

A Cohesive Look at Classroom Management

This course provided me an overall understanding of what classroom management is and what it means to be an effective teacher. I learned the importance of consistently examining classroom management procedures and documenting what is working and what is not working. Albert Einstein said it best: "Insanity is doing the same thing again and expecting a different result". As educators we must take each year as a new year for classroom management – some of our great ideas that worked this past year might not work with this year's group of students. This course provided me with several worksheets and reproducibles to consistently document and analyze the students in my classroom and the approaches that will work best for them! Specifically, this course focused on seven big ideas: motivating our students, understanding that behavior *can* be changed, the importance of our relationship with our students, the importance of our students' relationships with one another, developing classroom management plans before the school year begins, developing behavior standards and consistently monitoring our students' behavior.

Motivating our students means finding their interests and explaining to them how the material is relevant to their lives. If we spend our time just lecturing our students, they will not be able to make meaningful learning experiences and will most likely shut down in the classroom – both academically and behaviorally. As we have seen in our case studies through out this course, if a student feels that what they are learning will not help them outside the classroom, they will not see the point in paying attention and participating during class. This also can be reflected in behavior management. If a behavior management system is not one that motivates students to behave, there will be many students who misbehave. This big idea caused me to reflect on my own

behavior management system – and make some changes! This year I had a few behavior issues and had to do my own “tweaking” of my classroom management and after completing the readings on motivating our students through behavior management, I realized exactly why it wasn’t working. Jones and Jones states: “(...) turning over colored cards (...) often makes the situation only worse. Recent research suggests that, at least in their responses to disruptive student behavior, teachers may not have progressed significantly beyond this approach” (8). I realized that just giving warnings and pulling cards was not classroom management, and a positive approach to behavior needed to be implemented to support and motivate student to make *good* behavior choices.

Secondly, as teachers, we need to remember, that “behavior can be taught and changed” (Sprick, 17). As educators, this can be a very difficult concept to remember and acknowledge when there is a student who is consistently disrupting the classroom. Even when we feel like we have done “*everything*” for the student – we need to remember that all behavior can be changed if the student is given the opportunity. Therefore, our first weeks of school should be used to show students what positive behavior looks like and ways to exemplify those behavior choices. This big idea led me to examine not only my concept of behavior but also the approach my fellow colleagues and school takes to support behavior change. Jones and Jones states: “School personnel spend more time and resources on corrective, reactive responses to student behavior problems than on positive, preventive methods” (17). Unfortunately, I see this same approach to corrective behavior in my building – so I immediately thought what can I do? Too often, our staff meetings and grade level meetings are spent talking about how to fix behavior problems, rather than spent talking about the classroom management techniques that support positive behaviors. I have already made the suggestion to my principal to start each staff meeting with positives – what is working in our classrooms and speaking to student behavior in a positive light!

As educators, the most important relationship we can develop and maintain is our relationship with our students. The relationship a teacher has with his or her students can directly affect the student's connectedness, competence, and contribution in a classroom. Our students spend most of their days with us in our classrooms – we are and can be a very influential adult figure in their lives. Creating opportunities to enrich the relationship with our students is something that should consistently happen through out the course of the school year. There are many activities we can do as teachers to give our students the time to get to know us and for us to get to know our students. Along with activities, another way to build our relationships would be giving students feedback and receiving feedback from our students. The Jones and Jones text includes two wonderful charts for my students to give me feedback (Figure 3.4, 91) and for myself to monitor my feedback to my students (Figure 3.6, 95). Both of these charts allow opportunities for me to assess what is happening in the classroom. The best way to know if things are working is to ask the children themselves and Figure 3.4 gives them that guided opportunity. I also think it's very important to not only monitor which students I am calling on and which students are volunteering, but to also monitor my responses to the students. Figure 3.6 provides a chart that looks more in depth at the students' response and my feedback for them. Giving the students the opportunity to provide me with feedback shows them that their thoughts and feelings matter to me and are very important in the success of the classroom community. Implementing feedback for the students also shows them that we see the hard work they are doing in the classroom and that we care enough to give them corrective feedback when they are doing something wrong – because we want them to succeed!

In the same light, the relationship a student has with his or her peers can be equally as important as the relationship with his or her teacher because the more positive relationships a student has within the classroom the more likely they will feel as if they play an active role in the classroom through participation

and confidence in their own abilities. Just as our relationship with our students takes effort to maintain and develop, our students should be given the same opportunities to build relationships with their peers. One way to build a relationship between students would be implementing base groups. "At the very least, the base group provides a setting in which at least three members of the class are concerned about and support each student's learning. This helps create a sense of each student being known and valued in the class – a key to prerequisite to learning for many students" (Jones and Jones, 118). This is just the type of group experience my students need.

Another big idea from this course to walk away with would be developing classroom management plans before the school year begins. With this comes a proactive approach to classroom management, where from day one the teacher and the students know how the classroom will "flow" throughout the day: what to do when transitioning to a different lesson, what expectations are set for independent reading and so forth. Our Champs texts provided us with several reproducibles that can be completed to help develop a complete management plan. One worksheet that I will be using to help create a proactive approach to classroom management would be the Classroom Management and Discipline Plan worksheet (Sprick, 195). The worksheet for Classroom Management and Discipline Plan is something I can work on over the summer to get me organized for the upcoming year. It asks questions about my behavior plan that I had not thought about before. In this worksheet I am examining my own expectations for my students and providing the students with a guide on how to be successful in their second grade classroom. It also helps me plan ahead for what to do when students misbehave or how to transition from one activity to the next or even how to manage student work. Looking and planning ahead shows my students that I am not only prepared but that I care about their success in the classroom. Completing the Classroom Management and Discipline Plan ahead of time also helps me feel more prepared and relaxed when the first day comes

around. "If you are fully prepared for the first day of school, you will be relaxed and ready to handle whatever takes place" (Sprick, 194).

When it comes to preparing a classroom management plan before the school year begins, it is also important to think about developing behavior standards that you will implement in the classroom. As educators, we need to decide on the goals and expectations of our students in the beginning and provide them with many examples and explanations of what they need to do to succeed. To start thinking about behavior standards, it would be beneficial to complete the Classroom Activity worksheet (Sprick, 157). This worksheet focuses on using the Champs acronym to develop standards and expectations for classroom activities. This is definitely something that will be beneficial for my students. Providing my students with specific descriptions and examples of what is expected of them during silent reading or during a math lesson creates the opportunity for less disruptions. After completing the Champs worksheets for each of the activities in the classroom, I can then explain them to the students and we can model what is expected of them as far as: **c**onversation, **h**elp, **a**ctivity, **m**ovement, **p**articipation, and **s**uccess! Discussing this worksheet with the students before they begin each of the activities helps give them standards to follow and exactly what types of behaviors are expected during the activity. The Champs text also included icons that I found would be most beneficial for my students. In implementing this in my classroom, we would have the Champs acronym on the board and then the specific icons for the expected behaviors for that activity as a visual reminder of what is expected of them.

Finally, to implement effective classroom management it is **critical** to consistently monitor students' behavior. As educators, we need to be able to define the behaviors we want to improve on and as one of my group members suggested, we also need to focus on positive behaviors to reinforce. One specific application I would like to use in my classroom practice is the Countoon from our Jones and Jones text. This is a strategy for helping students monitor their own behavior, which is definitely a great practice to help students recognize

appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. "Especially when working with young children, it is helpful to start by incorporating a visual display of the behavior being counted" (Jones and Jones, 381). I really liked this idea of having a visual reminder for each of the students. "A counttoon includes a picture of the behavior being tallied and a place for the student to mark a tally each time the behavior occurs" (Jones and Jones, 381). This will be beneficial in younger grades, especially with my group of students, for having each of them monitor their behavior when it comes to raising their hand or just shouting out answers or questions. This tends to be an issue with several students, where they are so excited to share in class that they forget to raise their hand, having this visual reminder on their desk will help them keep track of when they raise their hand and when they talk out.

Each of these seven big ideas can easily be implemented in any classroom. Many educators believe classroom management is just about "managing behavior"; these big ideas prove them wrong. It is more than just rules and procedures; it is about forming a relationship with our students and showing them that we believe they can succeed! As educators we must look at classroom management as a journey – that doesn't begin and end every year but that is continuous throughout our careers. The Institute on Disability of the University of New Hampshire said: "It is important to recognize that behind every success story, there lies a journey in which commitment, hard work, and humor paved the way".