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CLASSROOM STRUCTURE

Creating a safe learning environment requires that you clearly identify rules and expectations. Almost all successful teachers say the most important thing they do on the first day of school is establish their classroom rules and expectations. Some teachers plan them in advance, while others prefer to develop them collaboratively with their students. Whichever path you take, you will need to teach the rules just as you would teach any other content area. Once the rules are identified and taught, be sure to identify incentives that support them. Preparation includes the following tasks:

1 Review other teachers' lists of rules and expectations. Whether you are going to prepare classroom rules ahead of time, or develop them with your class, this is a good first step. Most are simply listed in positive behavioral terms, but some successful teachers combine positive expectations with explicit sanctions. Some examples follow.

Students should:
► look at and listen to the teacher
► play nicely
► speak with indoor voices
► complete work on time
► listen to others
► follow teacher directions
► keep hands, feet, and objects to self
► use a 6-inch (quiet) voice when working
► walk quietly in the halls and room
► raise a hand when you want to speak
► wait your turn
► keep your body in your own space
► work hard
► finish your work carefully

Classroom Rules:
► Treat others with respect
► No teasing, swearing, or put-downs
► Do not interrupt others
► Respect other people's property and space
► Don't touch, push or, hit others
► Stay out of other students' and teachers' desk and storage areas
► Return items that are borrowed
► Respect everyone's right to learn
► Keep voices and noise levels low
► Help others if you can
► Be a good sport

I have the right:
► To be happy and be treated with compassion in this room. This means no one will laugh at me or hurt my feelings.
► To be myself in this room. This means that no one will treat me unfairly because I am black or white, thin or fat, tall or short, boy or girl.
► To be safe in this room. This means that no one will hit me, kick me, push me, pinch me, or hurt me in any way.
► To hear and be heard in this room. This means that no one will yell, scream, shout, or make loud noises.

2 Decide on a limited number of rules and expectations. Keep the number small—between five and nine expectations—so your students won't feel overwhelmed. A small number of well-stated, succinct rules will be easier for them to manage, and make it more possible for them to succeed at the behaviors you expect of them.

3 When making rules collaboratively, have students brainstorm the kinds of rules that would help them feel safe and make the classroom a place where they can learn. Help them:
group their suggestions and identify categories of rules;
consolidate their suggestions to eliminate repetition;
choose the wording that best conveys their rules and expectations; and
keep the number of rules small, so students will be able to manage them.

Make a poster of your classroom rules and expectations. Find wall space where it can remain all year. Leave room on the poster for several additional items that might be suggested by students.

Plan how you will teach the classroom rules and expectations on the first day and throughout the year. Decide:

- How to begin a class discussion on why schools and classrooms need to have rules that limit student behavior.
- What illustrations on the poster might be helpful.
- What specific examples of acceptable and unacceptable behavior should be presented.
- How the rules and expectations can be reviewed weekly.

List consequences. Review the following list of consequences that successful teachers use to discourage unsafe or disruptive student behavior. Circle those you would be comfortable discussing the first day of school.

- Separation from a group or work station within classroom
- Minutes subtracted from recess period
- Minutes of after-school detention
- Loss of morning snack (if routinely offered)
- Note or phone call to the parent

List privileges. Review the following list of privileges that successful teachers use to motivate academic effort of the whole class, and circle those you think would be most appropriate at your grade level.

- End-of-week game time (length determined by points earned)
- Pizza party (scheduled when predetermined number of points earned)
- Popcorn party (depending on when class fills the jar with kernels)
- Lunch in the room with teacher and classmates (dessert provided)
- Afternoon music during seat-work time
- Extra recess time

The structure you introduce at the beginning of the year will help both you and your students feel more comfortable, because you will all know what is expected of you from the start. Identifying the expectations that are most important to maintaining discipline in your classroom, teaching these expectations effectively, and letting students know how they will be rewarded or punished for their behavior sets the proper tone for the year. If we want students to behave well, we have to let them know what good behavior is!

CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Many teachers emphasize the increasing necessity of beginning to establish a positive emotional climate within the classroom the very first day. Rules and consequences provide a necessary safety component to the classroom climate. With today's students, however, it becomes absolutely necessary to establish emotional connections with students, while at the same time maintaining a business-like demeanor. Consider the following strategies recommended by successful teachers:
1. Spend time evaluating the appearance of your room. What could you add to make it feel warm, magical, and bright. Would a plant or small lamp on a work table in a corner help? Notice what other teachers do to add warmth to their classrooms.

2. Think of analogies between classrooms and athletic teams, frontier families, or businesses. Make it clear than in these groups everyone has to get along with each other without arguing and fighting, everyone has to work hard, and everyone has to care about each other in order to win, survive, or make the group successful.

3. Consider adopting or creating a class identity, slogan, or logo. These can foster a sense of belonging and feelings of loyalty to you, to the other students, and to the learning you are undertaking together.

4. Prepare a short speech about the importance of mutual respect. What does this mean in terms of behavior? How do respectful teachers talk to students? How can students talk respectfully to each other? How should students talk to teachers? Use some examples of respectful and disrespectful behavior. Stress that treating people with respect will be very important to them throughout their lives.

5. Find or invent a game to familiarize everyone with students' names. The sooner students know each other, the more friendly and family-like your class will become. The bonds that students form with each other encourage them to respect each other, and to behave accordingly.

6. Prepare a short speech in which you share your enthusiasm with students. Let them know how much you love teaching, how excited and nervous you are about meeting everyone, how much you look forward to getting to know everyone, how important each student’s learning is to you, and how much you want them to feel comfortable in your room and have a great year.

7. Decide what kinds of personal information about yourself and your family you can comfortably share the first day of school. Sharing some information makes you more human to the students, and will help them see you as someone they will want to respect. But knowing ahead of time what you're willing to tell them and what you want to keep private can prevent awkward moments with your class.

8. Think of something funny that happened to you during the summer, or sometime in your life, that you can share with students the first day of school. When you show that you can laugh at yourself, you create a climate where students feel comfortable about making mistakes—which is, after all, an important part of learning!

9. Prepare a short speech about how to balance hard work with having fun in your classroom. If your students know that both work and play are going to happen in school, they will know you are concerned with them as people, not only as students. They will also be willing to work at work time, knowing that down time will follow.

10. Play a fun game at the end of the day. It's a good way to relax, and enjoy each others' company.

**Routines**

First day activities must include introducing classroom routines. Routines let you and your students know what to expect regarding day-to-day matters. When students know what's expected of them, they calm down and can more easily maintain good learning behavior. Routines help everyone—including you—get with the program. In developing your classroom routines, think about what makes sense for you, and ask other teachers what procedures they use. Some common classroom routines are:
- Where to store coats and bags.
- Where to put notes from home, lunch money, lunches.
- Using the bathroom and drinking fountains.
- Sharpening pencils.
- Lining up to go to other classrooms, recesses, and lunch.
- Returning from other classrooms and recesses.
- Signals for getting student attention.
- Playground rules.
- Moving about the room during class.
- Handing in and storing written assignments.
- Dismissal procedures for walkers, getting bus riders on correct bus.

Some of these routines you can customize for your classroom; others will need to conform to school-wide policies. In either case, the more you can make routines of daily activities, the less chance students have to develop discipline problems.

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Successful teachers stress the importance of getting right to work and filling the first day with exciting academic activities. You'll want to engage students in a variety of different kinds of activities, so they'll find work interesting and won't feel the urge to create trouble. The more lively, interactive, and challenging the activities, the less likely you'll have discipline problems. Here are some frequently mentioned first-day suggestions.

1. **Include at least one academic task that enables ALL students to succeed.** It's important to get off on the right foot, with every student in your class knowing that he or she will be able to achieve in your class.

2. **Include at least one academic task that will challenge your top students.** This will keep these students involved, and should help other students stretch—and achieve at higher levels.

3. **Begin reading an exciting book to the class.** Let students know that you'll be reading additional installments on a regular basis.

4. **Begin a science project alluding to future "hands-on" activities.** Students who are doing, rather than simply listening, will have fun learning, look forward to new activities—and stay out of trouble!

5. **Make work relevant.** Make sure students know how the work will help them in their "real lives." Prepare a brief rationale for why students should invest effort in learning basic math, spelling, and writing skills. Present this rationale in various forms just before introducing a unit of work.

6. **Begin a portfolio file of monthly writing samples, self-portraits, and other drawings.** Portfolios let students chart their own progress, which can be a big incentive for them to stay interested and keep working hard.

7. **Be sure students take home something new they learned to read or something new they learned that would be of interest to their parents or friends.** Seeing some immediate, tangible results of their work can be a big motivator for students.

8. **Spend some time "hyping" future instructional units.** Students who are looking forward to a new project are less likely to create problems in your classroom.

In a nutshell, when you use creative instructional strategies, your students will have less time and energy to get into trouble. When you stay on your toes, you'll keep them on theirs, too. And the sooner you get started, the better.
INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

Effective instructional planning is the key to motivating students' academic growth. Successful teachers say it matters how a lesson is introduced, how meaningful the content appears to students, the pace at which information is imparted, the amount of variety introduced, and the amount of student involvement. Here are some suggestions for how to meet these challenges throughout the school year.

1. Think of ways to advertise coming curricular attractions a week or two in advance. A little “sales pitch” can go a long way toward generating student enthusiasm.

2. Use songs, poems, or experience-based stories to begin a lesson. This kind of introduction invites students in to the lesson, letting them know it will be fun and relevant to their lives.

3. Think of ways to use visual props with your spoken directions. Visuals can “hook” students into a lesson, and keep them interested and on-task. They will also be sure to attract the attention of students whose preferred learning style is visual.

4. Vary the presentation of informational material between lecture, video, discussion, and games. Changes of format keep lessons moving, and students interested.

5. Experiment with quick, random calling on students instead of waiting for hands during a discussion. This should keep students on their toes and attentive.

6. Try talking at different speeds and volumes when you give directions or present information. See which work best at keeping student interest by evaluating the number of students with their eyes focused on you.

7. Insist that all students look at you when you give directions. If a few students begin looking somewhere else in the room, pause and wait for them to give you their full attention.

8. Use a variety of colored chalk when writing directions or giving information on the chalkboard. Making the presentation appealing is as important in a classroom as it is in a restaurant. The more attractive the package, the more likely students will want to see what’s inside.

9. Ask the class often if they remember each step in a series of directions you’ve given. This encourages their ongoing attention to your instructions. It also gives you the chance to keep students on track, where they’ll be less likely to tune out the lesson and distract others.

10. Have a variety of work stations for some students to complete written work. Allowing them to move around from station to station burns off physical energy, and doing a variety of work tasks keeps them from getting bored.

11. Vary the seating chart more than once a month. Familiarity can lull students into not paying attention. Seeing the classroom from a new seat can keep them fresh.

12. Be sure each week includes some form of “hands-on” project. Students learn best when they’re “doing,” and students who are learning will cause fewer disruptions than those who are bored.

13. Establish the relevance of your lessons. With basic academic areas such as math and spelling, think of ways you can begin the lesson by explaining how it is pertinent to an athletic or recreational activity students care about, or to some later life skill or lucrative occupation.

14. Ask the class often if they understand what they are being asked to do and why they are being asked to do it. You can defuse potential problems by asking students “Who cares?” before they
have a chance to—and then insisting that they answer the question!

15. Limit your help to an individual student to less than a minute, keeping one eye on the rest of the class. This won’t give other students a chance to become disruptive.

16. Let students know in advance that any recitations must be very short. Students tend to get distracted when they listen to long student presentations. If other students aren’t paying attention, cut the talk short.

17. Try to break up written work periods during the day so that none is longer than 20 minutes. Remember, the research shows that too long a time on independent tasks can lead to discipline problems.

18. Count down the last five minutes of a seat-work period, reminding students of the expected results. Students will stay on task when they know they’ll be held accountable for a finished product at a given time.

19. Be sure that all materials for the day are organized and ready for quick distribution. If you’re distracted and flipping through papers, students are more likely to get rowdy—so be in your top form!

20. Mentally rate the interest level of your lessons on a 10-point scale and make a note of those with a rating of seven or above. See if you can accumulate enough 7+ lessons to fill the school year.

21. Ask other teachers what they taught last week that seemed to pique the interest of their students the most. Getting ideas from other professionals can keep you fresh and keep your students engaged and learning.

Implementing these suggestions will improve your ability to reach your students, and the more you can reach them, the fewer discipline problems you’re going to have.

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**SIGNALING/CUEING**

Survey responses show that the various signals successful teachers use to get and hold students’ attention to directions, information, and tasks are considered an important part of getting students motivated. The following list of recommendations can help you accomplish these goals.

1. **Getting students’ attention.** Review the following list of what teachers say to get students to listen to their directions and circle those that seem most applicable to your grade level and personal style.
   - I need to see everyone’s eyes looking at me.
   - 1, 2, 3. Eyes on me.
   - When I see everyone’s eyes, I’ll know you’re ready to begin.
   - Stop, look and (in unison) listen.
   - Eyes on me, ears listening, mouth closed, feet quiet, seat on rug.

2. **Get students back on task.** Memorize at least three of the following questions teachers ask to redirect student attention to the assigned task.
   - Are you with me?
   - Can I help?
   - Having trouble?
   - Are you doing your job?
   - Can you repeat my directions?

3. **Review other ways teachers get or redirect student attention to the assigned task.** Circle those that appear most appropriate for your grade level and personal style.
   - Counting forwards or backwards from five.
   - Beginning a rhythmic clap that the students finish or imitate.
Giving a particular student "The Eye" (an intense stare with head tilted and one eyebrow raised).

Raising one hand with outstretched fingers and saying, "Give me five" (each finger representing a listening or working expectation).

"Excuse me!"

"I want to see everyone seated, lips closed, bodies quiet."

"Mouth! Chair! Hands! Eyes!"

"This is your first and last warning" (of impending consequences).

Rate yourself. On a 10-point scale, score your behavior on the following kinds of body language successful teachers commonly associate with on-task student behavior. Ask a colleague to swap observational ratings on the same items.

Displays confident body posture (e.g., standing tall, feet planted solidly on the ground).

Uses a strong voice.

Moves vigorously around the room.

Uses many hand and facial gestures of approval and disapproval.

Is highly vigilant, constantly scanning the room.

Shows energetic and enthusiastic facial expressions.

When students become familiar with your signals that you want their attention, you will be able to quickly draw their focus to you, and minimize behavioral problems.

REINFORCEMENT TECHNIQUES

All of the successful teachers surveyed and interviewed referred to the necessity of reinforcing their expectations and rules with rewards and punishments. Frequent use of verbal approval is the most common reward mentioned. A surprising number of successful teachers also mention their regular use of concrete reinforcements and privileges to motivate student effort. All of the teachers, however, stress the need to respond immediately to unsafe or disruptive student behavior with unpleasant negative consequences.

Review the following list of words and phrases successful teachers use to motivate academic effort and circle those you think would be most appreciated by students who have difficulty achieving at an average rate.

You did that just right.

You are such good listeners.

That's well thought out.

You have a good head on you today.

Jolly good answer.

You are showing improvement.

That is certainly so.

That's such a good paper.

Well, I should say so.

You can be proud of yourself.

Right you are.

Now you're cooking.

Good progress

You're on the right track.

I'm pleased.

I like the way you're working.

How about that!

You are a careful thinker.
Great!
You’ve been listening with both ears.
Beautiful!
Please repeat. That’s worth hearing twice.
Stupendous!
I’m glad to see you working in your seat here.
Perfect!
You’re putting some good effort into this.
Fantastic!
Susie has her thinking cap on today.
That answer has the rest of us thinking now.
Bravo!
We accomplished a lot today.
Wonderful!
Say, you’re on the ball.
Splendid!
It feels good to come into such a good class.
Lovely!
Everyone seems to like that answer.
Superb!
Cool!
This is result of hard work by every one of you.
Much better!
You’re getting better at finishing the assignments.
Marvelous!

Your good study habits are helping you get a lot done.
Good work!
Anyone would love to work with this group.

Compliment student effort. Identify and memorize at least five new ways each month of the year. Sincere expressions of your approval can work wonders keeping students motivated.

Review a portfolio of each student’s work once a month. Record and communicate their area of greatest improvement. Students thrive when they see concrete samples of their progress.

Review the following list of privileges and concrete reinforcements that successful teachers use to motivate the whole class’s academic effort, and circle those you think would be most appropriate at your grade level.

- End-of-day socializing time (2–10 minutes depending on behavior)
- Class award posters
- Class sticker posters
- Extra videotape
- Free reading time
- Marbles in a jar for privilege time

Review the following list of unpleasant consequences that successful teachers use to discourage the repetition of unsafe or disruptive student behavior after one warning. Rank those you use or plan to use before referring an individual student to the school principal.

- 1–5 minute separation from a group within the classroom
- 1–5 minute isolation in a time-out station within the classroom
- 1–5 minutes subtracted from recess period
- 5–15 minutes subtracted from recess period
# Task Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>Week of:</th>
<th>Observer:</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>Th</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unpack books quietly</td>
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<td>2. Return Homework</td>
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<td>3. Complete Journal</td>
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<td>4. Activity Class</td>
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<td>5. Lunch</td>
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<td>6. Bathroom and Hall Behavior</td>
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<td>7. Story or Game Time</td>
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<td>8. Nap</td>
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<td>9. Recess</td>
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<td>10. Center time - Independently</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Work time - with teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Pack and Leave Time</td>
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</table>

| TOTALS |   |   |   |    |   |          |
15. Self-Monitoring and Personal Prescriptions

Self-monitoring by the student, whether it be academic or behavioral performance, can often be effectively achieved through the use of a personal prescription. The student and teacher together develop the self-monitoring prescription by discussing which behaviors, if changed, could enable the student to better achieve school success and be accepted by peers. Stress that it is important to always aim for a target. If a person has a goal, then he/she is likely to hit it. Prescriptions are checklists that the student reviews during the day and rates him/herself periodically as to the effort being exerted. The following sheets give examples of different personal prescriptions. The first example is a series of questions written by the teacher for the student to read throughout the day. The student is only expected to think about what was discussed earlier and attempt to follow the requests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Am I in my seat?

2. Do I have the materials I need out?

3. Am I talking to or touching anyone?

4. Am I listening to the teacher?

5. Did I write down my assignment for tomorrow?
Daily Self-Monitoring Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1:</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No yelling</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stay in seat</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 2:</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No yelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in seat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 3:</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No yelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in seat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: __________

If appropriate, the student counts the number of points given at the end of the day. The teacher and student discuss at break time whether the student’s perception of effort matches the teacher’s impression. It has been our experience that when the student is involved in the rating process, effort does increase.

Rewards are then given.
Behavior Contract

Student Name: ________________

Date: ______________________

Room: ______________________

______________, will demonstrate good behaviors each day at school.

______________ is expected to follow the teacher's directions the first time she asks him to do something. He/she is expected to do so promptly and with a good attitude. Each time that [Student name] does not meet these expectations, he/she will receive a tally mark for the day on the tracking sheet. These tally marks will determine the rewards and consequences that [Student name] receives, as shown below.

Zero tallies in one day = A chance to roll the die after school for one of the rewards listed below
One tally in one day = Does not get a chance to roll the die that day
Two or more tallies in one day = Loss of recess the next day and/or other consequences as determined by Mrs. ________________

(number rolled on a die)

1 = One table point for his table
2 = One raffle ticket for monthly class drawing
3 = One piece of candy
4 = Gets to be first in line for the next school day
5 = Gets to help teacher after school that afternoon
6 = Five marbles for the class marble jar
Behavior Contract

We agree to the terms of this behavior contract as set forth above.

Each week, James will hand in all class work done acceptably in:

- Reading
- English
- Math

Every Friday he will give his Reading, English, and Math teachers a travel card to check YES or NO, telling if the goal was reached.

When James earns three YES checks, the following week he receives these privileges:

1. James has the privilege of playing at lunch recess.

2. James has ___ hour(s) computer time on Monday.

3. James goes home at 3:30 p.m. every day on the school bus.

If James does not earn three YES checks, or loses his travel card, or forgets to take his travel card to his teachers on Friday, these consequences occur the following week:

1. James spends Monday through Friday in noon detention doing school work.

2. James has no computer time on the next Monday.

3. James will stay after school until 4:00 p.m. on Friday and take the city bus home if he misses any noon detentions during the week. The school will call James's parents and tell them he will be getting home late.

_________________________  _______________________
Student  Parent

_________________________  _______________________
Teacher  Date
We, the People
of Mrs. Miller's Class
all agree to:
Be good listeners.
Respect others.
We keep our hands and feet to ourselves.
Be kind with words and actions.
Respect school and personal property.

Garrett
Isaac
Jesse
Cole

Maya
Nathalie
Ethan
Lexi