

# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT FOR SECONDARY TEACHERS



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# PREFACE

Good classroom management doesn't just happen. Smoothly running classrooms whose students are highly involved in learning activities and which are free from disruption and chronic misbehavior are not accidental. They exist because effective teachers have a very clear idea of the types of classroom conditions and student behaviors that are needed for good learning environments, and because those teachers work very hard to produce such behaviors and conditions. This book describes what *you* can do to create a well-managed classroom. The process is described as teachers encounter it: first, planning in several key areas before the school year begins; next, implementing the plan and establishing good management at the beginning of the year; and finally, maintaining the management procedures throughout the year. We have tried to make the materials as useful and practical to you as possible by providing checklists to help organize your planning activities in key areas. Numerous case studies are also provided to illustrate how important concepts can be applied in classrooms. All the case studies have been based on observations in junior and senior high school classrooms, with changes in names and other identifying characteristics of classes. We hope you will find much here that is helpful to you as your plan and organize your own classroom.

As teachers, our own experiences have influenced our understanding of classrooms. However, most of our knowledge about classroom management has been derived from research in over 300 elementary and secondary classrooms. Most of these classes were observed both at the beginning of and throughout the school year. The goal was to identify management practices associated with high levels of student engagement in learning activities and low levels of disruptive behavior, two classroom conditions that contribute to good student achievement. Data collected in classes taught by effective teachers, as identified in these classroom management studies, were the main source of the guidelines, suggestions, and case studies in this book. The research program was conducted over a five-year period at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, University of Texas, and it was supported by the National Institute of Education. Of course, the views expressed in this book are those of the authors and not the official positions of the Center or of the Institute.

We would like to acknowledge our large debt of gratitude to the teachers who permitted us to observe in their classrooms. Without the base of reality they provided, this book would not exist. We are also grateful to the many observers, school administrators, and other researchers who both assisted and enlightened us. Finally, we are very grateful for the skills of Judy Camps and Kitty Hays, who typed this manuscript.

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**CHAPTER ONE**  
**ORGANIZING**  
**YOUR CLASSROOM**  
**AND MATERIALS**



A logical starting point for classroom management is arranging the physical setting for teaching. This includes classroom space, furniture, equipment, and supplies. This is a logical starting point because it is a task that you must complete before the school year begins. Many teachers find it easier to plan other aspects of classroom management after they have a clear idea of how the physical features of their classroom will be organized.

Good room arrangement is important for classroom management because it can help you cope with the complex demands of teaching twenty-five to thirty students at a time for five or more periods a day. During any given period students will come and go, many activities will occur, and you and your class will use a variety of materials, texts, reference books, equipment, and supplies. Appropriate room preparation and arrangement of materials conserve class time for learning, while inadequate planning interferes with instruction by causing interruptions, delays, and dead time.

When you arrange the classroom, you will need to make many decisions. Should desks be set out in rows? Where should your desk be located? What areas of the room will you use for presentations? How will

you and the students obtain materials and supplies, and where will these be stored? This chapter will help you make these and other decisions about room arrangement. Each component will be described along with guidelines and examples to help you plan. In addition, a checklist for organizing your classroom, supplies, and equipment is provided. Use it to focus your efforts and to be certain that your classroom is ready for the beginning of school.

## **FOUR KEYS TO GOOD ROOM ARRANGEMENT**

Remember that the classroom is the workspace for both you and your students. While it may hold as many as thirty students each period, it is not a very large area. Your students will be participating in a variety of activities and using different areas of the room, and they will need to enter and leave the room rapidly when classes change. You will get better results if you arrange your room to permit orderly movement, few distractions, and efficient use of available space. The following four keys will be helpful as guidelines when you make decisions about arranging your room.

*Keep high traffic areas free of congestion.* High traffic areas include group work areas, the space around the pencil sharpener and trash can, doorways, certain bookshelves and supply areas, student desks, and the teacher's desk. High traffic areas should be kept away from each other, have plenty of space, and be easily accessible.

*Be sure students are easily seen by the teacher.* Careful monitoring of students is a major management task. If the teacher cannot see students, it will be difficult to prevent task avoidance or disruption. Therefore, clear lines of sight must be maintained between areas of the room that the teacher will frequent and student work areas.

*Keep frequently used teaching materials and student supplies readily accessible.* Easy access to and efficient storage of such materials and supplies will aid classroom management by allowing activities to begin and end promptly and by minimizing time spent getting ready and cleaning up.

*Be certain students can easily see instructional presentations and displays.* Be sure that the seating arrangements will allow students to see the overhead projector screen or chalkboard without moving their chairs, turning their desks around, or craning their necks. Don't put your



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instructional area in a far corner of the room, away from a substantial number of students. Such conditions do not encourage students to pay attention, and they make it more difficult for students to take notes or copy material.

Each of the four keys presented above will help accomplish good room arrangement. Some specific suggestions for achieving this goal are described below. By attending to these areas, you will address all the important aspects of room preparation. You can then be confident that you will have designed a physical setting that is conducive to student involvement.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ARRANGING YOUR CLASSROOM

### Bulletin Boards and Walls

Wall space and bulletin boards provide areas to display student work, instructionally relevant material, decorative items, assignments, rules, schedules, a clock, and other items of interest. Ceiling space can also be used to hang mobiles and other decorations. The following points should be considered when preparing these areas.

1. At the start of school, you should have at least the following displays for walls and chalkboards: a place for listing daily assignments, and some decorative display to catch your students' interest, such as a bulletin board with a "Welcome Back to School" motif or a display organized around a school-spirit theme ("Go Hippos!").

2. If you are teaching at the junior high level, or if you are teaching ninth graders in a senior high school, you should also reserve some wall or bulletin board space for posting classroom rules (at higher grade levels you might also post rules, or you might handle the communication of expectations orally and/or via a handout—see Chapters Two and Five).



3. Other displays that many teachers find useful include an example of the correct paper heading to be used in your class, and a content-relevant display such as one highlighting a topic that will soon be taught.

4. Covering large bulletin board areas with colored paper is an easy way to brighten your classroom. This paper comes on large rolls and is often kept in the school office or in a supply room. You can also trim the bulletin boards with an edging or border of corrugated paper. If you can't find these items in your supply room, consider spending a few dollars for these materials at a school supply center or variety store. You can also find books of bulletin board ideas as well as posters, cardboard punch-out letters, stencils, and other graphics for sale at such stores.

5. If you need ideas for decorating your room or for setting up displays, borrow some from other teachers. A look in some other rooms will probably give you several new ideas. Also, your departmental supply room may contain some instructionally relevant display material. Ask your department chairperson for assistance, if necessary.

6. Don't spend a lot of time decorating your room. You will have many other, more important things to do to get ready for the beginning of school. A few bare bulletin boards won't bother anybody. Leave one or two empty; you can add displays later or allow your homeroom/advisory students to decorate a blank space for an art project. You can also reward a "class of the month" with the privilege of redecorating a bulletin board. Finally, don't overdecorate your classroom. Wall space that's too filled up with detail can be distracting to the students; also, it makes a room seem smaller. It will seem small enough when twenty-five to thirty students are in it.

### **Floor Space**

Arrange your furniture and equipment so that you can easily observe students from all areas of the room in which you will work. Students should be able to see you as well as the overhead projector screen, the main chalkboard, and any other area that will be used for making presentations to the whole class. Of course, you will have to adjust to whatever constraints exist in your assigned classroom. A classroom may be too small or have inadequate or poorly located chalkboard space or electrical outlets. You should assess your space and determine whether any changes can be made to accommodate whatever constraints exist. For example, if the classroom is small, be sure to remove unnecessary student desks or extra furniture or equipment; if you have inadequate storage, perhaps you can locate an extra file or supply cabinet.

A good starting point for your floor plan is to locate where you will conduct whole-class instruction. Examine the room and identify where you will stand or work when you address the entire class to conduct lessons or give instructions. You can usually identify this area of the room by the location of a large chalkboard and the placement of the overhead projector screen. This area should also have space for a table or desk where you can place items needed in presentations and an electrical out-