

Managing Your Classroom:

Classroom management shouldn't just begin from the moment students enter your classroom in late August. It is a practice, to be refined and tailored to your particular needs, that should exist before and after each academic year.

There is no one prescribed formula that will prove more effective than another, and it is essential that your system of classroom management be something that you are comfortable with. Hand in hand, it must also be a system where you uphold established classroom expectations, assign consequences, and consistently follow through with violation protocols, while remaining liked for doing so!

Establishing Basic Expectations:

The most important element in establishing classroom management is first deciding on the expectations that you have for your own room. What guidelines or classroom rules will help to ensure that your ideal learning environment is created? When establishing this list, it always best to keep it at a minimum, including more general ideas such as (1) treat others with respect, (2) follow the last direction, (3) take pride in our environment, or (4) come to class prepared each day. In doing so, you will be helping to develop a belief system, respect, and a sense of caring and community, rather than a simple listing of "do's" and "don'ts." Write your rules out and display them in the most prominent area of the classroom. Create an official document, stating these rules, precise consequences for violations, and a signature area for the teacher, the student, and a parent or guardian. Distribute and discuss these on day one, collect on day two, and enforce the principle of your learning environment from the moment students walk into your room.

Assigning Consequences:

Handling classroom rule violations and misbehaviors is always something that is best done internally, within the offending classroom. Except for the most extreme of circumstances, avoid outside intervention. Allowing your students to see you handing over power and control to another offers you up as an easy target for future offenses. Instead, rely on yourself, your classroom rules, and your parent connection as the primary tools for preventing and confronting violations.

In order to prevent a problem from reoccurring, it is essential that the student take a moment to separate them self and reflect on the incident, regardless of its magnitude. *Pink Slips* have the right idea, but rather than resorting to someone else, first attempt to achieve the same degree of student introspection within your own classroom. At the same time, crank up the heat by creating a template to make this reflection, a piece that is addressed to the student's parent or guardian. In this format, the student is recognizing and taking accountability for their behavior, while at the same time, serving as the primary communicator in relaying this incident to the parent or guardian. You, of course,

will keep a copy of this reflection for your personal records and will mail the original document directly to the addressee.

If a parent chooses to call, they can use the contact information that you provide at the bottom of the form to initiate a follow-up. Naturally, if the offense is of greater severity, you are always the first to make that initial contact.

Every Moment is an Opportunity for Learning:

While your student is removed from the mainstream of the classroom, he or she should not be detached from learning. For this sake, it is recommended that the opposite side of your reflection template contain material that is appropriate to your curriculum. This can be a short worksheet that:

1. asks the students to read, respond, and compare their situation to that of a famous athlete, mathematician, or writer who faced adversity, overcame obstacles, or dealt with hardships.
2. includes general questions or problems aligned with MCAS content and phrasing.
3. reinforces key concepts or expands on current unit concepts (your two-sided reflection documents would change with the introduction of each new unit).

Documents that have been accurately and thoroughly completed, front and back, are ready to be copied and mailed home.

Housing your Offender:

All good teachers know that it is best to remove a child from a situation or environment when simple redirections have proven ineffective. Though sending them out of the classroom may seem like the easiest solution (out of sight, out of mind), this can often exacerbate a problem rather than resolve it. Your control has been diminished and a colleague's has grown in strength. With smaller classrooms, it can seem daunting and difficult to isolate the student from his or her peers, but it is not impossible.

Long before the first day of school, you should have designated two specific areas of your classroom where offending students can go for seclusion and reflection. Simply putting a desk at the back of the room continues to allow for interaction with peers and can become yet another obstacle, rather than a catalyst for the reflection process. For this reason, your areas should be self-contained, allowing the offending student minimal, if any, opportunity for interaction with peers. To achieve this, a number of devices can be utilized:

1. Free-standing cubicles where the student's back is to the wall and they can neither see nor be seen by classmates
2. A small curtained off area with a chair and desk