

Introduction

This is a book about classroom management unlike any you have read before. Many teachers believe that the only component of classroom management is student discipline—managing student behavior through rules and consequences. Classroom management is much more than just coming up with rules and meting out consequences when those rules are broken.

Poor teaching strategies can trigger behavior problems. When a teacher gives confusing directions, could students respond with inappropriate behaviors? Absolutely. I see this happen all the time, even with experienced teachers. When students sit too long without a break will they create mischief? Without a doubt.

You can prevent problems before they occur. I have analyzed possible triggers for behavior problems in the classroom and have found ways for you to eliminate them proactively by using effective management strategies. Teachers who wait until students act out are constantly in a reactive mode with discipline issues.

Most new teachers learn how to create classroom rules to help manage their classrooms. New teachers also need to learn practical skills for implementing those rules, and so much more. They need to know how to get students' attention; how to engage students so they are sitting on the edge of their seats, waiting for the next part of the lesson; how to give students a needed break, yet maintain order in the classroom. You'll learn how to do this in the next eight weeks.

Classroom management styles can impact students for years in both positive and negative ways. In one study, first grade students who were rated by their teachers as being in the top quartile for aggressive behavior were randomly assigned to classrooms that were described as either well-run or chaotic. Years later in middle school, it was found that the students in the orderly, well-run classrooms in first grade had a 3 to 1 chance of still being highly aggressive in middle school. The students who were in the chaotic classrooms in first grade had an astounding 59 to 1 chance of being highly aggressive in middle school (Kellam et al., 1994).

The human brain wires itself differently as it interacts with the environment. This is the concept of neuroplasticity. The environment that students are growing up in today is vastly different than twenty or thirty years ago, and the brains of our students are

wired differently. Take, for example, the huge amount of time today's students spend in isolation with an electronic device. The emphasis on fine motor skills, focusing on stationary objects such as a laptop or smartphone for hours at a time during critical developmental periods, watching videos that are only six seconds long—all these can affect students' ability to read off the board or sit for extended periods of time or have mental stamina for tasks that require sustained attention. The skills you will learn in this book will help you deal with your students' new brain wiring.

I often see teachers struggling to maintain order in the classroom, not knowing what to do in very complex and demanding situations. Many teachers spend an inordinate amount of time being drill sergeants, constantly disciplining students. This is not why we got into the profession of teaching.

Every teacher I know loves learning, loves students, and wants to share his or her love of learning with students. When the skills in this program are mastered, you will have the ability to manage your classroom with confidence. Then you can go back to doing what you signed up for in the first place—teaching students the subjects that you love.

There are eight fundamental tasks that teachers engage in many times every day:

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| Getting Attention | Getting Participation |
| Keeping Attention | Giving Directions |
| Engaging Students | Communicating |
| Teaching the Lesson | Transitioning |

When you perform these tasks well, your classroom hums along and your students are productive learners. When you handle these tasks poorly, your class can get out of control.

In the next eight weeks, you'll learn skills in all of these eight fundamental tasks that will help you manage your classroom. Each week will focus on one task. There are five skills to master for each task. Here's how it works:

Every day, Monday through Friday, you will be introduced to a new skill. Each skill has a short description and an explanation why the skill works. The directions for implementing each skill are described in detail. I suggest that you read about the skill and practice it first before you implement the skill with the students.

Then try the new skill with your class. To be most effective, you must implement the skill in front of a real, live classroom full of students. You may master some of the skills after one try and seamlessly incorporate them into your teaching repertoire. Others will require more practice over several weeks to make the skill a habit. In eight weeks, you will learn the skills you need to manage your classroom.

After a few months of practicing these new skills, find someone who will give you honest feedback. Ask a family member, a colleague, or a friend to watch you teach,

either live or by viewing a recording of you teaching a lesson. Ask this person to tell you honestly what he/she thinks of your classroom management. It will help if you give your colleague this book before he/she observes you.

You'll need this feedback, because you may not realize how much you have learned and how these skills have changed the way you teach. An observer will help you understand just how far you've progressed.

As you work through the skills over the next eight weeks, you will build confidence over time. Start by doing one new skill each day. Commit to using that skill the first five minutes of the class's first hour. That's it for that day! After a while, you'll use the skill all morning, and eventually all day.

In eight weeks, you will have forty effective classroom management skills at your command. Let's move toward the classroom that hums along, and away from the chaotic classroom where the teacher isn't in charge.

...Starting now!