

## DEVELOPING A CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Picture your ideal classroom. It probably includes a group of students who are excited and active in their learning, considerate of each other and of the materials in the classroom, attentive to the teacher. How is such a classroom community created? What does a teacher have to do to facilitate it? As with all complex problems, there is no single, simple solution, but there are a variety of things that teachers can do to help create and sustain such a place. What follows are some initial suggestions and resources to help you with this process.

### CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE

**Adapted from:** *Creating the dynamic classroom: A handbook for teachers.* Schwartz, S. & Pollishuk, M. Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada Inc.

- Continuously survey classroom
- Move around
- Keep students in line of sight – do not stand with back to your class
- Avoid negative comments
- Stop and wait for attention of students
- Use good classroom management strategies
  - proximity, look, pause, gesture, student's name
- Think why students misbehave
- Ignore minor behaviours
- Be consistent
- Establish clear routines (use school's code of behaviour)
- Meet needs of all students
- Don't have students sit and wait too long
- Plan transition from one experience to next
- Use all types of grouping and have clear instructions for process
  - Evaluate group activities
- Model and role-play for appropriate social skills
- Promote appropriate behaviour in positive ways
- Teach students strategies to control behaviour
- Involve parents
- Consult educational and resource personnel
- Monitor students inside and outside classroom

## **TEACHER CHECKLIST**

### **Is your classroom a happy learning experience?**

1. Do I let the students know that I am aware of and interested in them as a unique individuals?
2. Do I convey my expectations and confidence that the student can accomplish work, can learn and is competent?
3. Do I provide well-defined standards of values, demands for competence, and guidance toward solutions to problems?
4. In working with parents, do I enhance the academic expectations and evaluations which they hold of their children's ability?
5. By my behaviour, do I serve as a model of authenticity for the student?
6. Do I take every opportunity to establish a high degree of private or semi-private communication with my students?
7. Do I distinguish between students' classroom mistakes and their personal failure?
8. Do I avoid unfair and ruthless competition in the classroom?
9. Do I learn the name of each student as soon as possible, and do I use that name often?
10. Do I share my feelings with my students?
11. Do I practice courtesy with my students?
12. Do I arrange some time when I can talk quietly alone with each student?
13. Do I spread my attention around and include each student, keeping special watch for the student who may need extra attention?
14. Do I notice and comment favourably on the things that are important to students?
15. Do I show students who return from being absent that I am happy to have them back in class and that they were missed?
16. Do I remember to see small disciplinary problems as understandable, and not as personal insults?
17. Do I avoid having "favourites" and "victims"?
18. Do I have, and do my students have, a clear idea of what is and what is not acceptable in my class?
19. Within my limits, is there room for students to be active and natural?
20. Do I usually make it through the day without punishing students?
21. Do I permit my students some opportunity to make mistakes without penalty?
22. Do I make generally positive comments on written work?
23. Do I give extra support and encouragement to slower students?
24. Do I take special opportunities to praise students for their successes?
25. Am I projecting an image that tells the students that I am here to build rather than to destroy them as individuals?

## **Books on Classroom Management**

- Borba, M., (2003). *No more misbehavin': 38 difficult behaviors and how to stop them.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Coloroso, B. (2001). *Kids are worth it.* CAN: Penguin
- Levin, J., Nolan, J., & Kerr, J., & Elliott, A. (2005) *Principles of classroom management.* Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada Inc.
- Mendlec, A. (2001). *Connecting with students.* Association for Curriculum Development.
- Nelsen, J., Lott, L., & Glenn, S. (2000). *Positive discipline in the classroom.* NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Phelan, T., & Schonour, S.J. (2004). *1-2-3 Magic for teachers: effective classroom discipline - pre-k through grade 8.* ILL: Parent Magic Inc.
- Rominger, L., Packard Laughrea, S., & Elkin, N. (2001). *Your first year as a high school teacher.* New York: Three River Press
- Schwartz, S., & Pollishuke, M. *Creating the dynamic classroom.* Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada Inc.
- Thompson, J. G. (2002). *First-year teacher's survival kit.* Mississauga, ON: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Wheeler, J., & Rickey, D. (2000) *Behavior management.* Upper Sadddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Wright, D. (2000). *Managing behaviour in the classroom.* Heinemann.

## **Classroom Management Through Early Intervention**

Because teachers everywhere are eager to find painless ways to maintain classrooms free of misbehaviour and mayhem, there are thousands of Web sites that address the subject. Here are a few you may want to explore to learn more about how to prevent problems through early intervention.

[www.behavioradvisor.com](http://www.behavioradvisor.com)

[www.classroom-management.com](http://www.classroom-management.com)

[www.proteacher.com/](http://www.proteacher.com/)

[www.angelfire.com/ky2/socialskills](http://www.angelfire.com/ky2/socialskills)

[www.masterteacher.com](http://www.masterteacher.com)

[www.disciplinehelp.com](http://www.disciplinehelp.com)

[www.educators2000.com](http://www.educators2000.com)

[www.edusmile.com](http://www.edusmile.com)

[www.youthchg.com](http://www.youthchg.com)

[www.inspiringteachers.com](http://www.inspiringteachers.com)

## Advice from current and previous faculty

**Professor Fiona White:** Teaching is all about relationships. Treat students as people first, with respect and consideration. Create a welcoming environment. Focus on planning engaging learning activities, not on issues of power and control. Generate class norms and expectations collectively. Identify the community leaders in the room and work with them – make them your allies. Be yourself.

**Professor Christine Cho:** The first “rule” was to always build rapport as being proactive goes a long way. Set established routines and expectations for everything. To get the attention of the students use the “THEME” or “STAND BY IN 5” approach. On the first day of class, draw a hand on the board and each finger corresponds to a number:

[T (Turn to Me); H (Hands Free); E (Ears Open); M (Mouths Closed); E (Eyes on Me)]

Say to students, “Stand by in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.” The students loved it if they were settled before the teacher got to 1, in which case, some reward or incentive was offered. Make games out of it (team based) during the first week of school to really ingrain the strategy. Also, the “BUMPS” strategy, which is a type of progressive discipline, works well. Bump one is invisible discipline or low key response such as proximity, the look, the pause or the ignore. Each progression occurs until a formal contract is put in place.

**Professor Beverley Haun:** See yourself in each student and treat each pupil as if they really matter. Learn the names of each student on the first day of class. Have the students mail the teacher a work diary (approximately half a page) each week in a duotang (postbox in classroom) about their progress, concerns, goals working towards and achieved etc., and the teacher will respond to each diary. Always explain the reason for having students engage in any learning activity. Let them know what meaning is in the process for them.

**Professor Kevin Woollacott:** A positive atmosphere is essential in Primary-Junior classroom. Students know that they are expected to make good choices as members of the class. A reward system (such as Pizza Party) is used throughout the year. The students vote on child-directed ideas for the rewards and the teacher ensures that all children win at various times throughout the year. A contract could be used at times. The contract talks about respect and responsibility. Contracts are written in a positive manner and focus on why it is important to be respectful or responsible. Parents are called regularly to report on challenging behaviour as well as positive behaviour.

**Professor Sharon Carew:** Use firm, fair, consistent discipline. Praise good behaviour. Create a positive psychological environment among all members of the class. You will know immediately if a student is doing something unacceptable and use a frown or shake of the head. If the misbehaviour continues, privately tell the student exactly what behaviour you expect and the consequences. Be sure to follow through with the discipline strategy. Make sure every student is busy at the work of learning and the teacher is enthusiastic and inspiring.