

The Definition of Classroom Management

Classroom management is a gestalt, dependent upon several interdependent components: (1) an engaging curriculum; (2) working with anger, projection, and depression; (3) students as responsible citizens; (4) the teacher as a self-knowing model; (5) classroom management skills; (6) working with resistance, conflict, and stress; and (7) robust instruction.

If even one of these components is neglected, the whole process is compromised. Compromise results in the need for discipline.

Source: Adapted from Folder 3, "Developing a Classroom Management Repertoire," by J. R. Hanson, 1998, *Classroom Management: An ASCD Professional Inquiry Kit*, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

What is the long-term goal of classroom management?

Rheta DeVries: If we have short-term goals that are to have children obey the teacher who's an authoritarian telling them everything they should do and think and say, then that's what you're teaching children to do and be. Children may follow rules that adults present as long as they are under surveillance, but as soon as the adult turns his or her back, then children do what they like, and they don't follow the rules. So what we have as a long-term goal is the moral and intellectual autonomy of young children.

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What is an easy way to avoid classroom management problems?

Rheta DeVries: Having an engaging curriculum is one of the first things that a teacher wants to do in order to avoid management problems. If you don't have something the children are interested in, you're going to have behavior difficulties.

What opportunities arise from conflicts?

Rheta DeVries: We believe that conflicts are opportunities for children to learn self-regulation, to learn how to resolve difficulties with others. So the teacher uses the conflicts that arise naturally in the classroom as opportunities to help children learn strategies for resolving conflicts with others and to gain the confidence that they can resolve difficulties with others.

How important is an environment of respect?

Carol Myers, teacher: I use "yays and yucks" in my room as a strategy to get to know the children, and to let them get to know each other. It helps me a great deal as a teacher to get inside, into what goes on at home and what they bring to school that they don't necessarily talk about but they act out, whether consciously or subconsciously. It also helps them to become a family with each other. They come from lots of different backgrounds, cultures, and different personalities, different maturity levels—and when we share they find out more about each other.

What does it mean to have choices?

Sarah Vaughn, teacher: I try to give my students a lot of opportunities to make choices. They get to choose lots of activities in centers, they choose whether they want to play outside for a center time or play inside for a center time. There's all kinds of voting. We vote on our favorite, whatever it might be. We'll probably vote on our favorite ocean animal. So there's lots of times that children have choices and have a chance to vote.

What do you do when problems arise?

Loes Hedge, teacher: They've been told that they can solve their problems any way they want to as long as it doesn't cause a problem for someone else. And that's pretty much a philosophy in any way, whether they're working in a cooperative group or whether they're working alone on an assignment or whether there's a problem in the hallway or whatever. Try to work that problem out. Come up with a plan of your own, or come up with some kind of idea that can solve that for you and make it work for you and for everyone else. If you can solve it, and it doesn't become a problem for someone else, then that's an acceptable solution.

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