**Classroom**

**Management**

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Effective classroom management enhances student engagement and directly correlates with student achievement (Marzano et al, 2003).

A key to successful classroom management is use a holistic approach to managing students by establishing a positive climate in the classroom, building quality teacher-student relationships, and using a wide variety of classroom management strategies (Hardin, 2014; Seeman, 2010). This leads to better rapport, smoother running classes, and improved student learning.

### What is Classroom Management?

“The ability of teachers and students to agree upon and carry forward a common framework for social and academic interactions, by creating an ethos of effort within a social fabric that is built over time, and ultimately leads to student self-discipline”(Hardin, 2014, p.3).

**Three Views of Classroom Management** *(Taken from Hardin, 2014, p.7)*

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| **1. Classroom Management**  **as Discipline** | Instructor responsible for maintaining class control. Discipline comes before instruction. Consequences must exist for inappropriate behavior. |
| **2. Classroom Management**  **as a System** | Classroom management is systematic. Management and instruction are interwoven. Focus is on building learning communities; planning is essential. |
| **3. Classroom Management**  **as Instruction** | Focus is on teaching prosocial skills. Goal is to establish habits of peacemaking. Schoolwide programs on conflict resolution and peer mediation. Teachers help students make ethical judgments/ decisions. |

### Classroom Management Strategies[[1]](#footnote-1)

Note: This is a suggested list. Every classroom is unique and may require a very individualised approach. These strategies are compiled using *classroom management as a system* approach.

1. ***Focus on Relationships First, Rules and Procedures Next***
   1. Often behavioral problems are the result of a breakdown in faculty–student relationships. Marzano et al. (2003) found that the optimal faculty–student relationship consists of equal parts of dominance and cooperation. Students want the instructor to be in control but fair.

Effective managers do not treat all students the same, particularly in situations involving behavioral problems. They recognize that some students need encouragement, others a gentle reprimand, and still others might need another consequence. It is important that faculty convey the message that they are concerned about their students as individuals and the class as a whole. Faculty who show care towards students, are respectful and sensitive to them tend to have fewer conflicts and are more adept at managing such conflicts once they occur.

1. ***Differentiate Miscalls From Discipline Problems***
   1. Not all behaviors that are disruptive to you are “discipline problems.” Some of them may be miscalls. It is a miscall, if:
      1. Student’s behavior is not disrupting (or potentially disrupting) the learning of the rest of the class (but the learning of that individual student is disrupted).
      2. Behavior is not disrupting the role and responsibilities of the instructor.

An example of a miscall: To go after a student who is not paying attention, e.g., looking out the window is a miscall: “John, are you in this class or not?!” To reprimand this student during the class— especially with irritation, or worse, sarcasm, especially when no one else in the class was noticing him, and when you could have just gone on with your teaching —is a miscall. Talk to the distracted student after the class or during your office hours to find out the reasons for their disengagement.

* 1. It IS a real discipline problem when: the behavior disrupts (or is potentially disruptive) to the learning of the rest of the class (not just the learning of the disrupter), or disrupts the role/responsibilities of the instructor (not just personal feelings of the instructor).

1. ***Continuously Reflect on and Improve Your Teaching Methods to Ensure Your Students are Actively Engaged in the Classroom***
   1. Some research indicates that there is a correlation between instructional methods and disruptive behavior of the student. For example, the use of lecture all the time directly correlates with student loss of attention, whereas using interactive learning strategies lead to fewer distractions and fewer potential conflicts. Classrooms where students are engaged in peer-to-peer learning, interactive activities, and meaningful group discussions tend to have fewer distractions and positively affect student learning. A helpful resource for active learning strategies can be found [here.](https://documents.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@dvce/documents/doc/uow222256.pdf)
2. ***Establish a Positive Classroom Discipline***
   1. Use course syllabus as a contract. Many disruptive behaviors in classrooms can not only be handled but also prevented by having an effective, clear course syllabus.
   2. Create classroom rules and establish clear expectations and consequences. Encourage students to co-create the ground rules with you. You can ask them to come up with a list of behaviors that might undermine learning in class and ask how these behaviors should be dealt with by you (an instructor) and other students.
   3. Model the behavior you expect students to adhere to (e.g. if you arrive late for your classes, then it may be unfair to reprimand the late comers in your class)
   4. Interview students who are not academically engaged or displaying prosocial behavior to learn how to better manage them. You can ask them:
      1. What helps them focus
      2. Who they work well with
      3. Their favorite in-class activities
      4. Which kinds of activities help them remember key lesson points

### Common Behaviors and Possible Solutions[[2]](#footnote-2)

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| **Disruptive Behavior** | **Possible Solution** |
| **Arriving late/leaving early**  **Irregularly attending or not attending at all** | Include certain rules for missing the classes in your syllabus (e.g. 3 absences will lead to this much grade reduction). A prior conversation with the student may be helpful to find out what causes such behavior. |
| **Late submissions** | Decide and clearly communicate what is acceptable for you regarding student late homeworks. It may be an ineffective approach to generally accept all late homeworks. If you do, you will have fewer and fewer students doing the homework on time, as each sees that they can hand it in late. You will have less quality class participation — since fewer and fewer will complete homework on time for a quality class discussion. |
| **Misusing technology in the classroom (watching videos, playing games, texting, etc)**  **Chatting to other students / texting on phone** | Identify whether it is a *miscall* or a discipline issue (see Point 2 above under Classroom Management Strategies). If it is a miscall, then speak specifically at the students in question, asking them to put away their devices.  Careful: it is best not to try to take away a cell phone from a student in front of his peers. This pits the student against you, a conflict where the student does not want to “lose face” in front of his/her peers. Overall, research shows that punishing students in front of peers has “limited value.”  Most students prefer instructors to have explicit rules for use of technology that are clearly communicated. Student motivation or empowerment tend to suffer when instructors have no clear policy (neither forbidding nor permitting).  Possible reason may student boredom (relevancy not seen). Review your instructional strategies by:   * embedding collaborative learning for students * alternating your lecturing and student participation components (e.g. by lecturing interactively, lecturing for 15 min maximum and then posing for students to ask questions, summarize what they have been exposed to, solve given problems, connecting new information with what they have learned, etc ) |
| **Dominating class discussions and/or over-participation** | You may want to review your interactional strategies. For instance, some helpful strategies may be:   * pose a question and let everyone think individually before they respond. * use a random questioning pattern by writing student names on slips of paper and selecting randomly. * use peer instruction techniques (e.g. think-pair-share) by asking students to discuss with each other before they share to the whole group. * engage students in devising questions rather than only responding to your/others’ questions. |
| **Dealing with distractions** | Establish a visual (e.g. raise hand or a sign) or auditory cue (e.g. key word, sound) to signal a transition from students talking and refocusing as a large group back to the instructor. Practice this cue from day one, reinforcing with students its importance in quick transitions and efficient use of time. |

**References and Additional Resources**

Hardin, C. (2014). *Effective classroom management: Pearson new international edition*. Pearson.

Marzano, R.J. & Marzano, J.S. (2003). The key to classroom management. *Educational Leadership. Volume 61 (1), pp.6-13.*

Seeman, H. (2010) *Preventing disruptive behavior in colleges*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

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1. This list is a summary from selected chapters from Seeman, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This list is a summary from selected chapters from Seeman, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)