

# A Strategy for Classroom Management Success

Rebecca Huth

**Abstract:** This paper showcases four published articles which cover strategies for classroom management tested by teachers. In the first article, Barbetta et al. (2005) provides examples of classroom management mistakes often made by teachers. The authors bring awareness to the role teachers play in contributing to classroom management success or failure and offer possible solutions. A major concern continually identified by teachers of all skill levels is classroom management, as identified in the second article by Bondy et al. (2007). Their study is based on the successful teaching practices of three novice teachers effective in urban elementary classrooms. It highlights the teachers' success managing students by creating a successful classroom environment. Mundschenk et al. (2011) focuses on guidance as the primary tool for effective classroom management by using the analogy of teachers as air traffic controllers. The analogy provides detailed steps for effective classroom management. In the final article, Reese, author and Music Educator, shares her successful classroom management practices (2007). Her philosophy includes commendation, communication, consistency and content. This paper joins these four articles together to provide teachers with a four step strategy for classroom management success.

**Keywords:** *behavioral strategies, student resilience, classroom management, classroom environment*

What I learned from observing a Kindergarten classroom of a first year teacher is that it is extremely hard for students to succeed at learning if there is not effective classroom management in place. The environment I observed was stressful for the teacher, negative for students, and overwhelming for me as the observer. What I took away from that experience is the need for a successful classroom management strategy in order to be an effective teacher. My goal is to provide my students with positive learning opportunities. With the increase of diversity and a variety of disorders, classroom management is more challenging than ever, regardless of whether a teacher is skilled or new. I have designed this teaching strategy for the success of both teachers and students. Through my research, I believe I have found four classroom management steps to serve as a platform for a positive classroom learning

experience. This platform includes awareness, environment, guidance and teaching philosophy. These four steps will give teachers of any skill level, the opportunity to teach effectively and promote student success.

## Teacher Awareness

The first strategy my research suggests for successful classroom management is the requirement of teacher awareness. In Barbetta et al.'s (2005) article, the authors provide examples of twelve classroom management mistakes often made by teachers, bringing awareness to the role teachers play in classroom management success or failure. They also include suggestions of replacements for these common teaching mistakes. One of the mistakes listed is *Violating the Principles of Good Classroom Rules*. Instead, they suggest teachers should *Follow the Guidelines for Classroom Rules*. This includes having four to six classroom rules which are simple, specific, clear and measurable. The rules should be posted, stated positively, introduced through role play, and reviewed periodically. Consistency in carrying out consequences when rules are not followed is mandatory for rules to hold value. Verbal praise should also be provided for additional reinforcement.

Another teacher mistake listed is *Inconsistent Expectations and Consequences*. Instead, Barbetta et al. suggests teachers *Have Clear Expectations That Are Enforced and Reinforced Consistently*. Rules serve no purpose if they are not understood or are not going to be enforced and reinforced. An additional mistake the authors list is *When an Approach Isn't Working, Try Harder* which refers to teachers making loud, disapproving statements, increasing negative consequences or removing more privileges. This actually increases negativity and scars the student-teacher relationship, leaving students feeling defeated. Instead, Barbetta et al. suggest to *Try Another Way*. When an approach isn't working, try another way, such as verbal redirecting, proximity control, changing the academic tasks or providing additional cues/prompts. These more positive approaches are more effective and simpler to use. As teachers, we need to be consistent, yet flexible. The research shows that some of the most challenging students, such as students with severe emotional and behavioral problems, often need the most

reinforcement, yet they often receive the least. This is another example of teacher awareness opening the door for prevention. Prevention is accomplished by focusing on teaching desired behaviors, having flexibility and working together. Prevention is monumental because it can lead to the elimination of negative classroom behavior (2005).

### **Creating the Proper Environment**

Eliminating as much disruptive behavior as possible is crucial to creating the correct environment for students to succeed. Disruptive behavior is more common than teachers would like. Bondy et al. (2007) states that classroom management is continually identified by teachers of all skill levels as a major concern. They also identify schools with students of diversity as posing the challenge of creating an environment that is both safe and productive. It is crucial to set boundaries with children and give them dependency and consistency with those boundaries. Teachers truly need to set the tone at the beginning of the school year unless they want their students consistently testing them the rest of the year. By providing boundaries, dependency and consistency, teachers provide the environment needed for successful classroom management. Bondy et al. focus their findings on literature on culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM), psychologically supportive classroom environments and building resilience. Their study is based on the effective teaching practices of three novice teachers in the first two hours of the first day of school in urban elementary classrooms.

This study highlights the teachers insisting on respectful behavior and creating a successful classroom environment as well as resilience for students who would generally struggle in school. This healthy environment is gained primarily by how these teachers set the tone in the first few hours of the first day of school followed by continued implementation and reinforcement. The two concepts these teachers focused on were *Developing Relationships* and *Establishing Expectations*. *Developing Relationships* involved a personal approach to teaching with students learning about each other, as well as learning about their teacher, and discussing why relationships are important. The teachers made developing relationships a priority because they felt relationships were at the core of a productive learning community. The study showed that “the teacher built a caring learning community where connections with and among the students created a safe place to learn and an emotional climate where

students could take risks, laugh, and trust one another and their teacher” (Bondy et al., 2007). In regard to *Establishing Expectations*, one teacher worked with her students to develop rules, whereas the other two had predetermined rules. The word “rules” refers to normal expected behavior, such as “be respectful” and “follow rules when given”. Regardless of who makes the rules, teaching rules and procedures set the stage for success. The teachers “established and communicated clear, high expectations with an attitude of ‘no excuses’” (Bondy 2007). Over the next few days, the teachers emphasized expectations and repeatedly returned to the rules. Although the teachers introduced rules and procedures within the first two hours of school, they clarified that over the next few weeks they would continue to go over rules and consequences to get the students into a routine.

### **Providing Guidance**

In addition to creating the proper class environment, teachers are responsible for providing students with guidance. Mundschenk et al. (2011) use the analogy of the teacher as an air traffic controller for effective classroom management. This article addresses the challenges of classroom management when attempting to hold all students academically accountable, including those with emotional or behavioral disorders. The reality is, teachers are responsible for handling a broader scope of behaviors. Challenges come into place, not just in managing students with disorders, but also in holding the other students accountable. Students may play the “it’s not fair” card when seeing students with disorders being treated with different expectations; however teachers can’t allow students without disorders the option to slack in their academic integrity. Teachers need to respond effectively and efficiently to disruptive behaviors and also be aware that their own behavior could reinforce inappropriate behavior (2011).

Students need guidance, which is why the authors’ analogy of teachers being air traffic controllers is very appropriate. The analogy provides steps for effective classroom management including: preparing a flight plan, ensuring a smooth flight and bringing them in safely. *Preparing a flight plan* includes setting clear limits as to what pilots (students) can do and where they can go, which is essential for behavior management. Teachers should take the classroom environment in consideration and establish a clear, quiet runway (classroom) so pilot concentration can begin. For *ensuring a smooth flight*,

teachers should use a calm, controlled voice like air traffic controllers would, even under stressful conditions. Words directed at students should be concise and specific. Self-monitoring should also be taught so students can track their own behavior or academic performance over time, allowing teacher and students to be more productive. *Bring them in safely*, discusses using a holding pattern. The holding pattern includes having a game plan for removing students needing to be removed before they become too agitated and a disruption to the class. The authors also specify to *match the runway*, which means avoid having unreasonable expectations. Set achievable behavior boundaries for students. This can make teaching easier and give students a sense of accomplishment. Classroom teachers don't control student behavior; they guide students to promote learning (2011).

### Implementation of a Simple Philosophy for Success

Promoting learning is the goal of every teacher and achievable when successful classroom management is in place. In the article by Reese (2007), who happens to be a Music Educator, Reese shares her four Cs of classroom management: *Commendation, Communication, Consistency and Content*. These represent a quick, successful way to establish a safe, healthy and fun environment, especially in elementary schools. *Commendation* is essentially making an individual connection with each student. An example would be praising a student by commending them by name for positive behavior. Acknowledging positive behavior, even if it was something seemingly small, can lead to a positive environment for the entire classroom. *Communication* skills include enforceable statements and an opportunity to refocus and be in control of their own choices. It is important to avoid humiliating students exhibiting negative behavior- be respectful to them as you want them to be to you. Rather than commanding, communicate with the student with enforceable statements such as "I can see that you are excited to share. We will listen when you are ready to raise your hand to be called on". *Consistency* includes continually referring back to the rules and maintaining consistency of these rules. *Content* involves mapping successful lesson plans, providing focused minimal down time and keeping students engaged with the lesson. When a child displays regular unwanted behavior, communicate

with parents to collaborate toward a more successful learning experience for the child. When successful implementation of the four Cs is achieved, fewer disruptions will occur and more learning will be accomplished (2007).

### Conclusion

One of the biggest problems teachers of all experience levels struggle with is classroom management. As I witnessed in my kindergarten class observation, if a teacher cannot manage their classroom, the experience can be complete chaos for both the teacher and the students. Sadly, minimal learning will be achieved. Yet isn't that the reason why we become teachers and the goal of every teacher - to teach students and help them learn? Teaching requires being flexible and learning from others. Unfortunately, teaching also generally involves being responsible for an entire classroom of students by yourself. This means there are no other adults directly in the classroom to learn from or assist the teacher when situations arise. By incorporating multiple research into one strategy, I believe I have a platform for classroom management success. Teachers and students can look forward to less stress and more academic success. With these four steps: teacher awareness, creating the proper environment, providing guidance and implementation of the 4 Cs philosophy, I have equipped myself with the tools necessary to help my classroom achieve academic success and reduce stress. I encourage other teachers to equip themselves with this strategy as well, if not for themselves, for their students.

### References

- Barbetta, P. M., Norona, K. L., & Bicard, D. F. (2005). Classroom behavior management: A dozen common mistakes and what to do instead. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 49(3), 11-19.
- Bondy, E., Ross, D. D., Gallingane, C., & Hambacher, E. (2007). Creating environments of success and resilience culturally responsive classroom management and more. *Urban Education*, 42(4), 326-348.
- Mundschenk, N. A., Miner, C. A., & Nastally, B. L. (2011). Effective classroom management: An air traffic control analogy. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 1053451211414190.
- Reese, J. (2007). The four Cs of successful classroom management. *Music Educators Journal*, 24-29.