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# PROGRESSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

I still remember when I had my classroom management binder filled out with all of my classroom management strategies and rules for the classroom. I probably brought that into my first interview to show off that I knew I was going to be an expert classroom manager. All of those color-coded tabs with rules, procedures, and everything that could possibly happen in my future classroom. Then I got to the first day of school with thirty, junior high kids in the room and I realized the binder was not worth the paper it had been printed on. I started to realize all the cute little tricks and tips and strategies I learned while in college were not the Golden Ticket to a well-behaved classroom.

At some point in your career, hopefully it's sooner rather than later, you realize the fallacy of classroom management methods typically taught to new teachers, many still used by veteran teachers.

You will have a student who will look you dead in the eye when asked to do something and he will simply say, "No." You will reply with, "You

“The simple truth is you cannot make a child do something he or she does not want to do.”

better or else.” The student will look you back in the eye and answer, “Or else what?” You will then realize there is no “or else” because you can’t force him to do anything. Now this might seem like a shock because, as a new teacher, you would hope that you have some power or authority in the classroom. However, in my experience those teachers who feel they have that authority and power are the ones who struggle the most. The moment you get into a power struggle as the teacher in a classroom, you have already lost. If we don’t need traditional classroom management techniques, then what do we need? How can you as a teacher effectively manage a class of students?

## FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

The answer to that question is actually quite simple and yet incredibly difficult. One suggestion is to form and foster positive relationships. Again, this sounds simple but many teachers, especially new teachers, struggle with this. Relationships are key to effective classroom management, but honestly, I don’t even like using the phrase *classroom management*. Instead, I like to think of classroom culture as what we should be striving for. When there is a positive culture based on positive relationships, negative behaviors are almost non-existent. To be clear, this goes beyond simply knowing superficial information about students to an in-depth understanding of their cultural and intellectual background. This knowledge will help foster deeper relationships and a great chance of success in the classroom (Jackson, 2009).

The culture in a classroom impacts the work you will do as a teacher and can lend itself to relationship building. As a teacher of social science, I spend a great deal of time discussing the cultures of ancient civilizations with my students. We talk about what makes a culture positive as opposed to negative. A lot of it comes down to values and expectations. What do

“Actions speak louder than words and infinitely louder than cute posters.”

you value as a teacher and what do you value as a class? As a teacher, I make it crystal clear through every single thing I say that I value learning and the voice of every child and I expect my students to do the same. There are years when it takes classes longer to buy into this philosophy than others. However, it is critically important to be transparent with your students about what you value and how you expect them to treat one another. You need to act on these beliefs and not allow them to simply be hollow words.

If you talk to any high-quality teacher about how to effectively reach her students, she will inevitably say “building relationships.” The funny thing is I don’t recall having any course work on how to build relationships with students. The only thing I recall in this area was when I did my high school practicum and we were warned about inappropriate relationships with high

school students because we were only a couple years older than they were. Yet building relationships with students is probably the single most important thing we do as teachers. There is nothing more important than getting to know your student, and I often say you have to know the kid before you can teach the student. I will also say that there's a fine line there. I have seen examples of teachers who cross that line. I'm not referring to teachers who had inappropriate relationships with students and end up in jail or on the front page of the newspaper. I am referring to the teacher who wants to form relationships with kids but doesn't know where that line is between teacher and students. This often results in students taking advantage of the teacher and the line of respect being quite fuzzy. Simply put, some teachers think they have to be a student's friend and will stop at nothing to get that student's friendship. This will lead to a lack of mutual respect and do more damage to the relationship between student and teacher.

Having a relationship with a student and having mutual respect does not mean being best friends. It also doesn't mean being the favorite teacher or being obsessed with students liking you. There are a lot of ways you can go about building a relationship; however, it must be clear that simply having a positive relationship with a student will not make all misbehaviors disappear. It has the potential to greatly diminish them, but there are times where you will need to bring in a colleague or an administrator to support you in extreme cases of student misbehavior.

## FOUR EASY WAYS TO FORM POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

### 1. Say "Hello"

The easiest and simplest way is to simply say "Hello." This may sound ridiculous and too simplistic to be effective. However, I will tell you that simply greeting every single student every single day will go very far in building a relationship. There are children in our schools who can go an entire school day without a single individual speaking to them. You may think I am lying or making that up, but that is the sad reality for some of our students. They are the quiet students and the forgotten ones. They go through their entire school day without anybody engaging in a conversation with them because they're quiet and meek and just do their work and don't cause any problems. It can be something as simple as standing at the door of your classroom and saying "Good morning" as every kid comes in.

### 2. Have a Conversation

Go a step further and ask a student how his evening was or how his favorite sports team did last night. I often find myself in the hallways talking about who was kicked off *American Idol* or how in the world that person

survived on that latest outdoor-survival reality show. Whatever it takes, put yourself in a conversation with every single kid, every single day. Some people will say, “I don’t have time for that.” How can we as teachers say we don’t have time for our students? Bottom line, we are not in this business for impressing politicians, upholding a curriculum, or increasing our PISA score, but rather we are in this business for kids.

### 3. Meet Kids Where They Are

We are very fortunate to have a lot of morning and after-school activities the kids can participate in at school. One of my all-time favorites is bombardment. For those of you who aren’t familiar with that game it is the new way to say dodgeball in a somewhat politically correct manner. Now we have dodgeball, I’m sorry, bombardment every winter. My good friend Jay has been doing this intramural for as long as I can remember. On any given day, we have over 200 students in the gym playing bombardment. On many days, you will see teachers and administrators in there as well. They are not in there because they have to supervise or are required to be there. They are there because they want to go and play bombardment with the kids. I always loved playing dodgeball as a child, so I love the opportunity to go in there and throw a ball around and get hit as well. To be clear, the students all voluntarily choose to participate in this intramural, and we no longer use the red rubber balls from our childhood that left a red badge of courage on our cheekbones all morning.

Find an extracurricular activity where the kids are and join in. They will love seeing you there and enjoy interacting with you in a nonclassroom setting. Most schools have clubs and activities for kids to participate in outside of the school day or possibly during. If not, create one and make it your own.

### 4. Be Real

In addition to doing the bombardment intramural, Jay also teaches in our school’s BD or behavior disorder program. We often talk about how important relationship building is and how it is a huge part of what he does. He will go so far as to say he could not do his job without creating those bonds with kids. Early on in my career he shared why he does all of the intramurals and interacts with kids in these extracurricular spaces.

First, he thinks teachers who do this have a huge advantage when those students come into the classroom setting. No longer are you simply the teacher who’s pestering them about their schoolwork or yelling at them about different things they’re not doing. You are now also the guy who is going to the gym and playing games with them as well. You are the guy that took a shot to the face and split your glasses off of your head because the eighth-grade boy (who also pitches on one of the local club’s

baseball teams) caught you off guard. You have a little bit of street cred and to the students you are “real.”

Now when you ask that child to do the work or to engage in a conversation about school, you’re not just a teacher. You are now more of a real person and the more real you are to a kid the more likely they are to engage in whatever you’re asking them to do. While this may sound like just attempting to be the “cool teacher,” it really is not. Over time, you build these relationships to the point where a kid will do anything you ask him to do because he cares about you as a person and knows that you care about him in the same way. It sounds so simple and it really is. Create situations where you can engage in real interaction with your students and it will pay off in the classroom when you are asking them to do something they may not be terribly excited to do.

## ENGAGED LEARNING

Another rather simple approach or strategy for classroom management is to take a look at what you’re doing in the classroom. When you think about students who misbehave in a class, there’s always a reason behind it. Good teachers know they need to find out what’s causing the behavior. Yes, there are going to be those rare occasions where students just cannot control themselves. Nothing you do will change their behavior or create an environment where they will be successful. These types of students do exist. However, most students misbehaving in a class are doing it for a specific reason. There is a trigger or root to the problem. With this in mind, if you want to be successful in managing a classroom, you need to figure out ways to find out why students are acting the way they are.

In order to look at this more closely, I think it’s best to use specific examples. You will inevitably have a student who will sit in your class and do nothing. I know this may sound hard to believe but it’s true. Almost every single year, I have at least one student who goes beyond the realm of rational thought in ways to avoid doing any work. Now if you are like me, when you’re a new teacher, you will revert back to the way in which your own experiences as a student played out. You might assign this student a detention after school to give her some more time to get her work done. You might assign lunch work time for the student to get caught up. You might even assign more homework or time in a Saturday school detention to do the work. What you will find out is none

“The question you should be asking yourself is, “Why is this student *not* doing the work?” The answer to that question will inevitably be different for every child and be the key to success with that child. ”

of those will work. The question you will be asking yourself is “How can I get this student to do the work?”

It has been my experience that this question boils down to a few simple answers. The first reason most students will not do their work is it is too difficult for them. I’m not saying that kids will simply whine when things get a little difficult, but I mean that there are some things that some students will not be capable of doing. That’s not to say that I have low expectations for my students. The reality is some of your students will struggle to do things in your class. Struggle is OK when there is a chance of success. From the perspective of a student, if something is incredibly hard, it is a lot easier to give up on it or not do it then to struggle and look stupid in front of the teacher or peers. The first issue you need to figure out is if the work is too hard for the students.

Another possibility is that the work is too easy and perceived as not worth the students’ time. When you ask them, they will simply tell you because it’s too easy and they already know it. In some cases, it is true and the work you’re asking them to do is a complete waste of their time. In both of those cases, the work students are being asked to complete must fit with the students’ abilities. With that in mind, it’s very difficult to ask every student in the class to do the exact same thing, which means you will need to differentiate the learning activities.

Another answer that I have found to the question of a child not doing the work is not caring about school. Now, this brings on a whole other level, which is difficult to dissect and often stems from a belief system or an attitude that is present in the home environment. If a child has parents who do not value education, the chances will be higher that the child also will not value education. I have been in conferences where parents have flat out told me they hate a certain subject or school and so their kid will too. They even say these things in front of their children. If children hear their parents say they hate school or they hate math, they now have an out because they know their parents will support them. At the end of the day, you have no control over what their parents are telling them or the belief systems of a home. Your best bet is to continue doing all you can at school to provide a positive learning experience for children in an effort to change their own beliefs about school and learning.

## Three Steps to Increase Levels of Engaged Learning

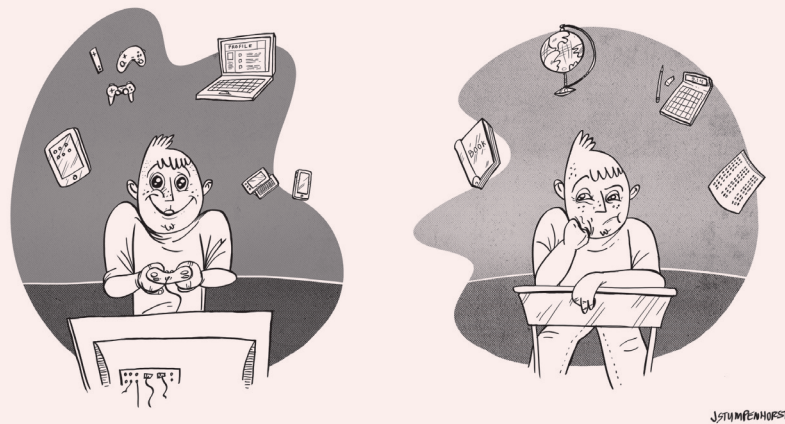
### 1. Differentiate Instruction and Learning Activities

Knowing that no two students will be the same, you will need to level your instruction as well as the activities you ask students to engage in. Always have two or three options for students, based on their readiness or abilities.

## 2. Entertain

Some teachers do not feel we are in the business to entertain students but rather are there to teach them. Yes, that is true, but if we can mix the two, it can prove effective. Engage kids in fun activities that will allow them to connect the content to a pleasurable experience. When you are reviewing for a test, have students create games rather than simply a study guide. Bring in multimedia to create a more dynamic method of presenting content. While at home, students are bombarded with media and devices (Figure 1.1) but are asked to shut them down and power them off while at school. Try to meet them in the middle and use their tools as a way to engage through entertainment.

**Figure 1.1** Student Engagement



*Source:* Created by Jared Stumpenhorst.

## 3. Promote Failure With Positivity

Failure in schools is often met with disapproval and disappointment. However, students need to feel safe to take risks and fail and learn from those failures. In classrooms built around a positive classroom culture, failure is encouraged as a step in the learning process. Regular conversations can help build this, and a great way is to have regular class meetings. Former elementary principal Lyn Hilt promotes the use of classroom meetings as a way for teachers and students to engage in dialogue about values, behaviors, learning, and everything in between leading to fostering positive learning environments.

## MISBEHAVIOR

Another common behavior issue that comes up in classrooms is the student who just simply misbehaves. He distracts his peers by acting out, yelling, talking, throwing things, or the whole host of other ways in which a child can distract a class. The list of ways in which a student can distract a class or be off task is infinite. Just when you think you have seen it all, something new will present itself in your classroom. I once had a student who enjoyed standing on a table and yelling at his group when they were not listening to him. It was often in a loud voice and he even told me he was channeling his inner Adolf Hitler. For me, the misbehaving student is actually easier to “fix” than the students who can’t or won’t do their work. In nearly every single situation of a misbehaving student, it boils down to a few simple reasons.

The first reason is a student acts out or misbehaves as a way to seek attention. In my experience, this is the number one reason a student mis-

### Five Simple Ways to Give Positive Attention

1. Put a sticky note with a positive comment on a student’s desk.
2. Call or e-mail a student’s parent with a positive note.
3. Walk around the room and interact with students.
4. Give a simple thumbs-up.
5. Have a quick conversation after class.

behaves in class. Either she does not have a good home life where she is not getting attention or she does not know how to seek attention in positive ways. I have had students tell me there is nobody at their home who cares about them or even talks to them. As sad as that is, it is a reality for many students. They go to empty homes or homes full of people who do not engage or interact with them. So when they are in my classroom, they will do anything to get attention from other people and especially from an adult. As a teacher, you need to find a way to engage

with those students and give them attention in a positive way that doesn’t distract the rest of your class.

Another cause of student misbehavior may in fact be the teaching. Students consistently having behavior concerns may indicate it is time for us as teachers to reflect on our own practices. If your lessons are boring and not engaging, I can almost guarantee you will have misbehaving students in class. If you are asking kids to do something that is too hard or too easy or not relevant to them, they will misbehave. Engage kids in meaningful and relevant content and behavior will not be an issue you will be dealing with. One of the best ways to engage them in meaningful and relevant content will be discussed in the student motivation chapter.



Some students simply do not know how to behave. Yes, that seems silly but the truth of the matter is not all students have great family dynamics where they are taught manners and politeness and what it means to interact positively with peers or adults. Some of your students will go home and swear at their parents or possibly be involved in physical altercations with them and that is completely acceptable behavior. They have no consequences at home for such behaviors. Students who come from those home environments often clash with the school environment. They are doing things that are tolerated, and in some cases, encouraged in their own home. These students often have so much learned behavior from home that it is very difficult to help them be successful in school because their behavior gets in the way of their learning. It is far easier to discipline children with detentions and suspensions than it is to teach them how to behave and exist in a school environment.

If students are struggling on a math skill, how do we handle it? We reteach the skill until they get it. Do we flunk them, punish them, and move on? No. Behavior is another skill that needs to be taught to many students. This is not to say that I'm trying to create obedient and conforming students. However, there has to be some level of positive behavior happening so learning can take place. Some of the students create unsafe conditions for other students. My goal in terms of classroom management is for all students to have the opportunity to learn in my class.

Randy Sprick's CHAMPS model is useful to look over as he speaks to not only building relationships but also the need for clear and concise expectations for students. When addressing misbehaving students, Sprick first looks at the learning and behavior expectations that have been put forth in the classroom. In addition, his CHAMPS model outlines five elements of quality lessons that lead to better behavior in students—Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, and Participation (Sprick, n.d., *Safe & Civil Schools*). When students are able to talk, receive assistance, move, and participate in an activity, the instances of misbehavior are lower according to Sprick. When creating learning or behavior expectations, you can go about it in a number of ways, but I have found the best is through conversations with the class. Hold a class meeting and outline the norms for the room and what the expectations should be. This is a tactic used by many elementary teachers but does not appear to be as popular with older grades.

## THE QUIET ONES

Another aspect of classroom management that is often overlooked is what to do with the quiet and well-behaved students. They are often the forgotten children of our classrooms and are in danger of losing interest and disconnecting completely. Just because a student is not acting out or misbehaving does not mean they are engaged or tuned into what you are

doing. I will share a short story of an experience I had in class that brought this up front and personal for me.

We were having some class discussions about reputations and how we establish and change them. That led us into a conversation about a legacy and what individuals leave behind when they move on into another phase of their life. It was a fantastic conversation, so I decided to use this conversation for a speaking activity we were planning on doing in our language arts class. I asked the students to write a one-minute speech about how they thought their peers viewed them. In other words, what did they think their reputation was? On top of that, I wanted them to go into what they wanted their legacy to be when they left our school in three years and went on to the high school.

I was a little skeptical on what I was going to get back; students, I assumed, would not really have a grasp on how they were viewed by other people. I was pretty confident that most students would come up and think they were good kids and everybody liked them and they just want to be remembered for being a good kid who got good grades.

On the day of the speeches, I noticed many of the students were hesitant and, I would say, looking a little nervous. We had a conversation about making sure we had an environment of trust and anything shared during these conversations would be kept in the room. The kids were all about it and it seemed like generally there was a touch of excitement about the speeches behind the nervous energy you could sense in the room.

The first few were nothing special in terms of content. Students got up, knew they were good kids, and wanted to keep being good kids. Then I had one of my very quiet and shy female students come up front and give a speech. Everybody in the room went dead quiet. She gave a speech about who she thought she was. She assumed that most people, even those in our own class, didn't even know her name because she was so quiet. She shared how she was tired of living in other people's shadows. She went on to talk about how she wants to change and she wants people to see her, hear her, and know her. Her legacy was that she wanted people to simply know her name. I am not sure why this particular speech struck me; but the fact that a sixth grader wanted as her legacy just simply to be known took me by surprise.

“ She didn't say she wanted to be known for being a fantastic athlete or a musician or even a high-achieving student. She simply wanted her name to be known. ”

For some reason, I just thought about this student and I could not get her speech out of my head. I have so many conversations with teachers about how we're meeting the needs of all of our learners. I look at what we do in school every day to push kids in all of the varying groups and subgroups. I

think about how much time, energy, money, and resources are spent on the “lower end” of our student population, making sure we get them above that sacred “meets” line for standardized tests. Then I see how much time we spend trying to enrich and push our gifted kids. Yet, I bet if you look at your classrooms and your schools, the squeaky wheels always get the oil. That is to mean that we often overlook our quiet kids or the forgotten ones—the kids who sit and do their work, are quiet, and don’t cause a problem. These kids can go through an entire day without a single teacher or peer speaking to them.

It really made me look at what I’m doing in my classroom. It is very easy for 10 percent of the students to take up 90 percent of my time. A few simple things to help with this would be to make time for the quiet ones. Give up your lunch and spend it eating and talking with a handful of those students. Create classroom activities where they are the center of attention and give them that voice. Simply listen to them when they talk and do everything you can to elevate their voice in the classroom through calling on them and providing them leadership opportunities whenever possible.

## RULES

If you walk into most school classrooms, you will likely see rules proudly displayed on the walls (see Figure 1.2 for an example). Some teachers get real clever and creative with the way they are hung on the wall. Two problems are often associated with traditional approaches to rules. The first problem is a majority of the rules that are used in classrooms are not created with any input from the students. Many teachers scoff at this idea. Why in the world would you involve a student in that process? Simply put, children will be more invested in the rules if they have a part in creating them. As Russ Quaglia (2014) advocates, we need to listen deeply to what students have to say and lead our classrooms with them by our sides. There is a lot to be said about human nature and our ability to go along with something if we were involved in the process. Think “taxation without representation.”

The other problem that I have with rules being posted in a classroom is that they are even posted to begin with. Rules posted in an

**Figure 1.2** Classroom Rules

1. Use your quiet voice.
2. Keep hands to yourself.
3. Raise your hand to speak.
4. Stay in your seat.
5. Leave devices in your locker.
6. Be on time.

early elementary classroom always make me laugh, especially in some of the early grades where kids can't even read the rules. However, rules are there and the thought of a ruleless class in the primary grades makes most of us shudder. Myself, I could not imagine my sons being a classroom without the rules clearly posted. Yet, innovative elementary teachers such as Pernille Ripp have completely rid themselves of rules and reward systems present in most elementary classrooms. She advocates for conversations and class meetings to replace traffic light behavior charts or writing names on the board (Ripp, 2014). Lyn Hilt, a former elementary principal, agrees with Ripp and advocated for the same thing among her staff. Ditch the rules and rewards systems and put in place opportunities for whole class conversation and dialogue about behaviors and expectations.

There are also great numbers of teachers using the very things Ripp and Hilt advocate removing. Teachers at the elementary level use sticker charts, ClassDojo, and behavior charts to monitor and track behaviors. In my own role as a teacher, I have created and used behavior-monitoring sheets with strict rules and expectations for student behavior. These were used with students who struggled adhering to the social norms created within the classroom. The point is you have to find what will work within your classroom and that may change yearly or even daily. Some students will need more guidance in their development with behavior than others, and as the teacher, you need to respond to that appropriately.

### **Classroom Management Tips**

- Speak to every kid every day, even if it is just a hello.
- Coach a sport, sponsor a club, or supervise an intramural or some extracurricular activity.
- Attend a school music performance or sporting event.
- Let kids know who you are as a real person.
- Eat lunch in the cafeteria from time to time with the kids but pay special attention to the allergy table and avoid the "manager's special" in the lunch line.
- Find ways to connect with students outside of school. I see lots of students at my own son's swim meets.
- Have regular class meetings with open discussion with students about grades, class work, projects, tests, rules, or anything they are curious about or want input in.
- Tell each kid you care about them as a person as often as you can.

The best rules are often the ones that are taught as teachable moments when they happen. When a child is being rude to another child, have a conversation with those two children about appropriate behavior and how to interact positively with one another.

## THE CAST OF CHARACTERS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

There are a few scenarios you will inevitably find yourself in during your years as a teacher, as well as a few likely characters you will meet. I like to generalize a few types of students and look at how to specifically handle each of them.

### The “Blurter”

You will have a blurter in your class and you will surely encounter this student on a yearly basis and often he will have friends. He will be the one who always has a comment and often it will be completely off topic. One year, I had one of these blurters and it got to the point where we were tracking data on just how often he would blurt out in a single class period. Over the course of two weeks in his core academic classes, he averaged nineteen blurts per class period. A simple solution for him was to provide him with a notebook. Anytime he felt like sharing something when the teacher or another student was talking, he was to write it down in the book. Then he and I would go through his thoughts during lunch or our study hall. He found it to be effective and it helped him not to distract his peers in class anymore. Another thing that provided some help was showing the student the data on how often he was blurting out in class. He was not aware that it was so often and often that awareness can lead to a positive change in behavior.

### The “Lazy” Student

You will certainly have a student who refuses to do work in class and will appear to be lazy. For me, I have a handful of these students each year. One specific example is a young lady I taught many years ago. When she didn't do work, I would assign her morning detentions to get it done. Eventually, I learned she like the attention when she came in and continued to not do any work. A quick fix to this was to bring the parents into the mix. Pestering the student on a daily basis will not always work and additional work time will not always do the trick either. I started sending a daily e-mail home to parents listing the missing work and a quick note on how the student's work ethic was in class. This helped on two levels. First, it helped involve the parents in the process and keep them informed about what was going on. Also, it puts

some ownership in their lap to be working with their child at home or at least encouraging and supporting their efforts. In this case, the girl shared with me that her parents pushed her hard at home because they were tired of my e-mails. ☺

Another example was a young man who didn't do any work at all. He refused to participate in class and his parents, through a lack of action, indicated to me they were less than involved in their son's education. He was new to our school so we didn't know a great deal about him. Come to find out, he could barely read at a third-grade level and was asked to perform in a high-performing sixth-grade classroom. We were able to identify this and put in reading supports that obviously helped him and his overall success in school. Bottom line, look at the reasons why kids are not doing the work rather than focusing on the pure fact they are not doing it. What may appear on the surface as laziness could actually be a whole host of underlying issues, which further points to the need for teachers to know their students.

### The "Mean" Kid

Mean kids exist despite our best efforts. One year, I had a pack of mean students who were relentless in their attempts at intimidating and bullying other kids in the class and out in the halls. My initial reaction was to punish them and focus all of my attention on getting them to stop and be nice to each other. That rarely, if ever, works and actually creates more problems than it solves. I have dealt with this annually from both boys and girls. What I did do was focus my energy on the other students involved, the victims and bystanders. We started having conversations in class about how to stand up to bullies and so-called mean students. I chose literature in class specifically with that in mind, which led to deep class discussions on how to deal with these social situations. Some students started becoming more vocal and others either walking away to diffuse situations or confronting and standing up to the bullies. Often our greatest opportunity for change lies in those on the periphery.

The lesson I learned in this situation is negative behaviors often garner attention of both teacher and other students. Teachers get so wrapped up with the student who is acting out, they forget the other students involved. It has been my experience through focusing on empowering other students and giving them strategies to cope with mean students or bullies that the classroom climate improves and leads to an overall diffusing of such behaviors. Going a step further, I took a page out of 2012's Hawaii Teacher of the Year Chad Miller's book. Miller uses philosophy as a way to connect with his students and engage them in philosophical discussions. Many of these discussions are based on moral situations and scenarios that students can easily connect with. Despite popular belief, this content is taught in Grades K-12. Through using philosophical texts, Miller engages students in high levels of inquiry and discussion around

morally relevant topics. When students are engaged in philosophical inquiry, they are vulnerable and exposing themselves at a deeper level, therefore creating a mutual respect within the classroom.

The Philosophy for Children Hawaii approach to teaching reduces bullying for many reasons. The philosophical inquiries and the reasoning skills we teach (The Good Thinker's Toolkit) definitely provide the thinking tools and reflective experience for children to engage in the character building process. However, I think it is the attention we spend on developing an intellectually safe community of inquiry in our classrooms that is the primary reason bullying is down in the schools we work at. We don't do ice breakers as much as we make learning activities about the students; it always starts with their ideas, experience, and questions. And we have a set of tools that help regulate turn taking and encourage listening.

The aim of Philosophy for Children Hawaii and, more specifically, the "Philosopher's Pedagogy" (Makaiau & Miller, 2012) is to develop students' abilities to think for themselves in order to create intellectually responsible communities. In order to meet this aim, teachers utilize a circular seating structure and develop learning activities that provide ongoing opportunities for students to sharpen their thinking skills while building meaningful relationships with their peers and teacher. These trustworthy relationships produce an intellectually safe community of inquiry where the students collaboratively engage in philosophical inquiries that begin with their questions and unfold as they offer personal insights, share experiences, provide counter-examples, and ask for clarification when they are confused without fear of being belittled or ridiculed. What transpires is a thoughtful, compassionate, and ethical (and transformative) educational experience.

—Chad Miller, 2012 Hawaii Teacher of the Year

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Classroom management is not easy and the simple truth is not every strategy or approach will work with every kid. There are long lists of things teachers do in an effort to have students behave in class. That list could

include eye contact, yelling, redirecting, proximity, ignoring, praising, praising another student in the same proximity of a troubled student, putting them in a timeout, walking down to the office, embarrassing them, punishing them, and a whole host of other strategies both good and bad. However, none of this works every time with every kid and some might work one day and not the next. The key is to build solid relationships and know when to pull which card as you need it. Remember the goal of classroom management is not to punish kids for misbehaving but to create a classroom environment where learning can happen for all. Author and educator Todd Whitaker (2012) makes a great point in his book *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, when he points out the only person's behavior in the class you truly have control over is your own.

When you have connected with a student and built that positive connection, that student will do nearly anything you ask. This is because she will have trust in what you are saying and what you are trying to do for her. My best connections are with students who know that I care deeply about their future and try to give them all the tools to be successful.

### Reflection and Discussion Questions

- How will you connect with your students in a personal, authentic and appropriate manner?
- What role will classroom rules and discipline play in your classroom or school?
- What intentional steps will you take to create a positive classroom culture?

### Additional Resources

**Jackson, R. (2009).** *Never work harder than your students and other principles of great teaching.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Jackson lays out a specific plan for teachers who want to achieve what she calls a level of *master teaching*. Her seven principles are laid out in detail, with step-by-step guides for teachers to follow and improve the level of their instruction as well as the learning of their students.

**McTighe, J., & O'Connor, K. (2014, April).** *Seven practices for effective learning.* *Assessment to Promote Learning*, 63(3), 10–17. Available at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov05/vol63/num03/Seven-Practices-for-Effective-Learning.aspx>

For me, McTighe and O'Connor are two of the best in terms of their work in the area of educating children in general, but also in the area of management. This resource, along with countless others written by these two individuals, has



shaped much of what I believe about the role good teaching plays in the overall management of the classroom.

**Pink, D. H. (2009).** *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us.* New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

Pink is one of my go-to people when it comes to overall human behavior, and despite the way kids act at times, I do consider them human as well. As a result, much of what Pink writes about applies to teaching in that he writes about human behavior. His book *Drive* especially hits on the theme of motivation and inspired much of what I do in terms of motivating kids, as well as the connection between that motivation and management.

**Ripp, P. (2014, January 9).** Put your name on the board—A tale of why I gave up classroom discipline systems [Web log post]. *Bloggng Through the Fourth Dimension.* Available at <http://pernillesripp.com/2014/01/09/put-your-name-on-the-board-a-tale-of-why-i-gave-up-classroom-discipline-systems-2/>

This is an especially good piece of writing from Ripp as she describes her shift in thinking about classroom discipline and the reward/punishment system in her classroom.

**Sprick, R. (2014, April 3).** *Randy Sprick's safe & civil schools—Practical solutions, positive results!* The Safe & Civil Schools Evidence Base. Available at <http://www.safeandcivilschools.com/research/index.php>

Early on in my career, my district hired Sprick to come in for our start-of-the-school-year kickoff. He spoke about classroom management and how to “control” kids in a school and class setting. At the time, he was the go-to guy on management, especially in the area of behaviorally challenged students. Since hearing him speak, as well as reading his other works, I have revised and constantly evolve my belief systems around classroom management.

**Whitaker, T. (2012).** *What great teachers do differently: Seventeen things that matter most.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Whitaker is one of those educators who I recommend to all teachers and principals because of his insights and expertise in all areas of education. His book about what teachers do differently is a common sense approach to challenging the status quo in teaching but doing so in a thoughtful and simple manner. Everything he writes about is practical but grounded in real-life experience.