Classroom Management Techniques
By Katie Bielenberg

Expectations and Routines
I believe clear expectations of behaviors, along with appropriate routines, are essential to a positive and productive classroom environment. I establish classroom behavior expectations in the first week of every school year. I model expected student behaviors because I believe that setting a positive example by "doing" has a great influence on young learners.

It's important to also practice and reinforce daily classroom routines. Students learn class procedures at the beginning of the year, this helps them become respectful and responsible class participants.

Examples of classroom routines and procedures:
- Turning in assignments
- Entering and exiting the classroom
- Morning unpacking and readiness
- Attendance and announcements
- Lunch and recess
- Bathroom breaks
- Using designated spaces
- Class library
- Using class materials

Learning Agreement
I find that a helpful approach to setting expectations is to have students participate in drafting a *learning agreement*. Involving students in the process helps students to be responsible for their learning and regulate their own behavior. Students should be given a copy of the learning agreement to sign and keep as a reference.

The first step in creating a learning agreement is to clarify the desired outcome. Next, I would have a discussion with students. I would ask what the classroom might look like during different blocks of learning - whole-group, small-group and independent work.

For example, I might ask what the volume should look like during small-group work. On a scale from 0-4 (0 being *silent* and 4 being *full volume*), a level 2- *quiet/indoor voice* would be appropriate for small-group work. I've found that students are eager to share ideas and offer suggestions related to their own learning.

Praise and Feedback
It's beneficial to students to receive praise for their efforts and behaviors. An example of praise, "I notice that Kim is ready with her math book on her desk." Verbal praise, in which all students can hear, allows students to examine their own behavior and helps

reinforce expectations. It lets students know what they should be doing at that particular moment. Additionally, I aim to provide opportunities for feedback. The goal of feedback is to monitor student learning and improve student outcomes. It helps students assess their work and make changes. Feedback can be given in a variety of ways including formal, informal, peer and self.

Logical Consequences

It's important to consistently use positive language and reinforcement. In certain situations, however, consequences may be needed. I prefer to implement logical consequences for not following rules. For example, if a student has an untidy desk and needs to put materials away, the logical consequence is to clean up their desk before moving on to the next activity. Thus, logical consequences are directly related to a student's behavior and help students take accountability and make better future choices.

Check-Ins

I like to frequently check-in with students by circulating the classroom during work time. I observe, re-direct, question and offer support. I find that offering individual support helps with long-term student engagement. I also find check-ins helpful for assessing comprehension. After work time I may ask how difficult an assignment was by having students use hand signals. Thumbs up = easy, thumbs sideways = somewhat difficult, thumbs down = challenging.

Attention Getters

Attention getters can be an effective way to get student's attention. I like to introduce a couple attention getters at the beginning of the school year and add more as the year progresses. Examples include quick phrases, rhymes, clapping, snapping or a musical instrument such as a bell or wind chime. A phrase I like to use is "1, 2, 3 eyes on me," students respond by saying "1, 2 eyes on you." I find that silly phrases, rhyming or clapping patterns are effective for getting students to stop what they're doing and redirect their focus.

Attention getters should be used when students are off-task, talking loudly or not following directions.

Intervention

Interventions are a necessary classroom management tool. When a student is repeatedly off-task I find it's helpful to walk over and stand by the student's desk. Observing the student's behavior and then asking about expectations is essential. Another way to intervene is to call on a student, who is not paying attention, to answer a

question or give their opinion. Involving students in discussion is a great way to increase engagement and participation.

Peer Mediation

Occasionally, students will have disagreements with peers and need to resolve the problem by talking through the issue and expressing their feelings. Each student involved gets to tell their story while the other participant(s) listen.

I facilitate this process by asking questions and having students express their feelings using "I" statements. For example, a student might say to a peer "I was hurt when I wasn't included at recess. It made me feel sad. In the future, could you include me in the game?" The peer would respond by acknowledging their peer's feelings. Example: "What I'm hearing is that you felt sad when I didn't include you in the game."

I would then ask both students what their desired resolution would be, and see if they can come to an agreement.

Classroom Organization

When the classroom is neat and orderly, students can learn more effectively. Students will feel like there is structure and it helps transitions run smoother. I try to have designated learning areas. The class library is a quiet, comfortable corner where students can go to read independently. This area sometimes consists of a rug and teacher chair for storytime. Additionally, I believe it's important to have flexible seating so students can be comfortable and choose what works best for them during work time. I find that lap desks, wobble chairs, cushions, pillows, and medicine balls are all great flexible seating options.

Preparation

Preparation is key to ensuring that class time is spent learning. I find that when I am organized and prepared for the day, I can better focus on instruction and respond to issues as they arise.

I encourage students to be prepared for the day by displaying a daily schedule on the board each morning. Students can then write this schedule in their student planners. Students will also have homework planners that are organized by subject. Homework planners are a great way to keep track assignments and upcoming due dates. They are also a great way for parents to know what should be completed each night.