher can demonstrate interest in his or her students. For example, at the beginning of the semester, teachers can take individual photos of the students while holding a name card. By keeping these photos on hand in the classroom, the teacher will be able to communicate with students using their names. Additionally, teachers should try and interact with as many students during the class as possible. If the number of students in one class is too large to speak to each student every class period, teachers should keep a record of who they have spoken to and make sure to interact with each student every couple of class periods. As a final example, teachers should try to arrive to the classroom early and stay after the class ends so that students have the opportunity to interact with them. Students should also be encouraged to visit teachers in their offices or public spaces. By engaging students in these ways, it will help to break down any psychological barriers that the student may have which may prevent him or her from developing a personal relationship with the teacher. It will also help the student become more comfortable in the classroom, resulting in a more effective learning

environment.

Have a Well-Planned Lesson

Students notice when a teacher is anxious or nervous. The best way to keep calm in front of students is to be prepared. Teachers should start planning their lessons as early as possible and practice those lessons prior to entering the classroom. When beginning a lesson, the students should be told what the agenda will be for the lesson; it should sound like an itinerary. For example, a teacher could say, “For the first 15 minutes, students will work with their assigned groups on their project. After that, the students will spend the remaining 35 minutes completing the assigned math problems.” By providing students with an agenda, they will not be surprised by unexpected activities during class. Lesson plan preparation involves estimating how long each task will take and what the role of the student will be during the task, such as working in a group or preparing for a presentation.

By creating a lesson plan and following it, teachers will be able to better manage the class time. Teachers should plan an extra activity in each lesson plan as well in the event that students work through planned activities faster than anticipated or unforeseen issues arise. This also gives the teacher the flexibility to make changes when a lesson or activity isn’t working as well as the teacher had hoped. If the teacher feels confident and has prepared appropriate lesson plans, they will be able to easily navigate any issues during the class period and avoid confusing students.

Conclusion

Research has shown that the teacher has more of an impact on the success of a student than school policies, assessment, and community involvement. It is paramount that an educator has strong classroom management skills. A teacher should concentrate on three areas to improve their classroom

management skills. By establishing clear expectations and consequences in the classroom, the teacher can hold students accountable to mutually agreed upon guidelines. The teacher must also take a personal interest in students; studies have shown that there is a strong connection between the success a student achieves and the amount of encouragement they receive from the teacher. Finally, having a well-conceived lesson plan prior to each lesson will help the teacher run the class efficiently while also giving the educator the freedom to make changes if they desire. Teaching is a challenging profession; developing strong classroom management skills will make the job easier and help increase student success.

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