

Classroom Management and Discipline

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When I first learned I would be doing a paper on Classroom Management, I was not very excited. I did not consider it a topic on the same level of importance as Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics or learning the various approaches of teaching a foreign language in the classroom. I teach French at the high school level and have fairly small classes. I've never had any significant classroom management or discipline issues and have relied on my ability to forge good relationships with my students. However, after reading various materials for this paper I now see that my approach has been somewhat cavalier.

In *Enhancing effective classroom management in schools: structures for changing teacher behavior*, Mitchell, Hirn & Lewis (2017) underscore the importance of how effective classroom management is critical to ensuring both academic and social success of students. Educators across the US are more accountable than ever before for student academic achievement and performance indicators are often at the forefront of public awareness. However, Mitchell et al. (2017) point out that there is a symbiotic relationship between social behavioral success and academic success. That is, students who consistently demonstrate appropriate social skills in school are better positioned to benefit from academic success. However, students with persistent challenging behavior are at greater risk of exclusion and discipline that negatively impact learning and lead to a pattern of failure, both academically and socially (Mitchell et al., 2017).

So it's clear now that classroom management is essential to both academic and social success. But what is it exactly? How do we define it? In *What is classroom management and how to create a plan for it*," Porta Newman (2019) states that classroom management is the combination of tools and practices that are used to provide structure and a positive learning space in the classroom. I really like this definition. It's simple and focused. She goes on to describe some of the key elements of classroom management, starting with accountability. That is, clearly outline

rules that hold students accountable for their behavior. The classroom environment is also a key element in the management plan. Newman (2019) believes that it is important to create a physical space that is welcoming and reinforces parts of the intended culture. However, whereas Newman (2019) sees the instructor responsible for development the classroom rules, I believe that in high school it should be a collaborative process between the teacher and the students. That is, the teacher comes up with a few essential and non-negotiable rules but then the students collaborate with the teacher to develop the rest. In *What classroom management strategies work well for high school*, Matthews (2019) supports this approach and makes the case that in high school part of the classroom management plan needs to take into account the individual student and their growth and preparation to become a member of society. Allowing students the freedom to help development the classroom management plan and explore the boundaries within that plan is essential to the branching out and growing as individuals.

Matthews also believes that it is important to be very clear about expectations. Regardless of the rules that are put in place, there needs to be clarity around what the teacher expects. The last thing you want is for a student to be punished for something that they didn't know was permitted. To help students become familiar with the expectations, Matthews (2019) suggests using an approach of Modeling, Practice and Repetition. Matthews (2019) also underscores the importance of being reasonable in setting out classroom rules. Rules exist to boost student engagement and lead to better academic performance, her argues. Rules do not exist to merely limit what students can do. When setting rules, especially for the high school ages, teachers need to be able to explain the reasoning behind them so that students don't question their validity. For example, if one of the rules is that cell phones are not allowed out during instruction, then explain why. Furthermore, it may become clear over time that some of the rules are not effective

nor working as planned. In this case, it pays to be flexible and modify them. Matthews (2019) argues that the most important principle in setting classroom management rules is consistency. I wholeheartedly agree with this. You cannot set one set of expectations to a certain student and another set to the rest of the class. This is not fair and students will quickly see this. When students know that there is one set of rules and that they are equally applied to all students, then this helps everyone stay focused on school and engaged in their work rather than trying to figure out how they can manipulate the rules.

Classroom Management Plan

(Based on sample plan from Kelly (2019))

French class will meet 3 times per week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. Our classroom rules for the semester that we developed together consist of the following:

- 1) **Arrive on time:** To keep everything running smoothly and to be respectful to everyone's time.
- 2) **Turn off cell phones:** When class is in session, cell phones need to be turned off and placed in your bag. Any cell phone not turned off will be confiscated.
- 3) **No food or drink:** Eating or drinking in class is not permitted except for students that have specific medical needs. If this is the case then a note from the doctor will be needed.
- 4) **Bring required materials every day:** Come to class prepared with all the times you were assigned for the class at the beginning of the year.
- 5) **Be polite and respectful and maintain good body language:** Always behave in a way that is respectful to your teacher and fellow students.
- 6) **Do all of your own homework and do not cheat on tests:** Any student caught cheating or sharing answers from tests will get a zero. Some of the homework will be group work, but unless instructed, assume all homework is for you to do alone.
- 7) **You are responsible for making up missed work:** if you are home sick or miss a class or an assignment, it is your responsibility to make up the work.
- 8) **Turn in all work on time:** Unless you have a valid reason that has been cleared by the teacher beforehand, always turn in your work on time.

References

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