



**Professional Development for 21st Century Teachers:
Effective Classroom Management**

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR 21ST CENTURY TEACHERS: EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Changing a child's life through education is by far the greatest gift an educator can give to a student. Every child deserves the opportunity to receive an education. Yet, some children are denied this privilege every day. Teachers play many roles in a child's life. On the first day of school when a child walks into a classroom, he is putting his future in the hands of the teacher. Everything that happens in that classroom will affect the student and his future. Therefore, it is vital that the classroom and the classroom climate is conducive to student learning.

Today's classroom is a very different place than it was fifteen or even five years ago. Teachers are faced with larger, more diverse classrooms during a time when teacher accountability is mandated as a result of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. The ability to understand and respond appropriately to students' cultural, racial, economic, social and learning differences will become increasingly important to effective teaching practices. Many educators find themselves frustrated and wonder how they can measurably increase student motivation and academic performance, while at the same time manage their classrooms effectively and cultivate the students' desire to embrace a lifetime of learning.

The *Framework for 21st Century Learning* suggest that schools today should focus on more than the basics to integrate 21st century themes such as Global Awareness, Financial, Economic, Business, Health, and Entrepreneurial Literacy. Today's K-12 issues require specialized expertise to articulate and put into action.. Schools will move beyond traditional space-and time-bound classrooms toward virtual environments that serve children as the

demands of their lives require. The 21st century teacher needs the skill and ability to manage students who never set foot in a school building (Brown, 2005). To this end, professional development for teachers is a vital tool in our quest to educate today's children.

In our effort to fully understand the importance and significance of professional development and effective classroom management for teachers in the 21st century, several questions must be answered:

1. What exactly is professional development?
2. What is the impact of classroom management on student learning and quality of teaching?
3. How can a teacher create a climate for learning?
4. Should professional development be an ongoing process?

Professional development for teachers is the range of formal and informal processes and activities that teachers engage in both inside and outside of the school, in order to improve their teaching knowledge and skills (Jackson & Davis, 2000). It should be targeted, ongoing, and embedded into a teachers' workday (National Staff Development Council, n.d.). The ultimate goal of teacher professional development is improving student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2003). Professional development has also been defined as a process that increases the life-long learning capacity of community members. This process promotes both high standards of academic achievement and responsible citizenship for all students (Michigan State Board of Education, 2000).

A teacher's impact on student learning and success can be enormous. The most important action an effective teacher takes at the beginning of the school year is creating a proper climate for learning (Star, 2004). Research has shown that teachers are the most powerful factor impacting student achievement and learning (peaklearn.com). The National

Staff Development Council (NSDC) identified 26 staff development programs with documented evidence to demonstrate the link between staff development and increased student achievement (Killion, 1999). Researchers have found that the most important factor in student achievement was teacher quality (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1998). Sustained and intensive professional development in classroom management is more likely to have an impact on enhanced teacher knowledge and skills, and ultimately student achievement, than shorter professional development activities. Research also shows that the number of hours spent in professional development activities is related to the extent to which teachers believe that the participation improved their teaching (NCES, 2001).

Since research indicates that teachers have control over many factors that influence motivation, achievement and behavior of their students, professional development focusing on classroom management will enhance a teacher's skills and performance in the classroom. The physical environment in the classroom, the level of emotional comfort experienced by students, and the quality of communication between teacher and students are important factors that may enable or disable learning (EENET Asia Newsletter, 2006).

Skills such as effective classroom management are vital to teaching and require common sense, consistency, a sense of fairness and courage. The skills also require that teachers understand the psychological and developmental levels of each student, because as educators, we are obligated to educate the "whole" child (Kizlik, 2009).

Creating a climate for learning involves several steps. Teachers first need to reflect on what happens inside the classroom as student behavior is often a reaction to factors within the school. Teachers should reflect on the learning environment they have created and determine

whether this environment engages all children actively and meaningfully. It is important for teachers to investigate how various teaching styles can affect the progress and behavior of all students. Everything a teacher does for learning may not be helpful, some may be useless or even harmful (EENET, 2006).

As previously mentioned, research indicates that effective classroom management does in fact affect student learning and quality of teaching. While there is no one best solution for every problem associated with classroom management, the twelve steps listed below serve as a great start in implementing effective classroom management:

1. Develop a set of written expectations you can live with and enforce.
2. Be consistent. Be consistent. Be consistent.
3. Be patient with yourself and with your students.
4. Make parents your allies. Call early and often. Use the word “concerned”. When communicating concern, be specific and descriptive.
5. Don’t talk too much. Use the first 15 minutes of class for lectures or presentations, then get the kids working.
6. Break the class period into two or three different activities. Be sure each activity flows smoothly into the next.
7. Begin at the very beginning of each class period and end at the very end.
8. Don’t roll call. Take the roll with your seating chart while students are working.
9. Keep all students actively involved. For example, while a student does a presentation, involve the other students in evaluating it.
10. Discipline individual students quietly and privately. Never engage in a disciplinary conversation across the room.
11. Keep your sense of perspective and your sense of humor.
12. Know when to ask for help (Star, 2004).

New ideas in education are being introduced daily and as a result, today’s educational facilities will require teachers who are able and willing to acquire the knowledge necessary to implement these new strategies in a manner which will enhance and improve student learning. A high-quality professional development program is conducted as an ongoing process, not a one-shot approach. Teachers need continued practice to become comfortable with and to

implement change. Professional development takes time and must be conducted over several years for significant change in educational practices to take place. Substantial change in school practice typically takes four to seven years, and in some cases longer. Administrators must take into account this long time frame, and teachers must be prepared to be involved in professional development throughout their careers (Killion, 1999).

The need for teacher professional development, particularly in the middle grades, is fully recognized and paramount. However, despite the recommendations for experts in this field, middle grades teachers are not currently engaged in regular professional development. Research has shown that the frequency and depth of most professional development that is currently provided to classroom teachers falls short of meeting their needs. Middle grades teachers participate in professional development activities an average of only several times a year (Flowers & Mertens, 2003).

Schools should dedicate a minimum of 10 percent of their budgets, excluding salaries and benefits, to professional development and devote at least 25 percent of a teachers' work time to learning and collaborating with colleagues (NSDC, n.d.) . Schools should offer a wide variety of professional development opportunities to teachers. The one-size-fits-all approach to professional development is not effective, for each level of teachers have different needs.

Today's educational leaders must understand the principles of effective professional development and classroom management. The responsibility for the knowledge can no longer be delegated to specialists. Professional development has to be integrated into the life and day-to-day operations of the learning community.

The educational leaders of today need to do it all: increase achievement, satisfy demanding stakeholders, create effective learning communities, be expert in school law, finance, public relations, assessment and instructional practice, as well as managing the classroom and making sure that the classroom climate is conducive to learning.

However, in spite of all of this preparation, this researcher believes that there is no greater reward than helping a child unlock his or her greatest potential. LET'S GIVE TEACHERS THE KEYS THEY NEED!.

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