

Best Practices for Elementary Classroom Management



The specifics of classroom management may vary between kindergarten and fourth grade, and the problems you have with a second grader may be different from those you have with a fifth grader; however, the basic best practices for managing your class in an elementary school remain the backbone of a purpose-driven class. Start by teaching routines, balance caring with keeping order, coach your students to self-regulate, use a variety of questioning strategies to promote deeper thinking, and master transitions to help shape your can-do class.





MANAGING YOUR CLASSROOM EFFECTIVELY

Step-by-Step

BY LEONA ONDERDONK ROWAN

M

Many beginning teachers identify classroom management as the aspect of teaching that presents the greatest challenge. In fact, classroom management is regarded as a “make or break” skill in the profession because it is absolutely essential to the teaching and learning process.

Though classroom management is challenging, a step-by-step approach sets the stage for a positive and productive learning environment. This approach is based on organization, clear expectations, rewarding desired behavior, preventing misbehavior, fairness, and consistency. By following these steps, you can create a classroom setting in which students excel.

Step 1: Organize Classroom and Materials

Long before the first day of school, you should organize the classroom and instructional materials (Evertson & Emmer, 2009). The arrangement of desks, tables, and chairs must foster learning. Students should be seated so they can see whole-class presentations, and the teacher should place her chair so that she can see all students. Organizing supplies is equally important. When teaching materials are easily located and close at hand, downtime during instruction is reduced and misbehavior is minimized.

Step 2: Plan a Successful Start

The teacher’s success during the school year is largely determined by what occurs during the first days of school (Wong & Wong, 2009). To set a positive tone, you should welcome students each morning, beginning Day 1. To avoid confusion, the effective classroom manager assigns seats to students in advance, knowing that seating charts can be changed later.

Introductions need to be two-way communications. By telling students a few personal things about yourself, such as interests and hobbies, you lay the groundwork for building community. Similarly, you get to know the students’ names right away and invite students to tell things about themselves. These getting-to-know-one-another steps help students feel more comfortable in your classroom.

Lesson plans in the first days of school must be simple. Straightforward lessons that review concepts already learned help ensure that students begin the academic year with a sense of success and confidence.

Step 3: Establish Rules and Procedures

Developing a list of important rules to display in the classroom is crucial to a well-managed classroom. You can work with students to develop class-



Dr. Rowan is an Associate Professor in the Division of Teacher Education at Spring Hill College in Mobile, AL. She is Counselor for the Alpha Beta Alpha Chapter of KDP.

room rules and then explain why each one leads to a safe and orderly classroom. Permitting students' input gives them a sense of ownership and clear understanding of the need for each rule.

In addition to rules, teachers must set procedures for established activities that occur throughout the school day. Activities, such as entering the classroom, collecting assignments, distributing materials, and using computers, require specific procedures to help students self-manage. Once determined, each procedure should be thoroughly explained, rehearsed, and demonstrated. Through role-play, students can show how each procedure should be performed.

Step 4: Enforce Rules and Procedures Consistently


Once rules and procedures are firmly established, they must be enforced fairly and consistently. Rules must apply equally to everyone, without favoritism. At times, students need to be reminded of rules and procedures. Redirecting by the teacher can keep students on track and on task, thereby preventing misbehavior.

Step 5: Develop an Alternate Plan for Students Who Misbehave

Even the best classroom management plan may not be effective for every student. Some students may require additional assistance, such as a referral to the counselor, administrator, or intervention team. Whenever possible, teachers need to confer with parents and colleagues who may suggest a new approach or workable solution.

Students for whom the classroom plan doesn't work may benefit from an individualized behavior plan developed by the teacher, administrator, parents, and student. This plan should include specific actions a student must take if he or she misbehaves. For example, a younger child may be required to sit in the "Think about It" chair for a brief period of time until he or she is able to regain self-control. This time-out space provides an opportunity for the child to reflect on ways to improve. An approach for the older student is to have him or her write a personal improvement plan that includes a section for what he should have done and will choose to do next time. Just be sure any actions you take comply fully with the discipline policy of the school.

Step 6: Remain Positive and Enthusiastic

Teachers are far more likely to gain the cooperation of their students when they maintain a positive attitude. Providing students positive consequences for desired behavior is reinforcing. Simple rewards, such as a few minutes of "free time" to play educational games or a "Friday Fun" activity such as a classic movie and popcorn, are effective ways to reinforce appropriate behavior. Research indicates teacher enthusiasm increases student achievement and improves student behavior (Eggen & Kauchak, 2010). The teacher's positive attitude and enthusiasm encourage students to be lifelong learners and productive citizens. 

References

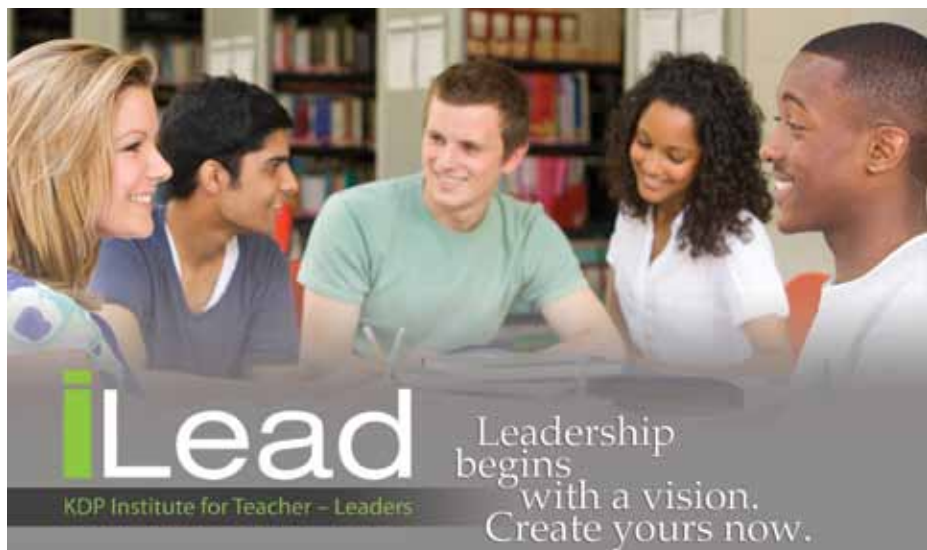
- Eggen, P., & Kauchak, D. (2010). *Educational psychology: Windows on classrooms* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Evertson, C. M., & Emmer, E. T. (2009). *Classroom management for elementary teachers* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2009). *The first days of school*. Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications.



KDP Connect

kdpconnect.org

KDP Connect course topics give specific strategies for each step. Subscribe today and explore the four topics in Set the Stage at www.kdpconnect.org/content/growasyouteach/#set



iLead Leadership begins with a vision. Create yours now.

KDP Institute for Teacher – Leaders

Hone your leadership skills at an iLead Fall Conference.

Attend Sept. 29 in Baltimore or Oct. 27 in Dallas.

Open to both members and non-members of Kappa Delta Pi

Register by September 14 to attend the Baltimore event.

www.kdp.org/iLead/baltimore.php

Register by October 12 to attend the Dallas event.

www.kdp.org/iLead/dallas.php

To learn more about iLead, visit www.kdp.org/iLead.

MANAGEMENT MENTOR

3=33

By Madeline Kovarik



The most important equation that a teacher can know when discussing classroom management is $3 = 33$. There are generally 36 weeks in a school year (taking out vacations). Spending the first three weeks of the school year teaching and PRACTICING the rules will lead to 33 weeks of being able to teach. To do this, teachers have to TRY these steps.

T – TEACH the rules like you would a subject such as math, science, or social studies. When teaching these subjects, teachers don't just tell the students; the students generally do something or practice something to demonstrate that they have learned it. It is the same with classroom rules. Classroom rules and procedures should be taught with examples and non-examples: "How does 'sitting up straight' look? What does it not look like?" Practice the procedure or rule: "When you hear this chime, stop moving and talking and look at me." Students then walk around the room and when the teacher sounds a chime, they stop, get quiet, and look. Then practice it again. Tell the students why they did the procedure correctly or incorrectly: "I like the way everyone stopped walking and talking. You all looked at me. Great work! Let's try it again."



R – REINFORCE the procedure or rule consistently by allowing extra time to practice during the first three weeks. For example, before an activity, remind the students of the procedure. If the class is lining up and your procedure is "be quiet, stand, push the chairs in, and line up," then allow time so the procedure can be practiced if it is not done correctly the first time. Practice DOES NOT make perfect! Only PERFECT PRACTICE makes perfect!



Y – Starting a new **YEAR** in the classroom requires classroom management planning. Occasionally, teachers state that due to testing constraints or curriculum pacing, they don't have time to follow this process. Consider the fact that a teacher who doesn't teach the rules and procedures, and allow time for students to practice them, will spend 36 weeks in the school year reminding students to follow the rules. This takes more time than teaching it correctly the first time!

Creating rules and procedures is easy—getting students to follow them is another matter. Remembering $3 = 33$ will help the process flow smoothly and create a more orderly classroom both at the beginning and at the end of the school year! 🍎



Dr. Kovarik has experience as an elementary teacher, a guidance counselor, a primary specialist, and a school administrator. She currently teaches online courses and speaks to teacher groups. She coauthored *The ABC's of Classroom Management, 2nd Edition*, which is highly recommended for all new teachers.

Classroom Prep

GRR to Conquer Classroom Management

By Michelle Hovland



Classroom management normally is a challenge for new teachers. Whether the new teacher establishes a well-managed classroom can be the difference between a bright beginning to an exciting career or the reason for an early exit! Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher 1983), however, new teachers can quickly establish classroom routines that support a positive learning environment!

Pearson and Gallagher introduced their Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model in 1983 after reviewing studies on reading comprehension instruction. These researchers found that learning occurred when it happened over time within a repeated instructional cycle that included *explanation*, *guided practice*, *feedback*, *independent practice*, and *application*. Within this framework, responsibility is gradually released from the teacher to the student, with the anticipation that the student will take responsibility for the task.

Teachers find that they must develop procedures for the smooth operation of the classroom and the efficient use of time before they can address instructional techniques. As Danielson (2007, 83) stated, "The best instructional techniques are worthless in an environment of chaos." An important aspect of good classroom management is ensuring that students understand expectations im-

mediately. With GRR, teachers begin establishing effective classroom routines the first day of school, which is the optimum time, of course, and when most teachers and students are filled with positive energy! When school starts, Whitaker (2004, 20) commented, "we are still undefeated . . . students have not been 'in trouble' . . . and we have the chance to build new relationships." Introducing classroom routines using GRR enables teachers to set high expectations and prepare students for success.

For example, some of the most difficult times of classroom management any teacher faces are transition periods between activities. Often these periods are chaotic, even after the teacher and students have repeatedly discussed moving quietly from one activity to another! If this is the case, aspects of transitioning quietly are not fully understood by the students. To ensure that students first understand what is required and then perform as expected, the teacher should teach quiet transitioning by applying the steps of GRR.

Step 1. Demonstration. In the first step, the teacher demonstrates exactly how to move from one activity to another. The demonstration includes explaining and modeling the task. During this phase of the framework, the teacher is in control and the students are observing,

Step 2. Shared Demonstration. The second step in the GRR framework is shared demonstration. In this example, the teacher now invites a couple of students to the front of the class to participate in a shared demonstration of quiet transitioning as other students observe. The teacher still has the majority of control during this step.

Step 3. Guided Practice. During this step, the teacher transfers responsibility for implementing the task to the students by shifting to a facilitator or support role. The teacher is still available to provide suggestions, feedback, and assistance if needed. Allowing time for students to practice what was observed in steps one and two, the teacher sets up the following situation: Students

Michelle Hovland is an assistant professor teaching courses in reading and the coordinator of the Teacher Learning Center at Black Hills State University, Spearfish, SD. She is a member of KDP's Beta Nu Chapter.

mediately. With GRR, teachers begin establishing effective classroom routines the first day of school, which is the optimum time, of course, and when most teachers and stu-

are at their desks pretending to work. From somewhere in the classroom, the teacher announces it is time to switch to a new activity and area of the classroom. The students then transition to the new area and begin the activity.

As the transition occurs, the teacher aids success by giving a reminder of the expected behavior. If the students (even a few students) do not perform the transition to the teacher's expectations, they are asked to repeat the guided-practice step. As the students again practice with guidance, the teacher judges whether a repeat of the demonstration or shared-practice steps is needed. Even if the students perform the transition appropriately, it may be helpful to repeat the guided-practice step.

Step 4. Independent Practice. Finally, the students are given opportunities to independently use the new technique. In this classroom-management vignette, the teacher sets up one final scenario in which she acts as though she is instructing a small group of students and nonchalantly asks the students to begin a new activity. The students transition to the new activity without teacher assistance. A group meeting follows the independent

practice, allowing students to reflect on their performance.

Teachers using the GRR framework to teach classroom routines constantly observe and evaluate students' reactions and performance to determine whether to proceed to the next step or return to a previous one. If, at any time, the students regress to unproductive behaviors, the teacher should again teach the desired behavior using the GRR framework.

A clearly defined and implemented classroom-management plan that includes explicit instruction in routines helps create a productive learning environment. Using the GRR framework to establish classroom routines takes time, persistence, and patience; however, the reward will be a well-organized classroom where learning can occur! 🍏

References

- Danielson, C. 2007. *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*, 2nd ed. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Pearson, P. D., and M. C. Gallagher. 1983. The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 8(3): 317–44.
- Whitaker, T. 2004. *What great teachers do differently: 14 things that matter most*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Grand Canyon University – the Key to Your Success!

Have you ever thought about continuing your education after obtaining your bachelor's degree, but just couldn't find a school that met all of your needs? Grand Canyon University (GCU) understands the obstacles that professional educators face, and that's why we've created "Key Advantages" designed simply for you! Join thousands of other students who have taken advantage of the great benefits GCU has to offer!

Key Advantages:

CONVENIENCE: Programs are available online with classes starting every eight weeks to fit your busy lifestyle.

TECHNOLOGY: All of our online courses use *Angel* technology, which means you will have a consistent format in every class you take.

VALUE: The College of Education equips you to perform ethically within the context of your job, and to create a framework of high standards within your organization.

Call an Enrollment
Counselor today!

888.261.2448 | www.gcu.edu/kpd

GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY™

3300 W. Camelback Road | Phoenix, Arizona 85017

Grand Canyon University is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. (800-621-7440; <http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/>)

“At Grand Canyon University, I always felt that we had a great learning community. Everyone was so supportive from the administration, to various offices, to the instructors, all the way to my classmates.”

— Stacy Tebo, M.Ed,
Education Administration '06





By Tracey Garrett

“I want to show my students that I care about them, but I don’t want them to walk all over me.”

—novice teacher

Research indicates that one of the most serious problems plaguing beginning teachers is that they see caring and order as mutually exclusive concepts. They continuously struggle to reconcile their need to develop order with their desire to develop caring relationships (Weinstein 1998). Unfortunately, this mind-set exacerbates issues of classroom management. Knowing how to bring these two concepts together is essential for novice educators.

The tasks of establishing order and developing caring relationships play integral roles in an overall approach to classroom management. Seeing these two tasks as polar-opposites forces

new teachers to choose either order over caring or caring over order. Yet one without the other is a prescription for failure.

Both objectives must be addressed simultaneously for a teacher to successfully accomplish either one. In fact, research demonstrates that students are more likely to follow classroom rules and routines when they believe their teachers care about them (Osterman 2000). On the other hand, caring relationships cannot develop if students do not feel part of a safe, orderly learning environment (Weinstein and Mignano 2007).

With the strategies that follow, you can create a caring and orderly classroom community starting now. It’s never too late to begin a caring and orderly approach to classroom management.

Developing Order

- **Establish rules and routines.** Rules and routines effectively communicate expected behaviors to students. Set them on the first day of school and reinforce them continuously and consistently throughout the school year.
- **Teach and demonstrate each rule explicitly.** Demonstrate rules as though teaching curriculum. Posting the rules and assuming

***Tracey Garrett** is an assistant professor in the Department of Teacher Education at Rider University in Lawrenceville, NJ. Classroom management is both her area of specialization and a research interest area.*

that students will understand and subsequently follow them does not work. To clearly establish your expectations, with no room for misunderstanding, model each appropriate behavior.

- **Impose clear limits.** Develop and impose clear and logical consequences when students choose to misbehave.
- **Use explicit directives.** State the expectation rather than offer a choice: "Sit down and get back to work." rather than "Would you like to sit down and get back to work?" One sets the expectation and leaves little room for misinterpretation. The other suggests an option on whether or not to sit down, a habit that surrenders authority.
- **Expect and give respect.** Maintain high standards for the way students speak to you and be sure to reciprocate when you talk with students.
- **Speak authoritatively and confidently.** Command the classroom without demanding. Communicating calmly and from a position of control speaks louder than yelling or acting in a dictator-like manner.
- **Present yourself as a strong, professional authority.** A teacher's demeanor—dress, mannerisms, conversation, and even movement around the classroom can communicate confidence and control.

Communicating Care

- **Organize and decorate your classroom.** There is little more unwelcoming than entering a messy, cluttered, and undecorated classroom. Take time before school begins to organize the room's layout, traffic pattern, and storage options. Then decorate and personalize the room to create an inviting space for daily learning.
- **Send a welcome message.** Prior to the first day of school, send a welcome letter or e-mail to families that communicates your excitement about having their students in your class.
- **Smile.** This simple gesture shows students that you are genuinely excited to be their teacher. You would be surprised by how meaningful a smile is to students.
- **Send home positive notes.** Make the extra effort to notice students' positive behaviors

and achievements. Jot them down in a notebook or use sticky notes on a seating chart as a reminder. Doing so assures that you will remember to let parents know through notes or e-mails about good and positive performance.

- **Conduct community-building activities.** In addition to establishing rapport between your students and you, be attentive to building relationships among students. Facilitate the development of peer relationships with various activities that provide opportunities for students to get to know one another.
- **Attend extracurricular activities.** Students appreciate it when teachers attend extracurricular events such as sporting events, school plays, and musical performances. It shows interest and conveys respect.
- **Let students get to know you.** Share a few of your interests such as favorite hobbies or sports teams to let students know *who* you are. You will be surprised by how much students love to hear about you and it helps you connect with them.

If you hear a veteran teacher make comments such as, "You're too," "Don't smile until Christmas," or "You have to be tougher," don't panic. What your more experienced colleagues are noticing is the common struggle between a new teacher's desire to care and need to develop order.

Take a deep breath, relax, and reflect on the concepts of caring and order. Consider how they complement one another as components of effective classroom management. When school starts and you step in front of your class, try these suggestions to create a safe, caring, and orderly learning environment. 🍎

References

- Osterman, K. F. 2000. Students' needs for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research* 70(3): 323–67.
- Weinstein, C. S. 1998. "I want to be nice, but I have to be mean": Exploring prospective teachers' conceptions of caring and order. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 14(2): 153–63.
- Weinstein, C. S., and A. Mignano. 2007. *Elementary classroom management: Lessons from research and practice*. Boston: McGraw Hill Co.

Kappa Delta Pi Record, 51: 52–56, 2015
Copyright © Kappa Delta Pi
ISSN: 0022-8958 print/2163-1611 online
DOI: 10.1080/00228958.2015.1023145

A Self-Regulatory Approach to Classroom Management: Empowering Students and Teachers

by M. Kay Alderman and
Suzanne MacDonald



Abstract

Development of motivation and self-regulated learning skills can take classroom management beyond the role of maintaining order in the classroom to empower students and teachers for lifetime learning. The authors describe self-regulated learning, student strategies, and the classroom structure that supports motivation and self-regulation.

Key words: curriculum, instruction, motivation, school reform, self-regulation

The current educational reform environment mandates rigorous academic standards along with accountability

assessed through high-stakes testing. Teachers, as the drivers of academic performance, are pressured to produce

better student test scores that sustain the United States' leadership in the world economy. In this highly charged and pedagogically conflicted environment, teachers often express that they lack the desired professional control of their classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Ravitch, 2010, 2013).

What is classroom instructional climate like in the context of today's reform movements? On one side, ac-

countability and high-stakes testing practices have increased external regulation; consequently, it would appear, the controls put in place to motivate improvement have resulted in decreased support of teacher (and student) autonomy (Ryan & Brown, 2005). The external regulations for teachers have subjected students to increased compliance to teacher authority. In contrast, professional pedagogical practices such as inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and technology-based environments represent a move from the passive to more active types of instruction where students (and teachers) have more autonomy for learning (Collins & Halverson, 2009). A move from passive to active learning requires higher levels of self-direction and self-discipline on the student's part.

As some have noted, these complex, activity-based classrooms require a new repertoire of skills for teachers and students (Freiberg & Lapointe, 2006). With a shift in classroom management away from unilateral teacher control, students must develop capacities for exercising responsibility and self-regulation (Brophy, 2006). Similarly, Zeichner (2005) emphasized, as students assume more responsibility and self-regulation, the central role of the teacher becomes to facilitate and encourage student self-control and personal responsibility for contributing to academic achievement.

Accordingly, teachers have the basic responsibility of ultimately helping students to be personally responsible and independent in a system that also requires compliance

to teacher authority (Fenwick, 1998). In this environment of accountability and complex learning, Dembo (2004) advocated that educators teach students self-regulatory strategies for managing their own learning. A self-regulated learning approach to managing classrooms has the potential to empower students and teachers in a mutual partnership for a democratic classroom.

Self-Regulation for Managing Classrooms

In a society where education is more important than ever for success in life, self-regulated learners are likely to be more successful in school and also to become lifelong learners (Zimmerman, 2000). With the development of personal motivation and self-regulation skills—or what many have termed *noncognitive* or *nonacademic* skills (e.g., ACT, 2007; Farrington et al., 2012; Usher & Kober, 2012; Zehr, 2011)—comes the potential to take classroom management beyond the role of maintaining order. These noncognitive skills represent sets of behaviors, beliefs, competencies, and strategies that are outside the current accountability testing movement as too often currently practiced.

Self-regulated learning approaches have been applied to a diverse range of primarily academic disciplines such as science, mathematics, and study skills (Bembenuddy, Cleary, & Kitsantas, 2013); yet there is scant evidence that classroom management has been a recipient of such attention. Nonetheless, self-regulated learning can be directed toward social behaviors when managing a classroom for instruction. Indeed, Patrick (1997) explained that children's performance in school is closely related to their social competence—that is,

their ability to monitor and manage their own social interactions. Through a classroom management approach, teachers can influence students' capacity for self-regulation and sense of responsibility. In this context, Selves-ter and Summers (2012) referred to self-regulation as "academic capital," because it is a way of promoting and supporting adolescents' personal responsibility (p. 89).

Self-regulation is fostered within a social cognitive context where students are learning social competence skills through interactions with others by observing and learning about their behavior (Schunk & Usher, 2013). The social cognitive framework is composed of three interrelated aspects (Bandura, 1997):

- the social (structure, teacher support);
- the personal/cognitive (sense of competence, values); and
- the behavioral (engagement, misbehavior).

For example, when a teacher establishes a structure that increases student autonomy, some students gain an increased sense of competence while others become more anxious when faced with choices. This results

M. Kay Alderman is Professor Emeritus in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department at The University of Akron. Her areas of interest include educational psychology in teacher education, motivation, and self-regulation. Email: kmmisty@att.net

Suzanne MacDonald is a Professor in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department at The University of Akron. Her areas of interest include social/cultural foundations of education, educational anthropology, global education, and teacher education. Email: scm@uakron.edu

in the competent students choosing a more challenging task and the anxious students seeking help. The teacher can decide whether students are ready for choices or need more guidance.

The three factors—social, personal/cognitive, behavioral—are crucial elements for classroom management because they provide multiple pathways, including a variety of appropriate actions, for teachers to build and maintain a positive classroom environment (Pajares, 2008). Teachers and students share the role for managing classrooms. The teacher's role is to establish a learner-centered environment to support student autonomy whereby students can assume responsibility for their learning and behavior.

The Self-Regulatory Processes

Self-regulation also reflects Bandura's (1997) social cognitive interaction among personal, behavioral, and social/environmental factors. These self-regulatory processes entail self-awareness, self-motivation, and behavior (Zimmerman, 2002). Each of these processes includes subprocesses that are applied in various circumstances, including academic and social. Some are performed mentally (e.g., accept responsibility) and some behaviorally (e.g., resolve a conflict). Management of classroom behavior requires students to employ important processes, both mental (cognitive or motivational reflections) and behavioral (carrying out actions).

Various scholars identified the following subprocesses as especially useful for managing classrooms:

- setting goals to guide one's behavior (Evertson & Neal, 2006); set-

ting social goals (Wentzel, 2009);

- taking responsibility for one's own actions (Bear & Duquette, 2008); sharing responsibility between students and teachers (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009);
- managing emotions for positive behavior through self-control/self-discipline (Duckworth, 2009); developing the ability to focus when there are distractions (Freiberg & Lapointe, 2006);
- self-monitoring progress toward goals (Paris & Paris, 2001); monitoring attention and social behavior as well as others' social behaviors (Evertson & Neal, 2006); and
- building self-efficacy (beliefs about outcomes) to sustain motivation; for example, the student believes he can implement strategies to control his temper (Zimmerman, 2002).

The teacher's role is to provide the structure that supports these processes.

These self-regulatory processes are depicted by Zimmerman (2002) in three cyclical phases: planning and goal setting, performance, and self-reflection. The phases are cyclical because feedback from prior performance is used to make adjustments for future planning and goal setting. The phases act as a structure by which teachers may plan strategies for managing a classroom. Examples of each phase follow.

- *Phase One: Planning and Goal Setting.* With teacher guidance, a sixth-grade student sets a goal such as staying on task during group work, or a second grader sets a goal to focus on her own behavior instead of tattling.
- *Phase Two: Performance.* Students

self-monitor to check their goal progress and to self-correct as needed. After the sixth grader is reminded by her group to get back to work when she is off task, she monitors her attention. Through self-talk, she reminds herself to stay on task. The second grader says to herself that she will not tattle on the boy who is not paying attention.

- *Phase Three: Self-Reflection.* Students evaluate the outcome of their goals. The second grader says, "I did not tattle once today because I remembered my goal." The sixth grader says, "I did my part in the group although others had to remind me to stay on task. Next time, I won't need to be reminded; I'll check myself." The ability to make adjustments is necessary to accommodate changing conditions in the three processes.

When should self-regulated learning begin? In Finland, even the youngest students start to take responsibility for their own learning and life, for example, by assuming agency for their own goals and choices (Vallinkoski, 2012). As students enter the classroom, some demonstrate more self-regulated behavior than others. Younger students, for example, need more guidance in developing self-regulated behaviors. For others, habits and attitudes have been developed before they enter school (Randi, 2009). Some children, such as those from disadvantaged, ethnic, or low socioeconomic backgrounds, may be particularly high risk for poor self-regulation (Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007). In these cases, the potential for the continued development of self-regulation

and change during the school years becomes especially important (McClelland & Cameron, 2011).

Although the roots of self-regulation begin with the child's interactions with parents and caregivers, it is incumbent on schools and teachers to establish the structure and climate to build on these skills throughout the school years. The scaffolding of self-regulated behaviors, based on Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, can occur throughout the school years. Through the use of self-regulated strategies, students manage their behavior and engage in learning. The teacher's role is to provide the structure that supports student development and use of these strategies.

Teaching Practices for Self-Regulated Learning

Classroom practices that support self-regulatory and motivational behaviors, beliefs, and strategies come from both classroom management and educational psychology research and practice. The supportive climate is a balance between structure and autonomy. Walker (2008) argued that authoritative teaching, based on Baumrind's (1971) contrast of two parenting styles—authoritative and authoritarian—provides this structure: “[It offers] an optimal context for student engagement and learning through its demands for student autonomy, effective classroom management, and responsiveness” (p. 237). This type of classroom context emphasizes opportunity for student autonomy, responsibility, and self-control and encourages development of student self-discipline (McCaslin & Good, 1992; Walker, 2009). It is not just the physical structure that supports student autonomy.

It is also the beliefs a student has about the structure, his or her competence, and the importance of the schoolwork. These beliefs influence student effort and engagement (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007).

Providing a structure that gives students some choice and responsibility is a balancing act for teachers. Teachers often are concerned about the classroom turning into chaos (Alderman, 2008). To determine the appropriate structure, teachers should consider these questions:

- How much structure is needed at first?
- How mature are the students and how much autonomy are they prepared to handle?
- What choices do students have the capability and maturity to make?
- How can students experience the feeling of ownership with only shared control?
- What is the best way to foster a democratic classroom community?

The overall approach focuses on creating a classroom environment where all students feel like they belong. Although there is a set of rules that all have a responsibility to follow, students are able to do some things independently and have choices in some areas.

The importance of the first few weeks of school for effective classroom management, including establishing expectations, norms, rules, and procedures for the year, is well established (e.g., Evertson & Emmer, 1982). During this period, teachers define appropriate types of classroom behavior and standards for both social and academic competence of their students. The beginning of the year is also the beginning of socialization for self-regulated

learning, or what Brophy (1985) termed “self-guidance” (p. 233). The socialization for self-regulation includes beliefs about responsibility and self-control, as well as a motivational belief that effort is more important than innate ability for learning (Wentzel, 2009). Specifically, teachers help students plan and set goals for learning and behavior (Evertson & Neal, 2006). Letting students know they have choices to do some things on their own aids their goal setting (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004). Motivational beliefs about responsibility and effort are conveyed at this time by having students discuss what it means to show effort in this classroom.

Following establishment of the classroom climate, teachers continue to monitor student behavior and to enforce rules and expectations for self-reliance (Wentzel, 2003). Using firm behavioral control, supporting students' sense of competence with warmth and feedback, and engaging them in meaningful tasks were found to be important in a kindergarten classroom (Rimm-Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson, & Brock, 2009). Other factors that support student autonomy are identifying student interests, allowing some decision-making, and providing optimal challenges (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010).

After the classroom climate is established, teachers have students reflect on how the class went and what each contributed. Both the teacher and students reflect on success in terms of student engagement, cooperation, and support for one another. Together, they consider revising goals for next time. For example, perhaps students need more guidance or are ready for more choices. And the cycle continues.

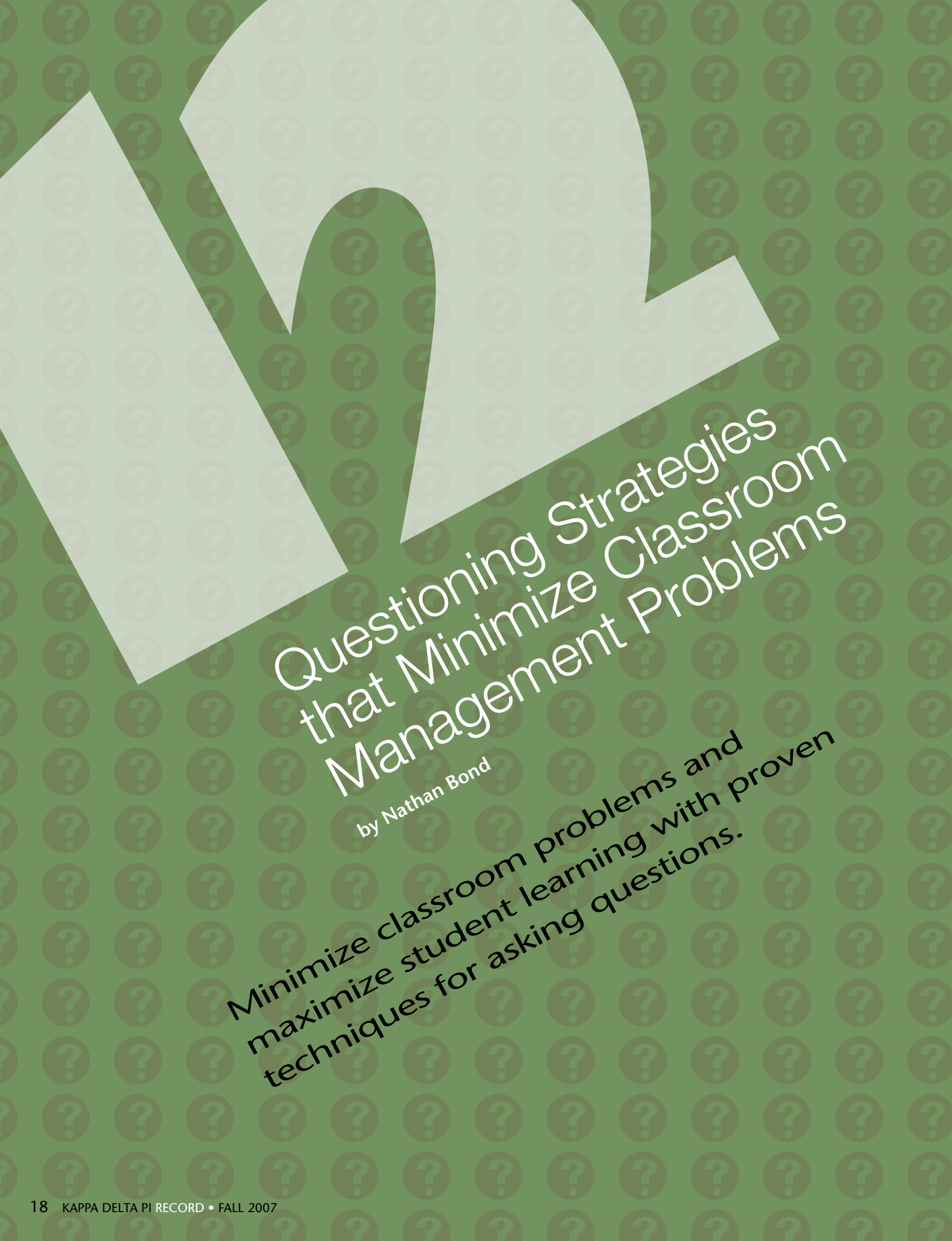
Conclusion

The school reform movements emphasizing rigorous academic content with accountability assessed through standardized testing have placed stress on teachers and students. Yet, education is more than grades on high-stakes tests; it is about the all-around well-being of students academically, socially, and emotionally in school and life. Increasingly, noncognitive attitudes, beliefs, skills, and strategies that are outside the testing accountability movement are being advocated to improve performance (Farrington et al., 2012).

Self-regulated learning integrated into classroom management can empower students to take control of their own learning and behavior; teachers thereby gain partners for creating a positive classroom climate. When teachers empower students with self-regulation and motivation strategies through classroom management, they are showing they care. Thus, schools that support motivation to learn and self-regulated learning capabilities provide the pathway for fostering lifelong learning skills that operate within a broader societal purpose for education (Lüftenegger et al., 2012). The alternative is foreboding, as Yowell and Smylie (1999) suggested: "Without developing the self-regulatory capacities of youth, the individual and social relations that are so important to them, schools fail to fully support democratic communities. Indeed, they may jeopardize them" (p. 488). ■

References

- ACT. (2007). *The role of nonacademic factors in college readiness and success*. Iowa City, IA.
- Alderman, M. K. (2008). *Motivation for achievement: Possibilities for teaching and learning* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman.
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology*, 4(1, pt. 2), 1–103.
- Bear, G. G., & Duquette, J. F. (2008). Fostering self-discipline. *Principal Leadership*, 9(2), 10–14.
- Bembenutty, H., Cleary, T. J., & Kitsantas, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Applications of self-regulated learning across diverse disciplines: A tribute to Barry J. Zimmerman*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Bohn, C. M., Roehrig, A. D., & Pressley, M. (2004). The first days of school in the classrooms of two more effective and four less effective primary-grades teachers. *Elementary School Journal*, 104(4), 269–287.
- Bondy, E., Ross, D. D., Galligan, C., & Hambacher, E. (2007). Creating environments of success and resilience: Culturally responsive classroom management and more. *Urban Education*, 42(4), 326–348.
- Brophy, J. (1985). Classroom management as instruction: Socializing self-guidance in students. *Theory Into Practice*, 24(4), 233–240.
- Brophy, J. (2006). History of research on classroom management. In C. M. Everson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 17–43). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Collins, A., & Halverson, R. (2009). *Rethinking education in the age of technology: The digital revolution and schooling in America*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2014, August 30). To close the achievement gap, we need to close the teaching gap [Web log post]. *Huffington Post Education*. Retrieved from www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-darling-hammond/to-close-the-achievement_b_5542614.html
- Dembo, M. H. (2004). Don't lose sight of the students. *Principal Leadership*, 4(8), 37–42.
- Duckworth, A. L. (2009). Self-discipline is empowering. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(7), 536.
- Everson, C. M., & Emmer, E. T. (1982). Effective management at the beginning of the school year in junior high classes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74(4), 485–498.
- Everson, C. M., & Neal, K. W. (2006). *Looking into learning-centered classrooms: Implications for classroom management*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.
- Farrington, C. A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T. S., Johnson, D. W., & Beechum, N. O. (2012). *Teaching adolescents to become learners: The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance—A critical literature review*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.
- Fenwick, D. T. (1998). Managing space, energy, and self: Junior high teachers' experiences of classroom management. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(6), 619–631.
- Freiberg, H. J., & Lamb, S. M. (2009). Dimensions of person-centered classroom management. *Theory Into Practice*, 48(2), 99–105.
- Freiberg, H. J., & Lapointe, J. M. (2006). Research-based programs for preventing and solving discipline problems. In C. M. Everson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management* (pp. 735–786). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Deci, E. L. (2010). Engaging students in learning activities: It is not autonomy support or structure but autonomy support and structure. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 588–600.
- Lüftenegger, M., Schober, B., van de Schoot, R., Wagner, P., Finsterwald, M., & Spiel, C. (2012). Lifelong learning as a goal: Do autonomy and self-regulation in school result in well prepared pupils? *Learning and Instruction*, 22(1), 27–36.
- McCaslin, M., & Good, T. L. (1992). Compliant cognition: The misalliance of management and instructional goals in current school reform. *Educational Researcher*, 21(3), 4–17.
- McClelland, M. M., & Cameron, C. E. (2011). Self-regulation and academic achievement in elementary school children. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 133, 29–44.
- Pajares, F. (2008). Motivational role of self-efficacy beliefs in self-regulated learning. In D. H. Schunk & B. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Motivation and self-regulated learning: Theory, research, and applications* (pp. 111–139). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Paris, S. G., & Paris, A. H. (2001). Classroom applications of research on self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(2), 89–101.
- Patrick, H. (1997). Social self-regulation: Exploring the relations between children's social relationships, academic self-regulation, and school performance. *Educational Psychologist*, 32(4), 209–220.
- Patrick, H., Ryan, A. M., & Kaplan, A. (2007). Early adolescents' perceptions of the classroom social environment, motivational beliefs, and engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(1), 83–98.
- Randi, J. (2009). I think I can: Developing children's concept of themselves as self-regulated learners. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 45(1), 55–63.
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Ravitch, D. (2013). *Reign of error*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Curby, T. W., Grimm, K. J., Nathanson, L., & Brock, L. L. (2009). The contribution of children's self-regulation and classroom quality to children's adaptive behaviors in the kindergarten classroom. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(4), 958–972.
- Ryan, R. M., & Brown, K. W. (2005). Legislating competence: High-stakes testing policies and their relations with psychological theories and research. In A. J. Elliot & C. S. Dweck (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation* (pp. 354–372). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Schunk, D. H., & Usher, E. L. (2013). Barry Zimmerman's theory of self-regulated learning. In H. Bembenutty, T. J. Cleary, & A. Kitsantas (Eds.), *Applications of self-regulated learning across diverse disciplines: A tribute to Barry J. Zimmerman* (pp. 1–28). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Selvester, P. M., & Summers, D. G. (2012). *Socially responsible literacy*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Usher, A., & Kober, N. (2012). *Student motivation: An overlooked piece of school reform*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.
- Vallinkoski, A. (2012, March). Growing up safe and sound [Web log post]. Retrieved from www.helsinki.fi/hub/articles/?article=224
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Walker, J. M. T. (2008). Looking at teacher practices through the lens of parenting style. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 76(2), 218–240.
- Walker, J. M. T. (2009). Authoritative classroom management: How control and nurturance work together. *Theory Into Practice*, 48(2), 122–129.
- Wentzel, K. R. (2003). Motivating students to behave in socially competent ways. *Theory Into Practice*, 42(4), 319–326.
- Wentzel, K. R. (2009). Students' relationships with teachers as motivational contexts. In K. R. Wentzel & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation at school* (pp. 301–322). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Yowell, C. M., & Smylie, M. A. (1999). Self-regulation in democratic communities. *Elementary School Journal*, 99(5), 469–490.
- Zehr, M. A. (2011, June 15). Experts call for early focus on black boys' nonacademic skills. *Education Week*.
- Zeichner, K. M. (2005). A research agenda for teacher education. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 737–761). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining self-regulation: A social cognitive perspective. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp. 13–39). San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2), 64–70.



Questioning Strategies that Minimize Classroom Management Problems

by Nathan Bond

Minimize classroom problems and
maximize student learning with proven
techniques for asking questions.

Teachers know from their training and experience that questioning plays an important role in today's instruction. Modern lessons are fast-paced and interactive, with teachers asking a lot of questions. Borich (1992) found that questions account for 80 percent of classroom talk and that some teachers ask more than 100 of them per hour! Because this instructional strategy dominates class time and because students are active during the lesson, there are more chances for management problems to arise if teachers do not follow good questioning techniques. This article explores some questioning strategies that minimize classroom management problems.

Classroom management problems occur under two circumstances during question-and-answer sessions. First, if students are dissatisfied or bored, they may exhibit off-task behavior as a way to let the teacher know that the instruction is failing to meet their needs. Generally, students are not asked whether they like a lesson, so misbehavior is their only recourse for providing immediate feedback to the teacher. Second, students may misbehave if they are unclear about the expected behavior. Exchanges between teachers and students occur quickly during a question-and-answer session, and teachers seldom make explicit the way they want the class to respond. Thus, students act out because they are unable to "read the teacher's mind."

Though the educational literature provides some global advice for asking questions, it often omits specific strategies that teachers can follow when employing this instructional approach with their students. This article highlights some of the techniques that are mentioned in the literature and then offers additional strategies to minimize classroom management problems.

1. Write out some questions when planning the lesson.

Teachers seldom write down their questions while planning; instead they generate them extemporaneously during the lesson. This approach can lead to vague questions that do not engage students in deep, high-quality thinking and, consequently, unengaged learners may misbehave out of confusion or boredom. Wilen et al. (2004) encouraged teachers to generate questions that are clearly written, appropriate for the students' ability, and sequenced in a logical way.

To go a step further in their support, teachers can project the planned questions on a screen using overheads or PowerPoint® slides. By doing so, all students can see them on the screen and hear the teacher asking them. In effect, the instruction becomes clearer and multisensory by providing both auditory and visual input.

2. Establish your expectations for behavior before beginning the questioning period.

Teachers may want to remind students to raise their hands, listen carefully to classmates' comments, and respect one another's right to self-expression (Emmer, Evertson, and Worsham 2006). Clarifying the ground rules reduces confusion and helps everyone know how to act. In addition to learning appropriate behavior for a discussion in a classroom setting, students learn important real-world social skills that can be used later in life, for example, in a business or work setting.

3. Call on a variety of students.

The elements of surprise and uncertainty are ways to "keep students on their toes" during a discussion. Teachers can keep students' attention by calling on them randomly. Because the learners are uncertain about on whom the teacher will call, they will remain attentive. Students will want to be able to respond correctly because they generally do not want to look bad or be embarrassed in front of their peers (Burden 2003). Surprisingly, the literature does not mention that teachers should keep a record either mentally or in writing of the students who were asked questions. Effective educators know that they must interact with all children by the end of the lesson and that they must keep all children engaged for maximum learning to occur.

4. Cue students before asking the question.

Classroom management problems arise because well-intentioned students cannot read their teacher's mind and thus do not know how to respond. Cueing the class before asking the question can minimize disruptive outbursts. Four cueing techniques are available:

- Call on a specific student and then ask the question (e.g., "John, what is the capital city of the United States?"). This approach is advantageous for two reasons: the teacher can ensure that a wide variety of students are involved throughout the lesson, and everyone clearly knows whom the teacher is addressing. As a result, management issues should not occur. A disadvantage of this cueing approach, however, is

Nathan Bond is an Associate Professor of curriculum and instruction at Texas State University, where he also works with undergraduate and graduate preservice teachers in Texas State's field-based program. He serves as the Counselor for the Eta Zeta Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi and frequently presents at KDP Conventions. Before becoming a professor, he taught Russian at the middle and high school levels.

that the remaining learners in the class will stop thinking once they hear a classmate's name being called. Quickening the pace may solve this problem.

- Ask students to raise their hands and then ask the question (e.g., "Please raise your hand if you can answer this question. What is the capital city of the United States?"). Teachers can use this approach as a type of informal assessment to determine the number of students who appear to know the answer and to give slower learners more time to formulate one. This cueing approach is clear, so management problems should be minimal. The only caveat is that students who do not raise their hands are embarrassed for not knowing the answer. They may act out as a way to cover their lack of knowledge.
- Ask students to shout out the answer and then ask the question (e.g., "Boys and girls, please shout out the answer to this question if you know it. What is the capital city of the United States?"). Best used at the beginning of a discussion, this approach encourages participation because students do not have to worry about the correctness of their answers. Furthermore, bright learners tend to like the chance to demonstrate their quick intellectual reflexes, many of which resemble the skills associated with playing video and computer games. Teachers should use this cueing technique cautiously because the noise and enthusiasm levels can quickly escalate out of control. If the cueing strategy is used before the question is asked, then the problems should be few because the students know the teacher's expectations.
- Ask all students to think of an answer before asking the question (e.g., "Boys and girls, I'm going to ask a question. I want everyone to think of an answer. Then I will call on someone. What is the capital city of the United States?" Pause to allow students time to think of an answer. Then follow up with, "John, please share your answer."). Though teachers have to provide more cueing initially, the approach fosters more thinking from the class as a whole and allows teachers to maintain classroom control. Again, the classroom problems should be minimal because more students are engaged in thinking and because they are unsure on whom the teacher will call.

5. Ask questions that are the appropriate level for each student.

There is an old saying, "success breeds success." When students feel success, they are more inclined to persist with a task. To help them feel success, the teacher should tactfully ask questions at the appropriate level. Many instructors will call on students randomly as a way

to keep everyone engaged. There is a downside to this approach. Calling on students randomly means that some questions will be answered incorrectly and that some people in the class will become discouraged.

Frustrated students may try to hide their feelings by acting out or by distracting others by telling jokes or acting like the class clown. In their research, Jones and Jones (2004) found that lower-achieving students especially need to feel success and should be given feedback for their correct answers. Asking questions that involve personal issues or opinions is one way to involve this group. If low-achieving students feel that the question is too hard or too easy, then they may misbehave.

6. Ask questions that elicit positive or correct responses.

This technique often is used by speakers to keep their audience engaged for as long as possible. Good and Brophy (1997) recommended that 75 percent of teachers' questions should elicit correct responses. Students will remain motivated and more willing to remain intellectually engaged with the teacher if they feel positively toward the information and can answer the teacher's questions correctly most of the time. Students generally will not disrupt the lesson if they are feeling successful.

7. Provide students with sufficient wait time after asking a question and before responding to their comments.

In a study on questioning, Rowe (1974) found that teachers wait a mere 0.9 seconds on average for their students to respond to a question. This amount of time is too short for average learners to complete the four mental steps that are required to answer a question. Students must first hear the question and decide whether they understand it. Second, they must recall the information from their memories. Third, they must consider whether their response will be accepted; and, fourth, they must decide whether the teacher will praise or rebuke their response (Jones and Jones 2004).

When teachers increase the amount of wait time, the length of the responses increases, the responses reflect higher-level thought, and the failures to respond decrease (Rowe 1986). When students are afforded time to think of an answer, they also are less likely to misbehave.

8. Vary the way students respond to questions.

Responding verbally is the most common way for students to answer the teacher's question. An alternate approach is to ask everyone to jot down an answer before calling on a student (Thompson 1998). The act of writing

makes the question-and-answer session more multisensory; specifically, it adds a tactile component to the lesson.

Requiring students to record their answers encourages wider participation by the class and reduces management problems because students are too busy writing and do not have time to misbehave. In addition, the teacher may want to call on several people before providing the answers. Again, this strategy provides more opportunities for participation, thus reducing management problems.

9. Vary the person who responds to the questions.

Rather than the teacher always responding to the students, another variation is to ask classmates to respond to one another's responses. This approach promotes positive social interaction by encouraging respectful listening. It also involves more people in the lesson and creates a more interactive exchange between individuals (Burden 2003). The more students participate in the lesson, the less likely they are to misbehave.

10. Respond to every answer and correct errors.

Listen carefully to students' comments and maintain a high ratio of positive to negative verbal feedback (Burden 2003). Respond to every answer and offer specific praise. By doing so, teachers show their students that they value their ideas. As a result, students will be more inclined to behave because they know that they are respected. Furthermore, if a student does not seem to understand, ask a classmate to rephrase the question or rephrase it yourself. If an answer is incorrect, indicate the part that is correct or ask a follow-up question for clarification (Thompson 1998).

11. Ask follow-up questions.

The goal of a question-and-answer session is to get everyone to talk, and one way to foster more discussion is to ask follow-up questions. Williams, Alley, and Henson (1999) found that 95 percent of teachers' questions are classified as low-level, usually requiring a yes or no response. Teachers can elicit more discussion by asking students to justify or explain their reasoning. Asking "why" questions promotes higher-order thinking.

12. Encourage students to ask questions.

The teacher is usually the person who asks the questions during the discussion. In a longitudinal study of elementary and secondary school classes, Dillon (1990) found that each student asks only one question per month on average. Teachers must take deliberate steps to get their learners to ask questions.

At the beginning of the school year, a short activity or game could be planned that requires the class to ask questions about a topic. For example, students could play the game "Twenty Questions." Repeating the activity and rewarding participants will foster the desired behavior. Once the classroom culture of questions has been established, students then will feel more comfortable asking them.

Closing Thoughts

Teachers know that questions can serve a variety of purposes. They can be used "to assess readiness for new learning, to create interest and motivation in learning, to make concepts more precise, to check student understanding of the material, to redirect off-task students to more positive behavior, and to create the moderate amount of tension that enhances learning" (Levin and Nolan 2004, 112–13). Teachers also know that questioning is a component of effective instruction (Bell 2002; Conderman and Morin 2002; Rosenshine and Stevens 1986) and, when used correctly, can produce greater student achievement (Wilén and Clegg 1986).

Asking good questions is an important skill that teachers must develop. Because this approach is used often, there is an increased chance for problems to occur. These problems arise typically when students are bored with the lesson or do not understand the teacher's expectations for behavior. To address these issues, teachers can acquire a variety of strategies for asking questions and apply them in their instruction. Following these recommended approaches should minimize classroom problems and maximize student learning. ■

References

- Bell, L. I. 2002. Strategies that close the gap. *Educational Leadership* 60(4): 32–34.
- Borich, G. D. 1992. *Effective teaching methods*, 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Burden, P. R. 2003. *Classroom management: Creating a successful learning community*, 2nd ed. New York: Wiley.
- Conderman, G., and J. Morin. 2002. Successful instruction for all students. *Kappa Delta Pi Record* 38(4): 170–73.
- Dillon, J. T. 1990. *The practice of questioning*. London: Routledge.
- Emmer, E. T., C. M. Everton, and M. E. Worsham. 2006. *Classroom management for middle and high school teachers*, 7th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Good, T. L., and J. E. Brophy. 1997. *Looking in classrooms*, 7th ed. New York: Longman.
- Jones, V., and L. Jones. 2004. *Comprehensive classroom management: Creating communities of support and solving problems*, 7th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Levin, J., and J. F. Nolan. 2004. *Principles of classroom management: A professional decision-making model*, 4th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Rosenshine, B., and R. Stevens. 1986. Teaching functions. In *Handbook of research on teaching*, 3rd ed., ed. M. C. Wittrock, 376–91. New York: Macmillan.
- Rowe, M. B. 1974. Reflections on wait time: Some methodological questions. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 11(3): 263–79.
- Rowe, M. B. 1986. Wait times: Slowing down may be a way of speeding up! *Journal of Teacher Education* 37(1): 43–50.
- Thompson, J. G. 1998. *Discipline survival kit for the secondary teacher*. West Nyack, NJ: Center for Applied Research in Education.
- Wilén, W. W., and A. A. Clegg, Jr. 1986. Effective questions and questioning: A research review. *Theory and Research in Social Education* 14(2): 153–61.
- Wilén, W., M. I. Bosse, J. Hutchison, and R. Kindsvatter. 2004. *Dynamics of effective secondary teaching*, 5th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Williams, P. A., R. D. Alley, and K. T. Henson. 1999. *Managing secondary classrooms: Principles and strategies for effective management and instruction*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.



Dear Dr. P.,
I have heard that teaching first grade is like herding cats and balancing spinning plates. As a new teacher in a first grade class, there are days that I can vouch that those sayings are absolutely true. Transitions, I know, are key elements in keeping students (especially first graders) on task, but I have a hard time getting students from one activity to the next smoothly and effectively. What transitions work well in a first grade classroom to prevent them from turning into tabbies or precariously placed china?

Sincerely,

Trouble with Transitions Tonya

Dear Ms. Trouble with Transitions,

First-graders sure are an exciting bunch, aren't they? Smooth transitions can be a challenge, however, at many grade levels. The trick is to help students direct their energy toward positive action. I have three suggestions for smooth transitions, from a "quick fix" you can try tomorrow to some long-term ideas for the year.

First Tip: Whistle While You Work!

It worked for Snow White's gang and may work for your "feisty felines." Right before a transition, sing a quiet song to cue students that they need to mentally and physically switch gears. You might pick a purposeful tune, such as "Clean up, Clean up, Everybody Clean up" or a student favorite, such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." The song signals change while allowing students time to put away their supplies and move to their next activity.

You could even have a daily song leader to help you. On another note, you might play the students' favorite music. At the end of their song, they must be ready for the next classroom event. Singing and music are excellent motivators, as well as community-builders. Encourage students to bring their own music (be sure to listen to it first) so they can contribute to the musical selections! My former fourth-graders always were excited to sing "Get Down, Get Funky, Get Loose" (see YouTube™ video).

Second Tip: Timely Transitions

Do all students have to transition at once? No! Individual transitioning works well when activities are differentiated or students are working in groups. When a group finishes its activities, each student puts away his or her supplies, cleaning up without disturbing the other groups. Small-group and individual transitions help avoid a mass movement of students putting away marker boxes at the same time!

Third Tip: Practice Makes Perfect

This suggestion is the most fun—practice! Sometimes your young learners (older ones too) don't know how you want them to do something, because their habits were established before they met you! Have students role-play different expectations—in this case, transitioning—so that they may experience success and have fun exploring the concept.

Consider grouping in triads or quads, having each group pull a role-playing card from a hat. The first group might act out an unruly transition—loud students who are not listening, some running to their cubbies, and supplies falling on the floor. You'll find that students LOVE practicing NOT following the rules! The next card may be an "okay" transition, and then the third card represents a "great" transition. Besides teaching and modeling expectations, role playing also builds community and serves as a good reference when students' memories lapse: "Remember when we . . ."

Good Luck!

Doctor P.

Dr. Catherine Pangan, a former elementary teacher and current professor at Butler University (Indianapolis), loves to help build and support strong, healthy schools. Please send your question for Dr. P. to cpangan@butler.edu. And watch out—she may make a house call!

SHAPING A CAN-DO CLASSROOM

By Jack Blendinger

Every classroom has a culture that gives positive or negative meaning to the learning occurring within its perimeters. This culture comprises the traditions, understandings, and expectations that teachers, students, and parents share about learning.

When the culture is strong, positive, and healthy, it produces a *can-do* community in which students toil daily to grow intellectually, personally, and socially. It is an environment initiated by the teacher and nurtured by all participants.

Nurturing a can-do environment starts with a teacher's sense of optimism in building relationships with students and parents. With that beginning, teachers can then employ other can-do fundamentals.

Classroom Heroes

Heroes are important to the classroom culture. They personify a learning community, providing role models who inspire others through their extraordinary deeds and successes. Developing a can-do attitude in

students begins with stories about heroic students from their school. Former students from the same

class as the current students serve as reachable heroes.

After learning about these heroes, students write to them, engage in two-way e-mail correspondence, and invite them to visit. Once sufficient information is collected, students work in collaborative groups to develop written profiles about the heroes. Photographs and other obtainable artifacts also should be collected.

Using these materials, students create classroom displays about the heroes. The teacher and students should regularly discuss the heroic attributes of these former students.

Jennifer and Travis are two such heroes. Jennifer, a senior at a California coastal high school, often visits her former elementary classroom to assist the teacher and inspire students. She achieved heroic status in her old classroom for winning her state's top academic awards for visual arts, creative writing, and mathematics. She went on to achieve an A-plus average in high school, lead her varsity volleyball team to the California Interscholastic Federation Championship, and have one of her paintings selected to hang in the Congress of the United States.

Travis, an A-average student throughout his school years, was offered full-ride basketball scholarships to three major colleges in the southeast. Following graduation, he also was asked to join

Jack Blendinger teaches educational leadership at Mississippi State University and is a member of KDP's Theta Chi Chapter.

the world of professional basketball. In making the difficult decision, Travis consulted his family. His parents approved the pro-ball choice, provided that he began college classes on a part-time basis. Now, Travis is fast becoming a leading player. When not playing basketball, however, he routinely visits students at his former schools to help them develop self-esteem.

Jennifer and Travis represent only two of many student success stories. Teachers need only a bit of imagination and investigative effort to identify local heroes.

Classroom Traditions

Tradition—passing customs from one generation of students to another—is an important feature of a can-do classroom culture. Traditions influence and shape student behaviors.

For decades, a now-retired Colorado elementary school teacher was recognized for the spelling prowess of her students. Her class put on an annual school-wide invitational spelling bee, and it was an accepted fact that her students were proficient spellers. If they weren't in the fall, they were proficient by spring. It was tradition!

Students deficient in spelling skills worked with the help of peers and their parents to improve deficiencies. Becoming a good speller and earning a certificate of merit in the spelling bee was a matter of personal pride.

It's never too late to create classroom customs. Traditions that influence student behavior and academic achievement often start humbly. Identify a tradition that will shape a strong, positive, and healthy classroom culture, and then roll up your sleeves and put it into action.

Recognizing, Celebrating Success

Do the walls of your classroom silently shout out recognition and celebration of students' accomplishments? Students need daily reminders of their achievements. Success begets success!

Make your classroom a wall-to-wall success story. Fill the room with students' accomplishments—A-emblazoned composition papers, 100-percent spelling tests and math assignments, carefully done line drawings or colorful canvases. Classroom shelves might display three-dimensional products, such as sculpture, science experiments, social studies projects, and fashion creations.

Slowly but steadily, students subconsciously absorb the positive feedback and realize how much they are learning and accomplishing. The teacher never stops congratulating students for their good work. Mirroring the teacher's behavior, students in turn develop the habit of congratulating one another for a job well done.

Can-Do Action Plan

What does it take to have a strong, positive, and healthy classroom culture? It requires identifying heroes and building tradition, recognizing and celebrating accomplishment, and instilling the pride of ownership in students. It's never too soon or late to start shaping a can-do culture! 🍏

Can-Do Classroom on Tap

Determine whether your classroom is a strong, positive, and healthy classroom culture by answering the following questions.

1. Are my students enthusiastic about learning?
2. Is a can-do attitude obvious among students?
3. Do lessons respect and accommodate learning styles?
4. Are students' academic achievements and positive behaviors recognized and celebrated?
5. Are students' accomplishments regularly displayed?
6. Do students take responsibility for developing bulletin boards and displays?
7. Do students keep the classroom environment attractive and clean?

