

Classroom Management

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It's a great honor for me to attend this training program (Teacher Development, Language & Methodology Refresher--young learner) in Cambridge during this summer vacation. We have learned lots of new teaching techniques in different domains such as listening, speaking, reading and...etc. Besides the teaching methodology, we also experienced some of the British culture such as pub quiz and met lots of teachers who exchanged their teaching experiences with us around the world in this two-week training.

At the beginning of the training program, our instructor, Amanda discussed the characteristics of young learners with us. After that, we talked about “classroom management” which interested me most. I believe that every teacher has his own way of managing a class and it's interesting to share some strategies with all the members in our

group.

There are key principles of managing behavior that, if mastered, can really help teachers perform in the classroom. According to Andy Vass, co-author of several behavior management books, teacher attitude is crucial. “This is because the way teachers manage behavior is based on the attitudes and beliefs they hold.”

“If teachers get it right, children pick up on this, often unconsciously, and this tells them that this teacher is authentic and interested in their success,” he adds. From this a sense of trust and rapport begins to become established, and the teacher’s influence is significant, says Vass.

According to the education expert Professor Dylan William, there are six secrets of a happy classroom:

1. **Stop students putting their hands up to ask questions-** it’s the same ones doing it all the time. Instead introduce a random method of choosing which student answers the questions, such as lollipop sticks, and thus engage the whole class.

It’s always the same minority of top students would raise their hands to answer the questions asked by teachers while the majority of students switch off and opt out.

Therefore, I use some wooden sticks which could be bought in bookstores whenever I need students to answer my questions. Recently, I bought a new set of “Lottery selector” to pick the number for me and my students just love it, especially when I say they could be the one who help me to roll the next number for me.



2. **Use traffic-light cups** in order to assess quickly and easily how much your students

understand your lesson. Traffic-light cups means that each student has a set of three cup including red, yellow and green one. Students then put a cup on their desk to inform the teacher whether they understand what they have just been taught (green), whether they are uncertain (yellow), or whether they haven't the foggiest (red). If several desks are displaying a red cup, gather all those students around to help them at the same time.

I think this is a good and easier way to check students' understanding because every time when I ask my students if they understand what I just taught and their answers would always be yes. Those who didn't understand would just be too shy or afraid to tell they didn't get what I taught.

3. **Mini-whiteboards**, on which the whole class simultaneously writes down the answer to a question, are a quick way of gauging whether the class as a whole is getting your lesson. This method also satisfies the high-achievers who would normally stick their hands up.

I usually use mini-whiteboards to review my lessons. In order to help those slow learners, I would ask them to form groups and through cooperation, each student would have the chance to practice without worrying if they don't know the answers.



4. **A short burst of physical exercise at the start of the school day** will do wonders for students' alertness and motivation. As any gym addict or jogger will tell you, it's all about the chemicals released into the brain.

Though it's not easy for us English teachers to practice this one, we can try another alternative like having some "stirrer activities" For young learners, it's never easy to sit still for the whole 40-minute class so it's important to mix some "stirrer activities"

and “settler activities.” Stirrers mean activities to re-energize a tired and distracted class. Settlers are activities to calm down an over-active and distracted class. Try to balance the need for pair and group interaction and communication with the need for periods of sustained calm and independent work. This would help teachers to teach more efficiently.

5. **Ditch the obsession with grades**, so that students can concentrate instead on the comments that the teacher has written on written work.

In Taiwan, students and parents always pay too much attention on grades. It is much more important in improving students’ learning than their grades. However, it’s also necessary to let the parents know not emphasize on the grades.

6. **Allow students to assess the teachers’ teaching-** they are the ones at the sharp end, after all. Letting students have a say is empowering and, if handled constructively, is highly enlightening.

I think this one make a great sense. Since students are the ones we are supposed to teach, they should be the ones who assess us. Through their feedback, we teachers could improve.

However, there are classic errors that teachers make when it comes to instilling order in the classroom but happily they can be remedied. Here are the most common mistakes:

1. Attempting to control a class

You can’t control anybody else’s behavior but your own. Highly effective teachers seek to influence and manage children’s behavior. If teachers are determined to control a class they often find that classroom interactions become more hostile and they, in turn, become increasingly demanding with a heavy reliance on punishment.

The other end of the attitude spectrum is the teacher who needs to be a ‘best friend’ to children, who can lead to blurred boundaries and some children will feel socially

excluded.

2. Taking poor behavior personally

All behavior is purposeful in the sense that it attempts to either gain something, usually peer kudos or attention, or not lose something, usually saving face in front of their friends. You can avoid this by:

- * Modeling the behavior you want rather than react to the behavior you're getting.
- * Looking to find solutions to behavioral issues in a professional and measured way as part of the challenge of the job.
- * Managing your emotions and being optimistic that a way forward will be found in time.
- * Keeping things in perspective; remember the things you do well and avoid focusing on things that have gone badly.

3. Criticizing the person rather than the behavior

Really effective relationships are built on distinguishing what someone does-their behavior-from the actual person. For example, if a teacher says: 'Don't be so spiteful!' the child will feel personally attacked. Criticizing the specific behavior is a more effective strategy as it gives students an opportunity to learn and modify their behavior. The same teacher could say instead, 'Calling Rebecca names is hurtful behavior.'

4. Not giving children a second chance

If a child behaves poorly give them a chance to start afresh. If you don't allow children to make amends it can limit their relationship with you and damage their self-esteem. It's also unlikely that there will be any positive change.

"I learned this the hard way," says Rana Siddique, secondary school teacher. "I had a 'I'll say it once' type approach, followed by an appropriate punishment, such as

missed playtime. But I know it was too harsh, as there were some children who really would have modified their behavior had I given them a second chance,” she says.

5. **Making threat**

If you make threats of any kind or personal, derogatory remarks, this can only lead to a hostile relationship, damaged self-esteem, and worsening behavior. Threats tend to have an intimidating and bullying tone and are often said in an emotional way. For example, if a teacher says: ‘Nathan, if you talk ONE more time that’s your playtime gone!’ it sets up both a threat and a challenge whereas ‘Nathan, if you continue to interrupt, you’ll be choosing to lose three minutes of playtime’, makes the request and consequent action fair and clear.

6. **Inconsistent approach**

Often this presents as giving warnings or sanctions but not carrying them through or applying sanctions and then letting children off. Children of all ages need to know where they stand and that the adult is consistent and cares enough to say no, mean no, and follow through when necessary. “I tried to improve the behavior of my class by constantly giving warnings,” says Maria Taylor, primary school teacher. “But I failed to follow them through. Needless to say, they ran amok,” she says.

We also discussed some of the tips of classroom management:

1. **Set the rules on the first day** and make the rules specific and simple. Try to discuss the rules they need to obey with students such as ‘Raise your hand before you speak.’ or ‘No food during class.’ If teachers discuss the rules with students, they would feel much related to them and would be more willing to follow.
2. **Create a positive atmosphere** and give clear instruction. Try to praise students more often and build their confidence so that they would have higher motivation of learning English.

3. **Never lose your temper.** As the only adult in the classroom, a teacher should always keep his temper. Students could be really naughty, but what teachers should do is focus on the wrongdoings instead of students themselves.
4. **Call students by their names.** It's not easy for an English teacher to remember all the names of his students. But if a teacher could call out their names, the distances between you and your students would have been drawn nearer and students would also be more comfortable in class.
5. **Have a friendly environment.** If teachers could have their own classroom, they should try to decorate their classroom with some posters or pictures. By doing so, it would help students to get in the mood of learning.
6. **Plan your class well.** Before any classes, teacher should spend some time to prepare the lessons. Once you are well-prepared, no matter what happened, you could deal with it easily.

At last, I want to compare what I learned during my trip to California. I noticed that almost in every classroom, they would have behavior charts for students. According to the teachers, that really worked.



There is one more trick I want to mention: one of the teacher shared two short chants with me:

1. Learning position: Sit up Tall, Feet Flat/Crossed, Hands Together, Eyes on Teacher!
2. Writing position: Sit up Tall, Feet Flat/, Hands on Paper, Pencil Ready!

Using short songs or chants to get young learners ready for class is a very practical way to manage your classroom. I think there are more effective ways to manage a classroom well and through this training, I have learned a lot and tried some. My students are always excited when they are in my class!!!

It's really great to go to the U.K. to see and experience British culture and the chances of meeting teachers from all over the world. I shared my experiences of staying in the U.K. including taking tube, bus even the visit to the British Museum and the Tower Bridge. My students are very excited and they feel the need of learning English well so that they could go travelling abroad.



I really appreciate to have the chance to go to Cambridge for two weeks. Thanks for the Bureau to offer this training trip. These trips really help us a lot! Just wish we could have more opportunities to learn and exchange our experiences with other teachers. I also want to thank for all the members we went together, you are the greatest partners. Thanks for your company and sharing. I've learned a lot from you.