



# CLASSROOM CULTURE

## Introduction

Classroom management is the ability to teach behavioral skills to students and create a positive and supportive learning environment (Sabornie & Espelage, 2023) that meets students' academic and social-emotional needs (Clark et al., 2023; Kwok & Svajda-Hardy, 2024). When routines and expectations are in place, students have a favorable perception of their school, which raises their academic performance and reduces disruptions in the classroom (Konishi et al., 2022). Though the ability to manage a classroom is essential for teachers, many educators do not feel adequately prepared to manage a classroom, regardless of whether they teach at the primary or secondary level (Criss et al., 2024; Sabornie & Espelage, 2023). One of the reasons most frequently cited by teachers for leaving the profession is stress resulting from problems with classroom management (Ahmad et al., 2022; Sabornie & Espelage, 2023), which illustrates how crucial it is to support teachers in developing their skills in this area.

## The Importance of Relationships

Building relationships with students is an imperative first step towards developing a positive classroom environment (Aldrup et al., 2022; Kwok & Svajda-Hardy, 2024). When relationships are secure and positive, students are more likely to accept behavior correction because they understand teachers' desire to see them succeed (Scott & Nakamura, 2022). Students are also more comfortable taking risks in their education and more likely to respond positively to corrective feedback when they have a secure relationship with their teachers (Aydin & Ok, 2022). Teachers who develop rapport with students are in turn more likely to have empathy for and respond to students' individual needs (Aldrup et al., 2022).

## Classroom Culture

Because teachers regularly interact with students, they are more likely to naturally develop a relationship (Sabornie & Espelage, 2023). When educators develop relationships with students in the classroom, students are more likely to attend class and complete their assignments (Sabornie & Espelage, 2023). Students who view the classroom as a welcoming and safe environment in which they belong are more likely to see teachers as being cognizant of their needs (Hettinger et al., 2021). In turn, teachers are more likely to experience these positive interactions with students





when they feel confident in and passionate about the subjects they are teaching (Scott & Nakamura, 2022).

## **Classroom Management Professional Learning**

Professional learning support for classroom behavior management should aim to help teachers develop skills and strategies that will enable and encourage them to react positively to undesirable classroom behavior (Clark et al., 2023; Sabornie & Espelage, 2023). Resources to improve responses to this behavior can include the implementation of a mentor teacher program, opportunities for teachers to observe each other, reading materials on best practices for behavior management, and scenario-based learning through role play (Clark et al., 2023; Shank & Santiago, 2022).

## **Teacher Practices**

Teachers can intentionally create and embed a positive classroom environment in various ways. An important part of developing a positive classroom culture is getting to know students, including how to support their academic needs and learning about their extracurricular and non-academic interests (Sabornie & Espelage, 2023). Teachers can begin with small gestures like greeting each student daily and using students' names regularly (Ahmad et al., 2022). Simple strategies like striking up conversations with students about non-school related topics, attending extracurricular activities, and facilitating field trips for students can lead to positive relationships between teachers and pupils (Tångring & Öhman, 2023). By learning about students' interests, teachers can find ways to connect instructional content to their lives, making lessons more meaningful and impactful (Scott & Nakamura, 2022). Teachers should provide positive, specific praise to students as often as possible, including "micro-affirmations" such as appreciation for participation in an activity or a remark that a student was missed when they were absent (Sabornie & Espelage, 2023). Teachers can also better understand how they are perceived by students by practicing facial expressions in a mirror at home. Practicing these expressions allows teachers to see how they respond to students, especially when students are exhibiting undesirable behavior (Sabornie & Espelage, 2023). Alternatively, teachers can record a video of themselves teaching in the classroom to understand facial expressions and movements they consciously, and unconsciously, use during classroom instruction.

## **Conclusion**

Classroom management is most effective in the form of a whole-school approach that involves teachers, students, and parents collaborating to create and implement uniform rules and expectations for all students, which results in a positive school ethos (Clark et al., 2023). Training on classroom management strategies can help teachers feel more comfortable with students and increase their confidence, which results in more teachers remaining in the profession for longer periods of time (Shank & Santiago, 2022; Clark et al., 2023; Hirsch et al., 2019).



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