

Classroom Management

What is Classroom Management?

I wanted to deeply understand the idea of classroom management. It helped to start with the basic idea of a classroom as a place where teachers and students gather for the purpose of learning. Ideally, everyone involved is there with good attitudes and behaviors, and a willingness to learn. The teacher presents the lesson, the students absorb the material, and everything goes well. However, this ideal is not always achieved.

Classroom management, then, consists of techniques and attitudes “through which a teacher controls their classroom environment so that student learning prevails because student misbehavior is effectively minimized and redirected.” (CPI Management Strategies)

Just as important, it addresses “the prevention of disruptive behavior preemptively, as well as effectively responding to it after it happens” (Wikipedia Classroom Management)

Classroom management is action-oriented and also goal-oriented. Those actions and goals will be examined in detail later, but we can consider the “big picture” goals now:

- to create a successful learning environment; indeed, having a positive impact on students achieving (Wikipedia Classroom Management)
- to create an environment that supports and facilitates academic and social-emotional learning (Wikipedia Classroom Management)
- to not only maintain order but to optimize student learning (Wikipedia Classroom Management)
- to encourage, and establish, student self-control by promoting positive student achievement and behavior. (UniversalClass Understanding CM)
- From a student’s perspective, effective classroom management involves clear communication of behavioral and academic expectations as well as a cooperative learning environment (Wikipedia Classroom Management)

In other words, classroom management’s primary goal is to create the ideal classroom through teacher efforts and student training. One advantage I infer is that when students experience a well-managed classroom, they are more likely to cooperate in creating another, thus helping their future teachers and classmates.

Why Classroom Management?

My education did not include training for classroom management. My student experience showed me that poor behavior could exist, but I saw very little of it during my undergraduate studies and almost

none during my graduate studies. It was easy for me to believe that teaching at a community college meant I would have very little poor behavior and what did occur could be quickly dealt with. This belief was incorrect.

My lack of skill here meant that some situations got out-of-hand, while others were not resolved in a manner that made me proud of my actions. I felt like I was the only teacher with this problem and dreaded those semesters where problems occurred. To my surprise, I found colleagues who felt the same way and who wished they knew how to handle demanding situations.

Even more surprising was discovering K through 12 teachers, people who had gone through teacher certification programs, who had not had classroom management training, or much of it.

It is a difficult aspect of teaching for many teachers. ... Teachers do not focus on learning classroom management, because higher education programs do not put an emphasis on the teacher attaining classroom management; indeed, the focus is on creating a conducive learning atmosphere for the student. (Wikipedia Classroom Management)

But poor student behavior can impact that learning atmosphere for others:

- the time a teacher must take to correct misbehavior caused by poor classroom management skills results in a lower rate of academic engagement in the classroom (Wikipedia Classroom Management)
- a high incidence of classroom disciplinary problems has a significant negative impact on the effectiveness of teaching and learning (UniversalClass Understanding CM)

So, in order to teach effectively, we need classroom management skills: “Teachers who apply strong and consistent management and utilize organizational skills have classrooms that experience fewer discipline problems.” (UniversalClass Understanding CM) And, “if continuous minor problems are not addressed properly, they will eventually turn into bigger, harder-to-control issues” (UniversalClass Understanding CM)

Those are not the only reasons: “research has shown that confidence in classroom management is important for a teacher’s sense of well-being and emotional health. Gaining skills in this area can decrease stress levels, burnout and resignations. This is significant considering the UK, USA and Australia lose 30-50% of their teachers in the first 5 years.” (liz’s early learning)

I would summarize this to say that good classroom management helps to attain the ideal learning experience while addressing the health of both the teacher and the students. “With a classroom environment like that in place, a teacher would have time to teach”. (cpi management strategies)

Classroom Management Basics

We can see that, as teachers, we want to influence and control student behavior. We want to be pre-emptive as much as possible -- I see this as defining a positive classroom environment – and we want to respond well to poor behavior – I see this as stopping it quickly. But sometimes a student’s response will escalate the situation, so what are we to do about that?

Consider this:

many in the field of teaching are not exactly clear on what constitutes classroom management and discipline and how these two concepts work together to create a stable, structured classroom that inspires learning and reduces conflict (UniversalClass Understanding CM)

Let me emphasize one part of the previous quote: “classroom management and discipline and how these two concepts work together”. This tells me that even the best classroom manager will face situations where deflecting and redirecting poor behavior will fail. Discipline enters the picture here, so we will need to address how to apply it correctly.

These ideas form the structure for the rest of this document.