

Understanding Effective Classroom Management

Key Chapter Knowledge and Skills

1. Understanding the concerns various groups have about student behavior in schools
2. Understanding the key components to effective classroom management
3. Understanding student factors influencing behavior
4. Understanding teachers' decisions regarding classroom management

Whether you are just learning to teach, experiencing the first several years of your teaching career, or working as a veteran teacher with a rapidly changing student population, your classroom management skills will be a major factor on how much your students learn and how satisfied you are with your role as a teacher. Research indicates teachers' skills in creating safe, supportive classrooms are a major factor influencing students' motivation, achievement, and behavior. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993) conducted a sophisticated data analysis of factors influencing student learning and identified classroom management as the most important factor. A decade later, issues of effective classroom management were highlighted by research as a key to effective student learning (Shinn, Stoner, & Walker, 2002). Further study continues to demonstrate the strong relationship between teachers' classroom management skills and student achievement (Moore, 2009; Roesler, 2009).

Research Basis for the Materials Presented in This Book

Extensive research and experience have gone into the development of this book. For the past forty years, the author has been a teacher, assistant principal, district-level special education coordinator, consultant in over twenty-five states, and teacher educator instructing in classroom management. His book *Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems* is currently in its ninth edition. He has chaired the American Educational Research Association's Special Interest Group on Classroom Management, written the chapter on classroom management for the *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* and the chapter "How Do Teachers Learn to Be Effective Classroom Managers?" in *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues*—a 1,445-page compilation of classroom management research edited by Carolyn Evertson and Carol Weinstein (2006), as well as numerous chapters and articles on



classroom management. Each year, the author continues to teach classroom management to between 75 and 145 graduate students who are completing a year-long school internship while earning their master's degrees in a 14-month full-time program. The questions, concerns, and efforts to implement best practices by these bright young educators, and the questions and feedback during their first years of teaching, have significantly enriched the content in this book. In preparing for this book, the author reviewed the 300 most recent articles as well as dissertations completed over the past five years on classroom management. The author also drew on the dozens of other studies conducted during the past forty years, ranging from the foundational work of Jere Brophy through the meta-analysis by Robert Marzano (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Many of the methods described in this book are based on the same research presented in recent summaries of "evidence-based classroom management" (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). The most important research, however, will be that which the reader conducts by implementing the methods described in this book. Effective classroom management is influenced by the context in which one teaches—including the unique needs and styles of teacher and students. Educators must conduct their own action research by implementing research-based methods and determining how these methods work most effectively within the context of their own classroom and school.

Classroom Management in Perspective

Student behavior problems have for years been a major concern of parents, teachers, and administrators. The 2010 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes toward Public Schools found discipline rated second to funding as the public's biggest concern about education in the United States; fighting was rated fifth (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010).

The public's concerns are well grounded. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2009) demonstrates that during the 2007–2008 school year 10 percent of male students and 5 percent of female students in grades 9 through 12 reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the previous year. Ten percent of this same student group indicated someone had used hate-related words against them. Twenty-two percent reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property during the past school year. Not surprisingly, 7 percent of these students indicated that during the past school year they had avoided a school activity or one or more places in school because they feared being harmed.

Teachers echo the public's concern about student behavior. In a recent study, 34 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that student behavior problems interfered with their teaching (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Perhaps not surprising, teachers report dissatisfaction with student behavior as a cause of transferring schools or leaving the profession, ranking it fourth among reasons for transferring (listed by 53 percent of those transferring) and fifth among those leaving the profession (44 percent strongly or somewhat dissatisfied with this feature of teaching) (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Indeed, over one-third of teachers indicate knowing a colleague who quit teaching because of discipline issues (Goodman, 2007). Classroom management is clearly the most common concern expressed by beginning teachers. Results from a survey completed by 900 graduates of fifth-year teacher education programs in California indicated a belief that their programs should have placed greater focus on classroom management (Whitney, Golez, Nagel, & Nieto, 2002). In a survey of Florida teachers, 43 percent of first-year teachers felt they were "minimally prepared" or "not prepared" to manage their classrooms (Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2000). In a 2006 poll of teachers and administrators conducted for

MetLife, one in five teachers indicated they were not prepared to maintain order in the classroom, and teachers leaving the field were significantly more likely to state feeling unprepared in classroom management. Principals pointed to classroom management as a major area in which new teachers were inadequately prepared. Not surprisingly, more recent research shows beginning teachers continuing to indicate a lack of effective training in classroom management (Battle, 2008; Brevik, 2009; Todras, 2008). Other research reveals that classroom management is still a major factor in teacher burnout (Durr, 2008) and that principals continue to identify classroom management as a major area of weakness for new teachers (Merkel, 2009).

Concerns about student behavior and classroom management do more than create stress for teachers and affect the number of teachers who enter or remain in teaching for an extended period of time. In addition, these concerns often cause teachers to limit their use of instructional methods that actively engage students in the learning process (Lotan, 2006). If teachers are to implement engaging, meaningful instructional activities that enhance student motivation and higher-level thinking skills, teachers must become comfortable with their classroom management skills.

Bullying is another issue teachers and students describe as a serious problem in schools. The most recent data from the National Center for Educational Statistics indicate 32 percent of students report having been bullied at school during the past school year. Of these students, 63 percent said they had been bullied once or twice during the six-month period, 21 percent said they had been bullied once or twice a month, 10 percent reported being bullied once or twice a week, and 7 percent reported being bullied almost daily (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Rates of bullying are much higher for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students. Over 75 percent of these students heard derogatory statements, and over 37 percent experienced physical harassment at school based on their sexual orientation.

Even though social factors have made the teacher's job more challenging, studies indicate that teachers and schools make a dramatic difference in the lives of many children. Schools and teachers working with similar student populations differ dramatically in their ability to help students develop desirable behaviors and increase achievement. A U.S. Department of Education publication (2000) stated: "Studies indicate that approximately four of every five disruptive students can be traced to some dysfunction in the way schools are organized, staff members are trained, or schools are run" (p. 10). Kellam, Ling, Merisca, Brown, and Ialongo (1998) reported that highly aggressive six-year-old boys assigned to first-grade classrooms with teachers skilled in classroom management were three times less likely to be highly aggressive in eighth grade than similarly aggressive boys placed in first-grade classrooms characterized by poor classroom management. These findings are consistent with experimental studies conducted in middle school classrooms (Hawkins, Doueck, & Lishner, 1988). Research also indicates teachers who are involved with in-service classroom management work can dramatically improve their classroom management skills. In one study of fourteen teachers who received support in improving classroom management, thirteen reduced student misbehavior in their classrooms by an average of 71 percent (Nard, 2007).



"So, other than that, how was your first day as a teacher?"

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This book was written with the intent of providing the kind of research-based, practical support that will help both preservice and in-service teachers significantly improve their classroom management skills to reduce disruptive behavior and improve student learning. These improvements are best supported by learning communities in which teachers actively analyze their practices in discussions with other educators after collecting data on outcomes from incorporating methods they develop to improve their classroom management skills (Casey, 2009).

Key Components of Effective Classroom Management

There is increasing agreement among researchers regarding the type of school and classroom environments needed to support positive behavior among a wide range of students. Current research indicates five components of effective, comprehensive classroom management:

1. Understanding students' personal and psychological needs
2. Creating an affirmative classroom climate and a community of support by establishing positive teacher-student and peer relationships and maintaining constructive involvement with students' caregivers
3. Involving students in developing and committing to behavior standards that promote on-task behavior and help support a calm, safe learning environment
4. Using instructional methods that facilitate optimal learning by responding to the academic needs of individual students and the classroom group
5. Implementing responses to unproductive student behavior that treat students respectfully and help them develop skills for working effectively in the classroom and school settings

Similar to the key "Strategies for Enacting Culturally Responsive Classroom Management" described by Carol Weinstein and her colleagues (Weinstein, Curran, Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003, p. 270) these skill areas have for years defined best practices in classroom management (Brophy, 1988; Jones, 1982, 1996, 2006).

PAUSE & CONSIDER 1.1

How do these components of classroom management compare with your own thoughts about effective classroom management? You may want to write briefly about this or share your thoughts with a peer or small group.



Student Factors That Influence Learning and Behavior

Educators often wonder why some students disrupt the classroom and fail to be actively engaged in learning while other students behave appropriately and seem to flourish in our classrooms. One approach to understanding in-school behavior sug-

gests that students behave responsibly when their personal/emotional needs are met. This explanation has the advantage of placing the teacher in a creative, exciting position. Rather than simply reacting to uncontrollable forces, the teacher oversees a wide variety of factors that influence students' behavior. It is important to keep in mind that just as students vary tremendously in their academic skills, they also vary in the type of support required for their personal/emotional needs to be met. The following section provides a brief, applied overview of several approaches to understanding students' behavior and meeting their needs within the school setting.

Personal Needs Theories

Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow (1968) suggested that students cannot have energy for learning unless their basic personal needs have been met. Maslow reported a hierarchy of basic human needs with lower-level needs generally taking precedence over higher-order needs. His hierarchy of needs, which has been divided in a variety of ways, includes these components:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Self-actualization
- Self-respect
- Belongingness and affection
- Safety and security
- Physiological needs

A good discussion of these needs can be found at www.xenodochy.org/ex/lists/maslow.html.

Maslow's theoretical position is that people have an innate need to be competent and accepted. Unproductive behavior is therefore not viewed as an indication of a bad child but rather as a reaction to the frustration associated with being in a situation in which one's basic needs are not being met. Maslow further suggested these basic needs cannot be met without assistance from other people. Finally, he postulated that only when the basic needs are met can the individual become motivated by self-actualization or the need to take risks, learn, and attain one's fullest potential.

Rudolf Dreikurs

Rudolf Dreikurs centered his ideas for working with children on the belief that their basic need is social acceptance: "We should realize that a misbehaving child is only a discouraged child trying to find his place; he is acting on the faulty logic that his misbehaviour will give him the social acceptance which he desires" (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972, p. 32).

Dreikurs described four goals associated with students' disruptive behavior: attention getting, power, revenge, and displays of inadequacy. He suggested that "when a child is deprived of the opportunity to gain status through his useful contributions, he usually seeks proof of his status in class through getting attention" (1972, p. 34). If adults are ineffective at responding to this attention getting, Dreikurs indicated students will seek power. If this response is thwarted by teachers' own power methods, students become deeply discouraged and seek revenge. Finally, Dreikurs suggested that "a child who has tried passive destructive forms of attention getting in order to achieve the feeling of 'belonging' may eventually become so deeply discouraged that

he gives up all hope of significance and expects only failure and defeat" (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972, p. 39). In *Discipline without Tears* (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972) and *Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom* (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1971), Dreikurs suggested methods for assisting teachers in identifying which of the four mistaken goals the child is seeking and ways teachers can respond to children to help them return to positive involvement in the regular classroom.

Topper, Williams, Leo, Hamilton, and Fox (1994) offered a slightly modified list of needs met by students' challenging behaviors.

- **Attention**—the behavior serves the need to draw attention away from others and to oneself
- **Avoidance/Escape**—the behavior serves the need to end an event or activity that the student does not like, or to avoid an event
- **Control**—the behavior serves the need to control events
- **Revenge**—the behavior serves the need to punish others for something that was done to the student
- **Self-Regulation/Coping**—the behavior serves the need to regulate feelings (e.g., boredom, embarrassment, anger, fear, anxiety) or energy levels
- **Play**—the behavior serves the need to have fun (p. 47)

The idea that all behavior is purposeful is an important concept in working with students. Students are not "bad" or "disruptive"; they are simply attempting to meet their needs using behaviors that are not in their best interests or the best interests of others. Oftentimes these behaviors have provided them with much needed attention, a sense of control, escape from work they find difficult, a method of self-regulation, or a way to have fun. It is our role as educators to help them develop behaviors that not only meet these needs but also serve them effectively throughout their lives.

William Glasser

For over four decades, William Glasser has crusaded for increasing the sense of efficacy and power students experience. In his book *Control Theory in the Classroom*, Glasser (1986) stated, "Our behavior is always our best attempt at the time to satisfy at least five powerful forces which, because they are built into our genetic structure, are best called basic needs" (p. 14). Glasser described the five basic needs as "(1) to survive and reproduce, (2) to belong and love, (3) to gain power, (4) to be free, and (5) to have fun" (p. 22; emphasis added). Glasser indicated students will function productively only in school environments that allow them to experience a sense of control or power over their learning.

Stanley Coopersmith

Another useful approach to students' needs is offered by Coopersmith (1967). In his research on the factors associated with self-esteem, Coopersmith found that in order to possess high self-esteem, individuals need to experience a sense of significance, competence, and power. *Significance* can best be defined as the sense of being valued, which an individual attains from involvement in a positive two-way relationship in which both parties sincerely care about each other. *Competence* is developed by being able to perform a socially valued task as well as or better than others at one's age level. For example, winning a free-throw shooting competition involving her peers would provide a fifth-grader with a sense of competence. Finally, *power* refers to an ability to understand and control one's environment.

Coopersmith's research indicates students need to experience a sense of trust and personal involvement as well as a sense of accomplishment or competence if their

FIGURE 1.1

Students' Basic Needs

Brendtro et al. (1990)	Coopersmith (1967)	Kohn (1993)	Glasser (1990)
belonging	significance	collaboration	love
mastery	competence	content	fun
independence	power	choice	power/freedom
generosity		virtue	survival

needs are to be met. Coopersmith also noted that in order for individuals to feel good about themselves and their environment, they must experience a sense of power or control. Students who clearly understand classroom rules and procedures and who understand what is to be learned and why it might be useful to them will experience a sense of power. Likewise, students experience a sense of power when they are allowed to choose a topic of special interest to study, provide input into how the classroom is arranged, understand their own learning style and its relationship to their learning and teacher decision making, or study material related to their cultural heritage.

Figure 1.1 presents the views of four researchers/theorists regarding this topic. As noted, all four share the belief that for students to have their basic needs met, and thereby function effectively in the school environment, they need to experience positive relationships with others (belonging, significance, collaboration, love). All indicate a need for choice or ability to influence the environment (independence, power, choice, power/freedom). Three of the writers specifically highlight students' needs for academic accomplishment (mastery, competence, content). Finally, two of the writers suggest a need to share with or give to others. William Glasser mentions this in his writing but did not include it on his list.

PAUSE & CONSIDER 1.2

Consider a classroom with which you are familiar. Label three columns on a sheet of paper: Significance, Competence, and Power. List ways that all students may have opportunities to achieve each of these in the classroom you are considering. If any list shows few opportunities to experience a factor, add several specific changes to improve this particular aspect of achievement. You will benefit from sharing your ideas with others and in return perhaps adopting methods used in other classrooms to strengthen your students' experience.



Personal Issues of Students Who Bully

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, bullying is a serious issue in schools, and it is helpful to understand the unique personal needs and characteristics of students who are involved in this behavior. Studies (Wood & Gross, 2002) suggest there are two types of bullies: *reactive bullies*, who have strong responses to what they perceive as threatening situations, and *proactive bullies*, whose behavior seems more calculated and planned. In both cases research indicates that social/emotional issues underlie the behavior. For example, reactive bullies are seen as students who desire but lack positive relationships with adults and may have experienced rejection from adult

caregivers. Following violent behavior toward others, these students often express remorse.

Teachers and caregivers often refer to them as having a “short fuse” because they tend to be intolerant of frustration, easily threatened, impulsive and over reactive in response to any source of stress or fear and unpredictable in their tantrums and outbursts. (McAdams & Schmidt, 2007, p. 121)

The behavior of proactive bullies is viewed more as a component of these students’ identity and is one way these students develop a sense of significance, competence, and power. These students are usually not provoked into their bullying and usually choose students who are emotionally or physically weaker and easily controlled. Proactive bullies experience little remorse and their behavior is difficult to alter because it is a fundamental aspect of their identity. These students have often lacked the supportive family relationships that help develop a sense of empathy and caring for others. What needs to occur for these students is extensive education in developing empathy for others through positive relationships with adults, while learning social skills to meet their needs for significance, competence, and power.

Differences in Culture between Teachers and Students

All students experience the developmental and social/personal needs described in this chapter. However, cultures differ in a variety of behavior expectations, including how individuals communicate a range of ideas and emotions. Because most schools represent the standards and approaches of white middle class society, it is not surprising that school settings create cultural discontinuity for many students. Data from the 2007–2008 school year indicate that 59.3 percent of the students and 83.5 percent of teachers in all schools in the United States were White, 15.3 percent of students and 6.7 of teachers were African American, and 19.3 percent of students and 6.9 percent of teachers were Hispanic. Asian/Pacific Islanders made up 4.6 percent of students and 1.5 percent of teachers, and American Indians/Alaska Natives were 1.4 percent of students and 0.5 percent of teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

It is quite likely that these discrepancies in ethnicity of teacher and student populations in U.S. schools plays a role in the disproportion of suspensions and expulsions given to non-White students. For example, in 2006, about 15 percent of African American students were suspended, compared with 8 percent of American Indian/ Alaska Native students, 7 percent of Hispanic students, 5 percent of White students, and 3 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students. Student expulsion rates in 2006 show that about 0.5 percent of Blacks were expelled from school, compared with 0.3 percent of American Indian/ Alaska Native students, 0.2 percent of Hispanic students, 0.1 percent of White students, and 0.1 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Research (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008) indicates that differences in rates of discipline between students of different races are not due to socioeconomic differences that exist between these groups. In other words, when socioeconomic status was controlled for statistically, disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates remained similar. Research indicates exclusionary punishments are more likely to increase incidents of challenging behaviors (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006; Mendez & Knoff, 2003) and are predictive of student failure in school (Lozen, 2007). These facts clearly suggest educators must strongly consider how to ensure greater sensitivity to the unique social and personal style each student brings to the classroom and how to help students bridge between the styles they use outside of school and those

expected in a workplace setting such as a school. This needs to include clearly explaining and providing reasons for and support in developing these workplace behaviors. In addition, school personnel need to work with students to consider when school behavior expectations can incorporate social norms students bring to school.

Recent immigrants to the United States are one group of students who experience potentially strong discontinuity.

In 431 B.C. Euripides wrote, "There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land." Students who have recently moved to this country are struggling with this loss as well as numerous other specific adjustments. One very basic stressor for immigrant children is that, "once an immigrant student walks into a U.S. classroom, the rules and knowledge they received from their home culture do not readily apply." (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999, p. 205)

In her book *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child*, Cristina Igoa (1995) considers how students who are recent immigrants often believe they cannot accept their culture of origin but also feel unaccepted and alienated from U.S. culture. She discusses the importance of validating and supporting the culture of origin. Igoa (1995) wrote about her own experiences as an immigrant student:

In the Philippines, we customarily greet each other with a kiss on the cheek; in America, we greet each other with a handshake or less. Each time I encountered an unexplained cultural difference such as this, I would feel awkward, confused, ashamed, or inadequate. The innumerable differences had nothing to do with language, because I was raised bilingually. I was more affected by the sense of cultural difference; the loss of cultural identity and feelings of inadequacy would well up within me as I sat in class. I felt an unexplained void, an emptiness inside. I read well. I could illustrate. But these were mere skills. What I needed was a cultural connection. I was constantly adapting to the system. I needed the system to meet me halfway, to collaborate, to include my thoughts and feelings. (p. 16)

She talks about the loneliness and sadness experienced by many students who are recent immigrants and their desperate need to be connected to someone who they believe cares and understands. Igoa also discusses the differences in their reactions.

In my work with immigrant children, I have become aware that each student's response and behavior in my classroom and out in the yard are a result of the complex interaction of his or her cultural background, individual nature, and length of time that student has been in the host country. (p. 17)

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (www.nwrel.org/cnorse/booklets/immigration/4.html#language) suggests a number of factors that influence the experience of immigrant families, including the following:

- Background and reasons for immigrating
- Immigrant or refugee status
- Adjustment issues
- Family and cultural supports
- Cultural differences
- Language issues
- Economic status
- Marketability of skills in U.S. economy
- Acceptance by U.S. mainstream society
- Generational issues

In order to understand the needs of our immigrant students, we must go beyond understanding theories of human development and understand the journeys that have led our students to our classrooms.

Finding out what is going on in the lives of our immigrant students involves finding out about their home cultures. For instance, how are your students taught in their homes? How do they show respect for elders? What is schooling like in their home nations? What ways of learning work for them? What are the things that go on in school (in teaching and learning) that feel uncomfortable or “foreign” to your students? What kinds of behaviors or responses from students make us feel uncomfortable, disrespected or unfamiliar? (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999, p. 205)

As discussed throughout this book, this will involve meeting with families and seeking out individuals in the community and the education profession who have a deep understanding of the needs of our immigrant children. An understanding of students’ unique needs can have a significant impact on the classroom management methods that are most appropriate for students. Ballenger (1992) provides an engaging description of a North American teacher’s discovery that the perspective from which she viewed behavior management and her use of language needed to be altered to effectively engage young Haitian students. Ballenger found that, when dealing with behavior problems, Haitian parents and teachers did not talk about children’s feelings or individual consequences. Instead, they focused on the fact the behavior was “bad” and that it was disappointing to significant adults in the child’s life that the child would act in this manner. Ballenger (1992) noted:

The North American teachers characteristically are concerned with making a connection with the individual child, with articulating his or her feelings and problems. . . . The Haitian people I spoke with and observed, emphasize the group in their control talk, articulating the values and responsibilities of group membership. (p. 204)

Ballenger comments that her observations suggested North American teachers, particularly those in the primary grades, were reluctant to firmly correct students, whereas Haitian teachers seemed to see this as part of strengthening teacher-student relationships. While acknowledging the fact that “North Americans perceive Haitians as too severe, both verbally and in their use of physical punishment” (p. 206), Ballenger emphasized that creating too great a discrepancy between parental and teacher responses to disruptive student behavior may cause serious problems because it can have a negative impact on the relationships between the teacher and the child.

Problems caused by social incongruence are not unique to children who have recently arrived from another country. Native American students who have lived in rural areas, often on reservations, and move to urban areas will experience stressors very similar to those of students from other countries. In her study of Papago preschoolers (members of an American Indian group in Arizona) Macias (1987) also described concerns regarding continuity.

For many children of ethnic minority origin, the transition from home to school in early childhood appears to be a critical period of discontinuity. The way in which cultural disparities—between what has been learned at home and what school teaches—are dealt with determines to some degree the efficacy of their schooling. (p. 364)

Several years ago the author was working in an elementary school in which approximately one-third of the students were Native American. Several teachers expressed annoyance when they discovered nice, shiny “I’m #1” buttons in the waste-baskets. During a faculty discussion concerning the lack of respect for school property

displayed by these students, a Native American staff member informed the teachers that in her culture, students were encouraged not to outshine their friends. She noted students from her tribe would be chastised by members of the tribe for bringing home an item indicating they had outperformed their friends and focused attention on themselves. The staff assistant had provided the teachers with an important lesson in how methods used to encourage and motivate students are more effective when they are responsive to students' cultural values.

This problem of cultural incongruence clearly affects some African American students. As indicated by the data presented early in this section, African American students, particularly males, are the most disproportionately disciplined student group. The manner in which some Black children prefer to learn and are accustomed to act in social settings may also lead to unfair treatment (Bireda, 2010). African Americans are more likely to have a collaborative approach to learning and take a "we" approach to supporting and defending their peers. African American students are more likely to be confrontational, intense, and more active and animated in discussions, not taking turns or asking for permission to speak. Additionally African American students may view time differently and place a higher value on social issues than timeliness (Bireda, 2010; Gay, 2000). A number of these characteristics (e.g., being more field dependent, viewing time differently, and valuing supportive and collaborative relationships are also common among Latino and Native American students). These values often differ from White teachers who value punctuality and more often "rely on more dispassionate, impersonal, and emotionally restrained communication styles" and "sequential versus simultaneous patterns of interaction. . . . Repeated reprimands for expressing culturally derived communication styles may irritate African American youngsters, diminish their sense of self-worth, lead to escalating discipline problems, and impede academic progress" (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005, p. 238). The book *Cultures in Conflict: Eliminating Racial Profiling* (Bireda, 2010) presents an excellent description of cultural factors that influence the learning and behavior of African American and Latino students as well as approaches educators can take to make schools more inviting, culturally sensitive places for students from these cultural groups.

In their article "Toward a Conception of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management," Weinstein, Thomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) suggest the following requirements for developing culturally responsive classroom management:

- (a) recognition of one's own ethnocentrism and biases;
- (b) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds;
- (c) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system;
- (d) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and
- (e) commitment to building caring classroom communities. (p. 27)

The materials presented in this book have been carefully selected to offer classroom management strategies—including the creation of caring classroom communities—that are considered best practice in working with a diverse student population.

PAUSE & CONSIDER 1.3

Based on your experiences with students and families whose cultures are different from your own, list several ideas related to how students from these cultural backgrounds might prefer to learn, what would make them comfortable or uncomfortable in a classroom, and how discipline might be handled in their family or community. Share these ideas with a group of colleagues or students in your class.



Developing Your Approach to Classroom Management

One of the most important professional decisions you will make is how you choose to create and maintain a learning environment that is comfortable and supportive for all learners. This decision will be influenced by a variety of factors, and it is important that you thoughtfully consider these factors as you develop your approach to classroom management. Too often teachers simply select a method because they have learned it at a workshop or it has been determined that all teachers in a building will implement a particular approach. It may be necessary, and even advantageous, for all teachers at a grade level or in a building to commit to certain aspects of classroom management such as the teaching of behavior expectations, decisions about when to involve other professionals in helping students behave responsibly, and so on. However, there are many aspects of classroom management in which the teacher has considerable choice, such as specific procedures in the classroom, methods for initially responding to mild disruptions, ways to develop a sense of community in the classroom, or instructional methods that enhance students' motivation to learn and thus reduce disruptive behavior. The decisions you make in these areas will significantly influence student behavior, achievement, and the extent to which you enjoy teaching. Although many decisions you make will depend on the type of information you have about classroom management methods, your decisions will also be affected by your own history, style, and values.

Teachers' approaches to classroom management are clearly affected by their own life experiences. Johns and Espinoza (1996) noted that "what teachers consider to be 'discipline problems' are determined by their own culture, filtered through personal values and teaching style" (p. 9). Similarly, how we organize our classroom and how we respond to disruptions of the learning environment are also influenced by our personal histories. In a study of 156 preservice teachers, Kaplan (1992) found "teachers' disciplinary experiences in their families of origin are predictive of the strategies they select for classroom management" (p. 263). This is not surprising; classroom management involves how we relate personally to others and how we respond when someone does something we believe is not acceptable. These are both factors closely related to how we were raised and how we learned to deal with people. It is understandable

that the beliefs and habits we developed in our family of origin and other relationships and experiences with others will have an impact on our classroom management decisions. As you work to create positive, supportive learning communities in which all students feel safe and respected, you must be aware of your own personal histories and beliefs and ensure these do not limit your ability to incorporate methods that facilitate learning for all students. Some educators and writers suggest that teachers should select an approach that is consistent with their own personality and matches their own preferences. Consider for a moment situations in which you seek professional help—possibly seeing a physician or dentist. Do you want the professional to choose an approach to treating you based on what makes that person most comfortable or on the most current research related to



"You'll find Classroom Discipline in Three Easy Lessons in fiction."

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the condition that caused you to seek assistance? During their high school experiences one of the author's children was sprayed in the face with water for turning his body to be comfortable in a chair, and the other was yanked out of her seat for asking a friend a question about a computer during a study hall in the library. These responses were defended by the educators involved as being the most effective methods, and yet few professionals would describe these techniques as "best practice." The best approach to effective classroom management involves incorporating "best practice" whenever possible. In some cases it will involve stretching yourself to learn and implement methods that are initially somewhat uncomfortable or are not completely natural. One wonders how many surgeons initially showed hesitation at opening a human body and manipulating or cutting the organs. After time, these skilled professionals learned to view this as a natural part of becoming proficient in their field.

In a study of teachers' approaches to classroom management, Johnson, Whitington, and Oswald (1994) studied over 3,400 Australian teachers, finding that teachers' views of discipline fell into three categories: (1) *traditional*, characterized by the teacher as authority figure who presents and follows strict rules and responds with clear and escalating responses to student misbehavior; (2) *liberal progressive*, in which teachers apply democratic principles that involve students in decision making and solving problems; and (3) *socially critical*, in which much student behavior characterized as inappropriate or unproductive is viewed as a response to conditions in the classroom that fail to meet students' needs. Johnson reported that 98 percent of the teachers fell into the first two categories. Over 70 percent of secondary teachers rated themselves as traditional, and nearly two-thirds of elementary teachers rated themselves as liberal progressives. The real issue here is whether the specific methods these teachers used incorporated a high rate of research-supported methods and whether they were responsive to their students' needs and desires.

The most effective approach to classroom management quite likely involves components of each of the views described by Johnson. Research, however, suggests a blend of the liberal progressive and socially critical approaches is most effective. Consistent with the socially critical view described by Johnson, Brophy (1996) reported that more successful teachers view classroom management as the proactive development of a safe, supportive, engaging classroom environment, whereas less successful teachers view classroom management as maintaining teacher authority and implementing discipline methods. This belief has been supported by research examining effective classroom management in urban schools (Ullucci, 2009). As you will read throughout this book, a number of researchers and writers have suggested that students behave more appropriately and learn more effectively in classrooms in which their needs and interests are taken into consideration, they are treated with respect, and they are involved in resolving conflicts. Student behavior issues can best be resolved by creating positive, supportive environments characterized by engaging and intellectually appropriate instructional activities. Therefore, regardless of one's personal beliefs or personal style, incorporating some aspects of the liberal progressive approach will help facilitate a more positive learning environment.

In a very real sense, the most effective classroom management will be that which you create from being a teacher-researcher in your own classroom. The theories, research, and strategies provided in this book can serve as an important and necessary foundation for your role as teacher-researcher. However, the most important factor will be your willingness to continually ask questions about student behavior and learning, to blend this with your considerable knowledge of research and best practice in the area of classroom management, and to think critically and deeply about the

dynamics in your classroom as a basis for working with students to make changes you believe will enhance their quality of learning in your classroom. I have attempted to help you in this process by including Pause and Consider activities throughout the text to encourage you to develop the habit of asking how research can inform your practice by analyzing your teaching context in light of new information.

Students who create classroom management and instructional challenges are, in fact, our best staff development specialists. They let us know that even though we may be very good, we can always expand our skills. Fortunately, almost without exception, the new methods we implement to assist students who are struggling with their learning and behavior will be beneficial for all students. Effective classroom management is not a zero-sum game—efforts to assist students in need necessarily detract from other students. When you use the methods suggested in this book, you not only enhance your ability to reach students with special academic or behavior needs but also simultaneously enrich the learning experience of all students.

PAUSE & CONSIDER 1.4

Write a brief statement on how your beliefs about discipline have been developed and how they relate to your own upbringing and personal values. Next, rate yourself according to Johnson's categories. Do you support traditional, liberal progressive, or social critical views of classroom management? As you read this book and consider methods that may be helpful in establishing a positive learning community that flows smoothly and is a calm, supportive place for students to learn, reflect on whether any of your current views may need to be altered in order to incorporate new methods.



Action Plan for Enhancing Your Classroom Management Skills

The following activity will help you use the material from this chapter to move forward with a deeper understanding of effective classroom management. This activity guides you in creating specific methods you can incorporate into your classroom.

- List the five key factors in effective classroom management. Then provide at least two examples of classroom methods you or a teacher whose class you are observing employs that effectively incorporate these factors into the classroom. How would you rate yourself regarding the implementation of, or preparation to implement, each factor?

Five Factors in Effective Classroom Management

Factor	Examples/Evidence of Implementation	Rating
1. _____	1. _____	_____
2. _____	1. _____	_____

3. _____	1. _____	_____
2. _____		
4. _____	1. _____	_____
2. _____		
5. _____	1. _____	_____
2. _____		

- Select a student who is having difficulty in your classroom or a classroom you are observing. Create a list of personal/psychological factors or needs not being met that might help explain this student's behavior and thus provide you with insight into interventions you might implement to more effectively meet this students' unique needs.

Student _____

Psychological Needs Not Being Met

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Possible Interventions

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- If you have a student from a minority culture who is struggling to be productively involved in the classroom, list several factors related to cultural issues that may be influencing this student's behavior. Also list one or two interventions you might make to assist this student.

Student _____

Cultural Factor That Might Influence Behavior

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Possible Interventions

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- Johnson and his colleagues (1994) discovered that teacher approaches to classroom management fell into three categories: traditional, liberal progressive, and socially critical. At this point, where would you place your approach to classroom management? What factors did you use to make this determination?

After completing this book, you are encouraged to answer this question again.

My Current Approach to Classroom Management _____

Reasons I Would Place Myself into This Category

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Recommended Reading

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- Pollock, M. (Ed.). (2008). *Everyday antiracism: Getting real about race in school*. New York: The New Press.
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