Activity 3.1: Creating a Safe Learning Environment (Middle School)

Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome 1: Describe the role of classroom management in the creation of an effective, safe learning community.

Standards:

INTASC Standard 5: Motivation and Management. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and member states. Copies may be downloaded from the Council’s website at [http://www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org).


Assignment Introduction Text: In this video, a middle school teacher of English language learners talks with her class about bullying and its impact on the victim. She begins by stating that a number of students in her class are absent. They have been suspended for bullying. A meeting of teachers will take place the next day. The teacher solicits suggestions from her class about how the school can prevent bullying in the future.

Video Asset: Bullying in Schools


Question 1 Text: As you watch the video, what are at least five ways the teacher creates an effective, safe learning environment?

Question 1 Hint: Throughout the video, listen to the words the teacher speaks to the students and how she interacts with them. How does she communicate that their classroom is a safe place for them to speak? Name at least five things she does to make her classroom a safe learning environment.

Question 1 Feedback: (1) Before talking about bullying, the teacher makes sure the students know the definition of bullying. (2) She recognizes that talking about being bullied is not comfortable for one of her students and helps with a response. (3) She lets students know she is aware they have been bullied and ridiculed because of their language skills. (4) She lets students know they can always come to her if there are problems. (5) She states that being bullied hurts.
The teacher always speaks to the students in a kind and caring way. She lets students know their thoughts are valued by telling them she will take the information to the faculty meeting the next day. The teacher shows that she values each of her students by drawing out students who are not responding. When speaking to students, the teacher looks right at them, kneels down to get on their level, etc. All of the teacher’s actions and words show that she supports her students.

**Question 2 Text:** What is the potential benefit of creating this safe environment?

**Question 2 Hint:** How will her discussion with her students help in the future?

**Question 2 Feedback:** By developing a trusting relationship, her students will always know that she is an advocate. She is someone they can trust and turn to if anything happens. By building that trust with her students, she can also garner their respect, which can carry over to their behavior in the classroom.

**Activity 3.2: Planning Your First Day: Recognizing Teacher Responsibility in Classroom Management (Elementary)**

**Learning Outcomes**

**Learning Outcome 2:** Detail the areas of teacher responsibility in establishing classroom management and discipline.

**Standards:**

**INTASC Standard 5:** The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

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**Assignment Introduction Text:** This video follows Mrs. Benjamin, a fourth-grade teacher, and her students throughout their first day of school. Mrs. Benjamin has structured the day to help students feel comfortable and feel they will be successful in the fourth grade. As you watch, pay attention to the many ways Mrs. Benjamin has planned for a successful day and a successful year.

**Video Asset:** Planning Your First Day
Question 1 Text: According to social psychologists, what are the two principal concerns of students when school begins each year?

Question 1 Hint: As the video begins, the narrator states the two primary things students worry about before school begins.

Question 1 Feedback: (1) Will I be accepted by my teacher and peers? (2) Will I be successful?

Question 2 Text: What three things about one’s teacher and peers should each student learn on the first day of school?

Question 2 Hint: It should be the goal of every teacher that all students end the first day of school with certain feelings and knowledge about the upcoming year.

Question 2 Feedback: (1) All students should feel comfortable with the teacher and peers. (2) Every student should feel that he or she can be successful. (3) All students should know that the teacher has high expectations for learning and behavior.

Question 3 Text: What are at least three ways that Mrs. Benjamin makes her students feel comfortable when they arrive on the first day of school?

Question 3 Hint: Before beginning a new school year, many students worry about their new teacher. What does Mrs. Benjamin do to alleviate her students’ fears and help set the tone for a successful year when the children first enter the classroom?

Question 3 Feedback: When the students arrive, Mrs. Benjamin is standing at the door greeting each student. She is smiling, and her voice tone is warm and friendly. She has prepared name tags to help her learn the students’ names. She lets the students know she is concerned about them by telling them to remove jackets and other items that make them uncomfortable. She lets students know she is aware of concerns they might have about the year. She has made arrangements in advance for places to store their various items (i.e., lunch, homework, book bags, etc.)

Question 4 Text: The video lists eight areas of teacher responsibility in establishing classroom management and discipline. What are the areas and what is one element within each area in Mrs. Benjamin’s classroom?

Question 4 Hint: The video is divided into the eight areas of teacher responsibility in classroom management. These are designated with “title screens.”

Question 4 Feedback:
1. Greeting Students—Mrs. Benjamin greeted the students warmly. She made sure students felt the classroom was a trusting environment—a safe place for them to be. She smiled and demonstrated a sense of caring for her students to alleviate any fears they might have.
2. Classroom Introduction—Mrs. Benjamin introduced herself to her students. She let them know she was looking forward to a terrific year with them. She related to the students by
telling them that she is also new to the fourth grade. She gave them nametags and told them where to put their materials. She clearly communicated to the students her expectation that the time just after arrival is the time for organizing one’s materials, not socializing. She also stated that they would be a family this year and would care about each other as a family should. Mrs. Benjamin let her students know she values their good and/or kind acts by providing compliment cards and certificates each time she catches a student doing something good.

3. General Information—Mrs. Benjamin stated the goals for the year and gave examples of activities/topics they would do in each subject area. (Note: A student might mention specific activities instead of giving a general statement.)

4. Rules and Routines—The teacher and students reviewed the rules that were posted and discussed reasons for the rules. She also explained the class process for giving “put-ups” when someone does something good.

5. Get Acquainted Activity—Mrs. Benjamin read *The Important Book*. Students worked in pairs to get to know each other better. They wrote introductions for their partners in the style used in the book. Finally, students presented their partners to the class.

6. Content Activity—Mrs. Benjamin taught the students how to create headers for all their papers. She told them to use a specific type of paper when writing first drafts in the writers’ workshop. She also taught them about the writing process to be used for each assignment. Before asking students to write, Mrs. Benjamin shared the importance of the writing workshop and everyone being respectful of others during the process.

7. Administrative Tasks—Mrs. Benjamin showed the students where they will find their schedule posted each day. She also told them where to find their homework on the board, explained the requirements for notebooks, and assigned classroom responsibilities for the month.

8. Ending the Day—Mrs. Benjamin and the students answered two questions in writing: What were you feeling last night about coming to school today, and what are you feeling now? The students shared their writing, and Mrs. Benjamin shared hers. She further established the warm tone for the room by letting students know that she too had trouble sleeping and was worried about the day. However, at the end of the day, she is feeling very comfortable and happy with her new students.

**Activity 3.3: Preparing and Organizing for Successful Teaching (Middle School)**

**Learning Outcomes**

**Learning Outcome 3:** Elaborate on how proper instructional preparation, organization of classroom space/materials, and maintenance of appropriate student behaviors are components of a personal classroom management/discipline plan.

**Standards:**

**INTASC Standard 5:** The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
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Assignment Introduction Text: In this video, we visit with Ms. deFabio and her seventh-grade language arts class as they begin the year. Our focus will be on the teacher’s responsibilities, her preparation before the first day of school, and the structure she chooses for the first day of school.


Question 1 Text: What is one of a teacher’s most important roles? What two things must a teacher do before school begins to ensure a productive classroom that is focused on learning? In addition to these two tasks, Ms. deFabio did one special thing before school began. What was it?

Question 1 Hint: The video opens with Ms. deFabio arriving at school as the narrator talks about the important role teachers have in creating a productive learning environment. Describe that role and two tasks that must be completed in order to fulfill this responsibility. In order for the first day to go especially smoothly, what was Ms. deFabio careful to learn?

Question 1 Feedback: One of a teacher’s most important roles is creating an orderly classroom. In order to have a productive classroom that is focused on learning, a teacher must carefully prepare before the school year begins by organizing the classroom and determining the procedures and rules the students are to follow. In addition, Ms. deFabio learned the names of all her students before the first day of school.

Question 2 Text: How did Ms. deFabio organize the first class for her students? Write several sentences to describe the elements of the day.

Question 2 Hint: Notice the different activities done by Ms. deFabio and the class throughout the class period.

Question 2 Feedback: Ms. deFabio began the day by introducing herself. Then, she had the students do a warm-up activity. After the activity, she explained the procedures for getting extra help, creating the independent reading folder, and organizing the class notebook. She then read and explained the classroom rules, followed by an explanation of the rewards system. The class period ended with a “Getting to Know You” activity.

Question 3 Text: Do you believe Ms. deFabio’s first day with her students was successful? Use evidence from the video to support your opinion.
**Question 3 Hint:** The following are a few questions, which may help you with your answer.

How did the students react to Ms. deFabio? How was her rapport with the students? What do you observe about the classroom that might contribute to your answer? Are the rules appropriate? Were her activities appropriate? How were they received by the students? What other aspects of the classroom do you observe?

**Question 3 Feedback:** Ms. deFabio had a successful day with her students. All visuals and student materials were prepared and ready. The students responded well to the activities and to the teacher. The teacher validated the questions asked by the students by answering in a respectful manner. She clearly explained her procedures and rules along with the reasons for the rules. Students were engaged in the activities. There is a very good rapport between Ms. deFabio and her students.

**Activity 3.4:** Low-Profile Classroom Management (Elementary/Middle School)

**Learning Outcomes**

**Learning Outcome 4:** Recognize the contributions of leading theorists in the field of modern classroom management.

**Standards:**

**INTASC Standard 5:** The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

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[http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/corestrd.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/corestrd.pdf).

**Assignment Introduction Text:** There are many theories and strategies/methods for classroom management. One of a teacher’s most important skills is the ability to make good decisions about whether an intervention is necessary to correct behavior, and the type of intervention to use when one is necessary.

Perhaps one of the most effective strategies for preventing disruptions, minimizing distractions, and limiting the time spent dealing with discipline issues might be called “low-profile” or “unobtrusive” classroom management.

With this and any strategy of classroom management, prevention is the first goal. When an intervention is needed, teachers use unobtrusive techniques to redirect the student and allow the learning to continue uninterrupted. (e.g., proximity, eye contact, complimenting a student who is engaged in the lesson, using the offending student’s name in a statement related to the lesson). If the low-profile intervention does not correct the problem, the teacher should deliver an
appropriate consequence. (e.g., warning, time out, detention). Some educators label these three steps: anticipation, deflection, reaction.

View the video and identify the low-profile/unobtrusive classroom management skills used.

**Video Asset:** Low-Profile Classroom Management

**Question 1 Text:** After watching the video, what are at least four ways the teachers used low-profile/unobtrusive classroom management techniques.

**Question 1 Hint:** Mrs. Benjamin, the fourth-grade teacher, and the male seventh-grade teacher repeatedly use low-profile/unobtrusive classroom management techniques to redirect students while keeping the focus on the subject and the learning. From all the examples you observe, describe the situation and technique used to reengage the student(s) in learning.

**Question 1 Feedback:**
1. The video opens with Mrs. Benjamin giving a compliment to a student who is working well.
2. One of the boys in the fourth grade is reading a book instead of participating in the hands-on activity. Mrs. Benjamin went to his desk, touched his shoulder, and quietly asked him to put the book away and get back on task.
3. When the seventh-grade students entered class after the lesson had started, the teacher welcomed them, directed them to the page where he was reading, and reminded them it was important to arrive in class on time. He quickly continued the lesson without losing the focus of the other students.
4. When Mrs. Benjamin was talking with the class about the activity, Gina got out of her seat without permission and began to sharpen her pencil. Mrs. Benjamin asked her to state the rule governing such activity, but quickly returned to talking with students about the lesson.
5. When a student was distracting the class by tapping on his desk, the seventh-grade teacher could not make eye contact because the student was engaged in reading the book. The teacher walked over and gently touched the student’s hand without interrupting his teaching.
6. When two fourth-grade boys were talking while Mrs. Benjamin was teaching, Mrs. Benjamin gave the student sitting beside them a compliment reward.
7. When a seventh-grade boy was doodling instead of paying attention, the teacher walked over, took the pencil, closed the notebook, and pointed to the page in the book on which the student should focus.

**Question 2 Text:** Do you believe low-profile/unobtrusive classroom management is an effective technique for maintaining a successful learning environment? Support your answer with specifics from the video.
**Question 2 Hint:** What happened each time one of the teachers used a low-profile/unobtrusive strategy? How did the students react? How did it impact the learning environment?

**Question 2 Feedback:** The low-profile/unobtrusive strategy of classroom management is very effective as evidenced by the students’ actions in each situation. The following are specific examples:

1. When Mrs. Benjamin complimented the student for working well, it reminded the other students of her expectations. They chose to return their attention to the work to meet their teacher’s expectations.
2. When she asked the young man to put the book away, he did so without disruption and focused on his assignment.
3. When the seventh-graders were late, they quickly settled down, got out their books, and focused on the lesson.
4. When Mrs. Benjamin had Gina state the rule for sharpening pencils, Gina quickly returned to her seat and class continued without interruption.
5. When the seventh-grade teacher touched the young man’s hand, he stopped tapping. Learning continued without interruption.
6. When Mrs. Benjamin gave the young lady a compliment reward, her words reminded the boys they were to be quiet, and they reengaged in the lesson.
7. When the seventh-grade teacher took the pencil, closed the notebook, and pointed to the passage being read in the book, the young man quickly refocused on the lesson.

**Activity 3.5: Empowering Students to Resolve Conflicts**

**Learning Outcomes**

**Learning Outcome 5:** Explain the importance of establishing a classroom management style that is both culturally responsible and developmentally responsive.

**Standards:**

**INTASC Standard 9: Reflective Practice: Professional Development.** The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

**Assignment Introduction Text:** When students have conflicts during the school day, many educators believe it is their duty to step in, give direction, assign consequences, and “resolve” the conflicts. Mr. Workmon, a fourth-grade teacher, believes a more long-term solution is to teach students how to resolve their own conflicts. Those who agree with Mr. Workmon believe that when a teacher resolves a conflict the victim remains a victim. When students resolve their own conflicts, the victim is empowered to resist being victimized in the future.

The video opens with Mr. Workmon supervising as fourth-graders Teri and Omar work to solve a problem. First, observe the process the students go through with Mr. Workmon’s guidance to talk about the conflict and work toward a solution. Then, listen as Mr. Workmon
describes the process and why he believes empowering students to solve conflicts is better than solving them himself.

**Video Asset:** Empowering Students to Resolve Conflicts
http://abavtooldev.pearsoncmg.com/myeducationlab/singleplay.php?projectID=herrell&clipID=empowering_students_to_resolve_conflicts.flv

**Question 1 Text:** What is the process Mr. Workmon, Teri, and Omar use to resolve the conflict?

**Question 1 Hint:** Listen to what Mr. Workmon says; then, listen to the exchange between the students. What is happening? What kind of body language is being used? What are the steps in finding a solution to the conflict?

**Question 1 Feedback:** First, Mr. Workmon got the attention of both students and told Omar that Teri had a problem. He let Omar know this was serious. Mr. Workmon told Teri to look straight at Omar and tell him the problem. He also told Omar to look at Teri while she talked.

Teri told Omar that his talking during class was disrupting her learning. She asked him to be quiet. Omar told her he would try. He said that Edward was bothering him.

Mr. Workmon told Teri that she was able to talk to Omar when supervised, but he wondered how she would handle it in the classroom. He then had the two students work out what they would say to each other when the boys begin disturbing Teri again and cautioned Teri that she is to handle the situation herself without raising her hand and asking the teacher to solve the problem.

Throughout the process, Mr. Workmon insisted the students look at each other. He stated that having students look at each other can change the dynamics of the conflict.

**Question 2 Text:** What is the process Mr. Workmon uses to empower his students to resolve conflicts?

**Question 2 Hint:** In the demonstration with Teri and Omar, Mr. Workmon illustrates the steps he uses to help students solve problems, while in the interview he details each step and gives the rationale behind it. List the steps in Mr. Workmon’s technique for empowering students to solve conflicts.

**Question 2 Feedback:**
1. Mr. Workmon pulls the students aside and talks to them away from their peers. Being away from their peers allows the students to concentrate on each other instead of performing for their fellow students.
2. The students are required to look at each other. Mr. Workmon states that many times this simple skill changes the dynamics of the conflict.
3. Mr. Workmon tells the offending student that the other student has a problem that needs to be resolved.
4. The victim explains the problem to the offending student and tells the student what impact it has on him or her.
5. The perpetrator must respond and tell how he or she will solve the problem.
6. Both students discuss the situation and work toward a solution with the guidance of Mr. Workmon.
7. Mr. Workmon then has the students state how they will handle the situation the next time it occurs.

**Question 3 Text:** Why does Mr. Workmon say he believes it is worth the time it takes to teach students how to resolve their own conflicts?

**Question 3 Hint:** In his final statements, Mr. Workmon states why he believes it is important to teach students how to negotiate differences and come to solutions. Compare and contrast the outcome(s) when students are empowered to resolve conflicts versus the outcome(s) when a teacher “solves” the problem.

**Question 3 Feedback:** If a teacher “stops” the conflict, many times students will continue to perpetuate it and tensions will build up in the classroom. The conflict will usually emerge again later. However, if time is spent early on to teach students how to resolve conflicts, the overall result is usually saved time.