

3. Establishing & Teaching Classroom Expectations

The idea of establishing classroom rules/expectations is not new. Indeed, most teachers recognize that rules help to provide the structure necessary for a classroom to run smoothly and enhance opportunities for learning. Effective rules are also useful in helping to prevent behavior problems before they occur. Ways to establish and teach students classroom rules/expectations have been the subject of a great deal of research regarding classroom management. Studies have shown that it is not enough simply to establish rules for the classroom; no matter how obvious a rule may seem, rules must be directly and systematically taught to students, as well (Bicard, 2000). While most teachers are more familiar with the term rules, we have chosen to use the term expectations to distinguish between compliance-driven behavior and student responses that often must be directly taught.

The research on classroom expectations has documented a number of approaches to engaging in this process. There are the traditional approaches of modeling rules, reinforcing rules by the teacher, prompting or cuing students to remember the expectations, and structuring the school day and the classroom to promote compliance with rules (Ayers & Hedeon, 1996; Barbetta, 1990; Quinn, Osher, Warger, Hanley, Bader, & Hoffman, 2000; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995; Walker & Walker, 1991). More recent approaches to instructional management reflect combining these strategies with both class-wide and school-wide student supports. Class-wide approaches involve such techniques as including students in establishing and enforcing expectations (Ayers & Hedeon, 1996; McGinnis, Frederick, & Edwards, 1995; Quinn et al., 2000; Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994), token systems to reinforce compliance (Barbetta, 1990), or other forms of recognition earned by specific students or the whole class (Quinn, Osher, Hoffman, & Hanley, 1998). School-wide behavioral supports are those applied throughout the

entire school to help *all* students learn and follow school and class rules/expectations, while offering additional support to those with behavioral problems (Taylor-Greene, Brown, Nelson, Longton, Gassman, Cohen, Swartz, Horner, Sugai, & Hall, 1997; U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 1997).

Regardless of how these approaches are combined, there are a number of proven strategies for establishing and teaching classroom expectations. Rademacher, Callahan, and Pederson-Seelye (1998) spelled out the major steps for the effective classroom implementation of rules/expectations. First, classroom expectations must be clear, concise, and explicit so that students can understand them and how to behave in order to follow them (Quinn et al., 2000). Consequently, rules/expectations must be reasonable, so that students will accept them, be positively worded, and relatively few in number (4-5) (McGinnis, Frederick, & Edwards, 1995; Short, Short & Blanton, 1994). Second, rules/expectations must be systematically and situationally taught to students in ways that help them learn how to engage in them and why they are important (Rademacher, Callahan, & Pederson-Seelye, 1998). In most cases, expectations are taught at the very beginning of the school year or the first day in a new setting or situation, and are also consistently reviewed with students to maintain a high level of correct behavior (McGinnis, Frederick, & Edwards, 1995; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997). Finally, classroom rules/expectations are evaluated for their effectiveness and are consistently and fairly reinforced both by teachers and by students themselves, through the application of self-evaluation techniques (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 1997). Students who comply with classroom rules/expectations receive praise and recognition for doing so, and those who have not followed rules receive an appropriate, previously outlined consequence (Bicard, 2000; Rademacher, Callahan, & Pederson-Seelye, 1998; Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994; Taylor-Greene

et al., 1997; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). It is often necessary to reteach expectations to those students who have difficulty following classroom expectations, the specific behaviors needed to comply with them, or both (Quinn et al., 2000).

When teachers follow these steps to establish, teach, and enforce classroom rules/expectations, they can anticipate increased rates of compliance, fewer office referrals for rule violations, more academic engaged time, and greater personal satisfaction with regard to classroom management of instruction (Quinn et al., 1998; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997; U. S. Office of Special Education Programs, 1997).

Catherine Hoffman Kaser, M.A.

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