



EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

January 20th, 2014

Faculty Work Day

Name: _____ Division: _____

Course/s: _____

Signature: _____

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What is Effective Classroom Management?

Effective classroom management is more than just administering disciplinary measures when a student misbehaves; it is about developing strategies to prevent problems from occurring while creating a positive learning environment.

Establishing an appropriate climate for learning is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching, and one of the most difficult skills to master. Failure to set the right tone will obstruct your effectiveness as an instructor. With these changing times, strategies that worked years ago may not be effective now given the challenges brought by the new generations of students.

As a professor, losing control of the classroom can be one of the most frustrating and intimidating experiences. Many professors may be fortunate to be teaching for years without encountering difficult disruptive behaviors, but the main purpose of classroom management is not only identification of the inadequate behaviors, but identification of preventive strategies and practical solutions to enhance the classroom climate.

This document aims to help faculty understand and identify different ways of managing a university classroom environment. MacDonald and Healy (2001) define classroom management as “the essential complement to your capacity to teach interesting material in ways that engage the interest and effort of all your students” (p.206). Every professor has his/her own method of classroom management and you need to define what your method is before you go into the classroom. Your policies and their consequences should be clearly stated on your syllabus. You will find out that writing these policies will help you define exactly what kind of behavior you require from your students. Your syllabus should be like a contract for your students.

Goals of Classroom Management.

The goals of classroom management are to: a) create the best learning environment possible and b) to develop student responsibility and self-regulation (MacDonald and Healy, 2001). It is not possible to have a positive learning environment if student behavior is not controlled and if students do not develop the sense of responsibility that being a college student demands. Students need to understand their responsibilities as a learner and be able to regulate their own behavior. That’s the reason why your syllabus needs to include all expected behaviors, classroom rules, and expected academic performance. A complete syllabus includes classroom rules, expected performance as measured by a rubric or any other assessment tool, and most of all clear deadlines and consequences.

Good classroom management involves a lot of planning and creativity. Good teaching strategies and student engagement are also essential for a positive learning environment. As an instructor, you need to review your classroom management strategies periodically to ensure that they are still effective. Also, it is important to assess if your teaching strategies are effective with the

specific group of students being taught. Teaching methodology needs to evolve according to your students' needs and with the changes in technology.

Instructor Responsibilities

As an instructor you are expected to:

- Ensure an appropriate pace and effective use of classroom time through course planning.
- Keep discussion and activities focused on the learning objectives.
- Create and maintain a positive learning environment
- Prevent, detect, and address disruptive or dysfunctional behavior.

Keeping your course focused on the learning objectives and learning outcomes will help you reduce some of the tension and resistance students may have about why a particular item or concept is important. Point to the relevance on the subject and stay focused on what the students need to know to complete the course successfully in order to make your classes run more smoothly.

Some ways to maintain your focus are:

- Keep the discussion on topic
- Balance the time or activities to the learning objectives/outcomes.
- Separate individual student issues from class issues.
- Address problems or disruptions immediately to keep them from escalating.

Professional Standards

Dress: Please refer to Faculty Handbook. Instructors should model the highest standards of professional behavior at all times, including dress.

Speech: Always address students in a professional and respectful manner. Be careful with humor, sometimes students may not understand! Avoid sarcasm or any condescending tone.

Student Confidentiality: Students have the right to expect that their private issues remain private, including their grades and performance standards.

Behavior toward students: Students have the right to have their opinions heard and should be treated with respect at all times. According to Benton (2004), we need to “approach teaching with humility. Only when we do so will our students treat us with respect. Only then will we deserve it.” Remember that respect must be earned; earning respect requires a lot of effort on your part; it doesn't happen automatically.

Attitude: Students are able to identify instructors that really care and love their profession. Remember that you must like what you are doing, and it should be reflected on your classroom climate.

Positive Learning Environment

Some of the things that you can do to foster a positive learning environment include:

- Respect for diversity
- Teach using a variety of teaching methods
- Provide constant and fair treatment of all students when applying class' policies and rules.
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy in student records and issues.
- Model appropriate classroom behavior for your students.

Student Accountability

Some of the things that you can do to foster student responsibility or accountability:

- To ensure that students are prepared for class every day, require a reading assignment or homework to be discussed and evaluated in class.
- Graded or ungraded class assignments from the daily lessons.
- Quizzes at any time during the class
- Minute papers to summarize the lessons learned.

The key is to give the students a reason to come to class prepared and also to receive a periodical assessment of their performance. If you want your students to come to class ready to learn, then you should prepare the lesson assuming that is the case. Students will understand that you will not spend valuable class time doing things they were assigned outside the class and that there are consequences for being unprepared.

Classroom Control Tips

- Set clear expectations: Tell your students what you expect, why, how and when. Use your syllabus as your "contract".
- Accountability
- Consistency
- Student involvement and engagement
- PRAISE
- MOTIVATION
- Handle classroom disruption in a positive manner

- Try to learn the students' names

Conclusion

Classroom Management is a difficult skill to master, but it is not impossible. Remember that as an FNU instructor we ask that you use your best judgment and that you be fair and reasonable in your dealings with students. Remember too that the best defense against student complaints and disruptions is to keep students actively involved and engaged and... respect!

See the attached charts for more suggestions in dealing with problem students

References:

Benton, T. (2004). No Respect. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 50. 18 C1.

MacDonald, R and Healy, S. (2001). *A Handbook for Beginning Teachers*. New York: Addison Wesley.

Issues / Solution Suggestions Table

Issue	Solution
<p>1. Undermining the instructor's authority</p>	<p>This is tricky as it speaks to "attitude." A student might belittle the instructor or engage in a battle of the wills. This student would need to be privately told that his/her attitude was confrontational and asked how this might be resolved mutually.</p> <p>"Be careful not to read most questions about content, interpretation, or assignments as a challenge of authority. Acting as if they are <u>not</u>, even when you suspect they are, can convey a sense of confidence and control. Sometimes merely assuring the student, while smiling, that you have indeed reflected on this issue at length and that they too will understand soon why the information or the assignment is valuable diffuses the situation. You may even want to encourage them to ask the question again at a later date if necessary."</p>
<p>2. Leaving class too frequently</p>	<p>Camps are divided as to whether or not students should ask for permission to leave for bathroom breaks or wait for a break in the class. I don't require my students to limit their bathroom breaks or ask permission, however, this is contentious for some faculty when breaks are taken too frequently. You might privately ask the student if everything is OK so that they know that you are concerned by their behavior. Don't assume disrespect – it might be a bladder infection or some other physical problem.</p>
<p>3. "Spacing Out" or Sitting With Back to Instructor</p>	<p>If this is a repeated problem, students need to know that their non-verbal behavior is perceived as disinterest. You might ask them after class if they need a more comfortable seat. Some students are extremely shy and it might take half of the semester before they open up enough to make sustained eye contact or face the instructor completely. Remember also that sustained eye contact is a culturally dictated practice that might not be feasible for some students.</p>
<p>4. Poor hygiene (possible cultural considerations)</p>	<p>Poor hygiene, too much perfume, cigarette odor or other strong odors can be distracting or even nauseating to students. The cause for the odor might be culturally based in bathing preferences between cultures. This can be a real problem for some faculty while others will never encounter the dilemma. I suggest letting the offending student know that in close quarters, some students have issues with strong smell. It might be suggested that for the course (not their outside of class lives) that the odor be masked in some way.</p>
<p>5. Verbal or physical threats</p>	<p>Verbal or physical threats are serious matters. They are discussed in detail by experts in the field in "<i>Handling Crisis</i>."</p> <p>As a general rule consult professional experts for assistance immediately.</p>

<p>6. Gum, Food, and Cell Phone Disruption</p>	<p>If decided upon by class, consequences for breaking this policy might range from the loss of participation points to the offender having to present on a topic of interest to the class. Some instructors allow cells to be on the vibrate setting as long as they are attended to at the break rather than used when it interrupts the class. Instructors need to abide by this rule as well and allow for at least one mistake per student as accidents do happen from oversight. The idea here is to prevent habitual disruption from gum popping and phones ringing.</p>
<p>7. Monopolizing Discussions</p>	<p>This is common but manageable. Many students are excited and talkative so it might be good to give them a few class periods to settle in. However, if it's evident right away that this is a trend, it's best to ask them to stay after class. You might approach them initially by saying that you are pleased with the amount of enthusiasm they have for discussion but were hoping that they have suggestions for getting the other class members equally involved. The student will most likely get your drift with minimal humiliation.</p>
<p>8. Sleeping in class</p>	<p>Sleeping in class is usually considered rude. Most faculty believe it should not be tolerated and is best curbed up front by waking a sleeping student and asking them to step outside with you. Once there faculty often tell students that it's best for the rest of the class if they return when they are awake enough to be an active participant. This occurs from time to time and you obviously are the one to choose lenience or punitive action. If it's one of your more regularly involved students, perhaps give them an option of an extra credit research assignment they can bring to your next class period covering the subject matter they missed while they were sleeping.</p> <p>An alternative approach is to assume that the student does not feel well, was up most of the night with a sick child, or has some other condition that results in sleepiness when still for long periods of time. You might simply choose to wake the student and ask them if they are feeling alright. To pull this off you need to approach it with true concern for the student's health and well being. Most of the time, student's are so embarrassed and so appreciative of your genuine concern that they don't let it happen again.</p> <p>Encourage students to actively participate, take notes (explain that this is helpful to their learning as it stimulates memory in the brain) and in particularly long classes break up the session with activities or paired conversations about a topic to ensure that students stay engaged. Students don't learn much from listening, so remember that the more they "experience" the learning process the more you are really teaching.</p>
<p>9. Repeated Tardiness:</p>	<p>There should be clear parameters set around this issue up front – either in your syllabus or in the class decided norms.</p>

	<p>Stick to your guns on the policy. Some fair policies might include 3 tardies equals one absence.</p> <p>It might be best to discuss this with students individually; some are habitually late because they are dependant on bus routes or other drivers for transportation to school.</p>
10. Refusal to Participate or Speak	<p>We cannot force students to speak in class nor participate in group projects. This can be addressed and become a win-win situation by either giving the student alternative options to verbal participation (unless it's a speech class) or simply carefully coaxing some response out of them and praising whatever minimal effort you receive from them. Remember, some students are terrified to be in a class setting –especially if there are round tables rather than desks – allowing for little anonymity.</p>
11. Sexual Innuendo, Flirting, or Other Inappropriate Suggestion	<p>This behavior should be curbed as soon as it occurs. It's never comfortable to tell a student that they aren't being appropriate and if you are uncomfortable, a short, positive e-mail or phone call might suffice. Your response should be not judgmental and you might discuss it with your department chair or faculty mentor before broaching it with your student.</p>
12. Sharing/Copying Work	<p>In some cultures, students work together to produce homework. It may come as a shock to these students that they cannot submit identical work. This may also come as a surprise to couples, parent-child, siblings, or close friends. Be careful to give thought to how you will handle this before you encounter it and react as if it were intentional cheating. This can also occur when the class does a great deal of group work. Make sure you are clear about what is individual vs. group work in your assignments.</p>
13. Plagiarism or Lying	<p>Depending upon the class and the student's prior knowledge of what plagiarism entails, some faculty issue an automatic F for the first instance, then expulsion from the class with a report to the department chair and division dean on a second instance. Most colleges have specific policies. Be sure to know you college policy before taking action.</p> <p><i>Plagiarism should be outlined in your syllabus with a reference for students to the college catalog for more information.</i></p>
14. Too Much Chit Chat	<p>Give 2-minute chat times for groups or before class begins let them know that you have material to be covered and that their talking isn't helping you achieve your goals for the class. Know too that some students occasionally translate a word or phrase to a tablemate who might not have as strong an understanding of English, be patient and observant when curbing this behavior.</p>
15. Disrespectful Behavior	<p>The reality is that sometimes students just plain won't like you. You will find yourself in a conversation with yourself about why they don't like you and treat you with disrespect.</p>

	Animosity will perpetuate itself so remember your role and look for a way to positively invite the student to engage more deeply in the class. Perhaps offer them a special task based on a self-disclosed talent; for instance, a student whose hobby is Origami (Japanese paper folding) might lead a lesson on the art of following instructions.
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Rodriguez, L. (2011). *Classroom Management*. Retrieved January 14, 2014, from www.4faculty.org

Tips on Classroom Management for Adult ESL classes

1. Make expectations clear and realistic, and stick to them	Use your syllabus as your guide. Review classroom rules and performance objectives periodically.
2. Be consistent.	Set class routines that students can become familiar with. Choose regular warm-up and classroom activities so that students can know what to expect.
3. Find balance between being your students’ teacher and being their friends.	Treat your students professional and with respect. Establish boundaries.
4. Engage all students while teaching	Don’t base the pace of an entire lesson on one or two students. Call on students individually instead of asking an entire class. Have students work in pairs or in small groups.
5. Use interactive activities and open-ended questions as a chance to check student comprehension	Remember that ESL students need a lot of repetition and review. Choose activities that have students producing English and check for understanding periodically.
6. Recognize that some discipline concerns need to be addressed immediately, while others are better done individually after class	If the behavior is affecting the class, it needs to be addressed immediately. Take the disruptive behavior outside the classroom.

English Skills Learning Center (2014)

Dealing with difficult students

Presentation expert David Peoples has observed “that out of every 100 people, there’s at least one nut.” Peoples has the following tips for dealing with troublemakers in class:

Type of Troublemaker	Distinguishing Characteristic	Solution
Hostile Troublemaker (Devil’s Advocate)	Interrupts with “I do not agree.” “It will never work.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer question with question: ‘What should be done instead?’ • Deferral: ‘Let’s talk about this later one-on-one.’
Know-it-all Troublemaker	Say things like “I have a PhD and twenty years experience...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with them individually to recognize their expertise and seek their buy-in. • State both sides and explain why your position is better.
Loudmouth Troublemaker	Talks too much, dominates, and won’t shut up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move physically closer and closer • Say: ‘I appreciate your comments, but we would like to hear from others.’ • Say: ‘That’s a good question, but in the short time we have I would like to stick to the subject of...’
Interrupter and Interpreter	Interrupts others and/or explains what others have said or asked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jump in to make sure first person is done and/or ask first person to confirm second person’s interpretation.
Gossip Troublemakers	Introduces gossip and rumors into discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it cannot be verified, ‘Let’s not take the time of the audience until we can verify the accuracy of that information.’
Whisperer	Whispering between two people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop talking; establish silence.
Silent Troublesooter	Reading newspaper, not participating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a directed question.
Latecomer Troublemaker	Arrives late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop talking and establish silence when they come in.
Early Leaver Troublemaker	Leaves early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule quiz for end of class. • Handout graded assignments or other materials at the end.

Effective Teaching and Learning Department, Baker College (2005).

Activity:

1. Provide a list of disruptive or inappropriate behaviors that you have encountered in your classes recently. Describe how you have handled each situation and the outcomes.
2. After reviewing this document, what other solution would you have given or would have been more effective in handling the above named behaviors.
3. Provide a list of your own suggestions according to the students and courses that you teach.