GUIDE

Classroom management ideas:
CREATING GROUP DYNAMIC[1]

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DE MONTRÉAL

Author : Pierre Rancourt, teaching artist

Once called "discipline", we now say "classroom management".

Also applicable for groups outside schools.

GOALS

- To maintain an optimal level of commitment from all participants.

- To channel the energy created within the group, in a context that encourages expressiveness and spontaneity.

- To reduce the need for interventions by the educator by increasing the autonomy of the artist-facilitator.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

- Consistency in the application of rules and procedures

- Sensitivity to what is happening in the classroom

- Maintaining the rhythm of activities and their transitions

- Discreet intervention

- The use of humor

- Tolerance

- Respect for students

- Intervention appropriate to the causes of disruptive behavior

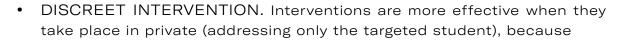- Understanding and applying the principles of positive reinforcement

EXPLANATION
OF PRINCIPLES:

- CONSISTENCY. "Enforce rules and procedures whenever necessary, intervening quickly when a rule or procedure is violated. It also includes not accepting or tolerating such transgressive behavior.[2]"

- SENSITIVITY. "[The teacher] is 'hyperperceptive' [...]. Not only can [they] detect their students' interest in the activity, but they regularly assess their level of cognitive engagement. Indeed, students who are not cognitively engaged are not learning and they risk disrupting the group.[3]"

  Common example: in preschool and elementary school, a child monopolizes the attention of the educator with a personal story that does not interest the others. It is then necessary to modify the activity to reengage the group. Other tips that may be useful:

  - scan the class frequently and regularly;

  - do not turn your back on other students when helping one in particular;

  - avoid concentrating on one activity, especially when several activities are in progress (do not help a single student for too long, do not linger with one team to the detriment of the others, etc.);

  - do not hesitate to question students to check their level of cognitive engagement.

- PACE OF ACTIVITIES. "[The teacher] acts so that events follow one another smoothly, continuously and in a logical order, rather than going too fast and ending activities abruptly.[4]" **Transitions between activities should be prepared**.

- DISCREET INTERVENTION. Interventions are more effective when they take place in private (addressing only the targeted student), because

  - they do not interrupt the activity;

  - a remark in front of the class focuses too much attention on a particular student, which can reinforce their disruptive behavior in the medium term;

  - a remark in front of the class can cause the student to be rejected by his peers.

- THE USE OF HUMOR. Always a must!

- TOLERANCE. **While maintaining consistency of instructions, avoid being too stringent, so that small disruptions do not become problematic.** This principle is valid especially for schools in disadvantaged areas, where several ethnic groups rub shoulders: there, openness and listening are necessary to understand the customs and behavior of the students, which can be completely acceptable.

- RESPECT. **Respecting the student means showing them that we accept them as a person regardless of their behaviour.** It is to make them feel that they are valued as a person, even if we disapprove of their behavior and are asked to change it. It means understanding that the student is learning and expressing support. Disapproval is aimed at the behavior, not the person. (For example, say: "Your behavior is disturbing", not "You are disturbing".)

  Avoid sarcasm or denigration. We want to value and encourage, not devalue and inhibit

- THE CAUSES OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR. Does the student know my expectations? Do they understand them? Do they know how to comply? Are they interested in the activity?

- POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT. Use positive reinforcement extensively.

MODES OF INTERVENTION

- Physical presence (moving around the class);

- Non-verbal clues (keep the rhythm of the activity, but indicate that we have seen and that we disapprove);

- A discreet verbal reminder (in a moment when you can only address the student who is disturbing) or direct (aloud in front of the class);

- Interest in behaviors according to students (without showing favouritism, but rather by valuing positive behavior that everyone can reproduce);

- Selective distribution of attention.

NOTE: Adult attention is <u>essential</u> for young children; a very effective intervention consists in modulating the level of attention given to a child according to whether or not we approve of their behavior. However, the older the child, the more this attention loses its importance in favor of that from peers (from the end of the 2nd cycle of elementary school).

NO TO PUNISHMENT, YES TO "LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES"!

THE DOWNSIDES OF PUNISHMENT

- Risking the reinforcement of faulty behavior by paying it too much attention, when it would be more constructive to teach a substitute behavior;

- Creating a hostile, unhealthy climate (spreading the effect);

- Fostering dependence and disempowerment (as proof, the class will disorganize as soon as the teacher is absent, proof that the appropriate behaviors have not been integrated);

- Compromising the relationship with the teacher (causing resentment, desire for revenge);

- Punishment = aggression. It targets the person and not the gesture, which has a demeaning effect.

CHOOSE "LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES"

This is a consequence that goes in the direction of learning good behavior: we can offer the student a "behavior incompatible with the faulty behavior" (for example, to give them a responsibility during the period when they would normally disrupt).

If you can't find a logical consequence, ask the students themselves for suggestions! This attitude promotes complicity between teacher and students while empowering the latter.

THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF REWARD SYSTEMS

Such systems are often inefficient and sometimes counterproductive if those who are excluded are always the same (devaluation).

Often, reinforcements (rewards) are too infrequent and too far removed from the intended behaviors to have any effect. Moreover, too often, the rewards have no connection with the behaviors to be adopted.

DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

This is a practice that is very similar to today's facilitation: co-creation. This type of management gives power back to the participants.

> " *Teachers who allow their students to participate in decisions that affect them, who ask more questions in class, who encourage debate and discussion, who promote cooperation between students and who establish a climate of respect, have positive effects on the acquisition of democratic values in their students.*[5] "

1 Based on Jean Archambault and Roch Chouinard, *Vers une gestion éducative de la classe*, Chenelière Éducation, 3ᵉ édition (2009).
2 Ibid., p. 103.
3 Ibid., p. 104.
4 Ibid., p. 106.
5 Ibid., p. 148-149.

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