
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

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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 *supportive strategies* in comprehensive classroom management.

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.

Resources

Brophy, J. (1998). *Motivating students to learn*. New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 0070081980.

- Kyle, P., & Rogien, L. (2004). *Opportunities and options in classroom management*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 0205324134.
- Lew, A., & Bettner, B. (1998). *Responsibility in the classroom: A teacher's guide to understanding and motivating students* (Rev. Ed.). Boston: Connexions. ISBN: 0962484105.

Websites

- Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Research Project—
www.coe.ufl.edu/CRPM/CRPMhome.html
- Safe and Responsive Schools Project—
www.indiana.edu/~safeschl
- TeachNet—www.teachnet.com (see *Discipline Strategies*)

Material in this handout is adapted from Kyle, P., & Rogien, L. (2004). Opportunities and options in classroom management. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, and included with permission of the publisher.

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and the NASP Center for Children & Families website www.naspcenter.org. Or use the direct links below to access information that can help you improve outcomes for the children and youth in your care.

About School Psychology—Downloadable brochures, FAQs, and facts about training, practice, and career choices for the profession.
www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/spsych.html

Crisis Resources—Handouts, fact sheets, and links regarding crisis prevention/intervention, coping with trauma, suicide prevention, and school safety.
www.nasponline.org/crisisresources

Culturally Competent Practice—Materials and resources promoting culturally competent assessment and intervention, minority recruitment, and issues related to cultural diversity and tolerance.
www.nasponline.org/culturalcompetence

En Español—Parent handouts and materials translated into Spanish. www.naspcenter.org/espanol/

IDEA Information—Information, resources, and advocacy tools regarding IDEA policy and practical implementation.
www.nasponline.org/advocacy/IDEAinformation.html

Information for Educators—Handouts, articles, and other resources on a variety of topics.
www.naspcenter.org/teachers/teachers.html

Information for Parents—Handouts and other resources a variety of topics.
www.naspcenter.org/parents/parents.html

Links to State Associations—Easy access to state association websites.
www.nasponline.org/information/links_state_orgs.html

NASP Books & Publications Store—Review tables of contents and chapters of NASP bestsellers.
www.nasponline.org/bestsellers
Order online. www.nasponline.org/store

Position Papers—Official NASP policy positions on key issues.
www.nasponline.org/information/position_paper.html

Success in School/Skills for Life—Parent handouts that can be posted on your school's website.
www.naspcenter.org/resourcekit