DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Abstract: This article was written in the hope that it could help beginning teachers get off to a good start in organizing and managing an effective literacy instruction classroom environment.

Key words: effective, classroom management, proximal development

Of all concerns novice teachers have about setting up a classroom of their own, classroom management is typically top of the list. Adams described effectively managed classrooms as those where there is purpose and order, an expectation of high student effort and engagement, a balance of cooperation and competition, and students who are trained to be independent and capable learners. An effective teacher uses time wisely and is well prepared to teach [2,3,5]. Furthermore, effective teachers understand Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development so that students receive appropriate scaffolding and challenge during daily instruction. Your ability to manage the daily schedule, classroom transitions, and student behavior can make or break your success as a teacher. Here are some classroom management tips to consider. First, clearly state and model the expected behaviors you have for students on the first day of school. Discuss the rules and the consequences for failing to obey the rules with the students. Do not fall into the trap of asking students to suggest the rules. You are the teacher and are responsible to maintain order and a positive learning environment [1]. They can ask questions for clarification, but they do not create the rules for behavior in the school or classroom. Classroom rules and expectations should also be shared with the parents. Once the rules and consequences have been established, it is important for you to be consistent in applying them. Second, classroom management involves managing time and transitions efficiently. Use your time wisely and engage students in meaningful learning activities. Students are quick to identify activities with little meaning or purpose and often demonstrate this by acting out or being disruptive. Another key to keeping the classroom running smoothly is to manage the transitions from one activity to the next, as described earlier. Third, and probably most concerning, is managing student misbehaviors. With clear expectations modeled and taught, you will prevent many common student disruptions and inappropriate behavior. When students misbehave or are disruptive, finds ways to administer consequences to minimize interruptions to your instruction [2]. This could mean simply telling a student to replace a green with a yellow card on your classroom management chart. A prepared teacher is a teacher who can respond to student misbehavior calmly and confidently and maintain the flow of classroom instruction. Predetermined rules and consequences, clear classroom routines, and brief transitions will ensure that all students can learn in a safe and comfortable environment [6].

Several years ago, we observed a randomly selected group of elementary teachers during their entire literacy block. What struck us as observers was how long teachers took to get into instruction from the start of the school day. In one classroom, an extreme to be sure, it took 45 minutes of opening activities before any instruction was begun. The daily opening routine in classrooms is intended to get the necessary work of administration and organization done quickly and efficiently. Typically, teachers need to accommodate the following daily tasks: (1) taking attendance, (2) getting a lunch count, (3) school

announcements and pledge of allegiance, and (4) reviewing the calendar and daily schedule. In addition, many teachers have now incorporated into the daily or morning routine a morning message. Although each of these demands are important to the smooth operation of a school, they can take precious time away from the more vital work of instruction generally and literacy instruction specifically. Consequently, it is important to organize the daily or morning routine as efficiently as possible, preserving every precious minute of allocated in-school time to the essential work of literacy teaching and learning [3]. When children enter the classroom, they should have a series of tasks that are to be accomplished immediately. Many teachers have an attendance board where students can turn their name around on a hanging decal or in a pocket chart to indicate they are in attendance. This saves time calling roll and gives the teacher quick attendance information in a single location. Similarly, a lunch count board can indicate the number of students who are planning to eat school lunch each day. Once these necessary tasks are done, students may be encouraged to read the morning message clearly posted in a classroom location. A morning message is typically displayed, read, and discussed as a kick off to the day. A morning message provides a time for students to think about what is going to be happening during the school day, reflect on an important event from the day before, or discuss a meaningful upcoming event. This can be displayed digitally or using static print displays. Once students have completed these opening activities, some teachers have a menu of useful activities students can complete, such as reading a book independently or with a partner, writing in a journal, or completing a word sort. These activities are sometimes referred to as "bell work," meaning work that is to be done right after the bell rings marking the beginning of the school day and completed by the time the teacher is ready to begin instruction.

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