## Five Strategies:

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5.
Teaching with Poverty in Mind Key Points

Effects of Poverty on Student Behavior and Academic Performance
- Emotional and Social Challenges: Lack of stability and interactions at home may lead to lower ability of emotional regulation
- Acute and Chronic Stresses: Trauma (acute stress) and long-term stress (chronic) both reduce emotional control, increase the likelihood for depression, and reduces memory available for school.
- Cognitive Lags: Parental education, speech, vocabulary, and noncognitive skills all affect a student’s cognitive success. Then, schools available to poor students are of lower quality than those available to middle- and upper-income families.
- Health and Safety Issues: Lead paint, pollution, heavier traffic, access to nutritious foods, access to quality healthcare, level of crime, etc.

The Good News
- Neuroplasticity: the ability of the brain to create new connections and re-shape itself even if it has been developing in one way for a long time.
- The Pygmalion Effect: teacher expectations influence student performance.

Poverty is Not the Whole Story
- Schools are generally run as middle-class institutions: they value using formal language, sticking to traditional rules and conventions, and teaching knowledge that has been deemed best by middle- and upper-class white people.
- When a system is designed in this way, it alienates people who aren’t interested in accepting that culture. Especially when we bring historical and personal bias, discrimination, and racism into the mix.
- Keep this in mind when you see defiance, uncooperative behavior, or apathy.
- Look for ways to build relationships, listen to students, and create space for individual expression and a chance to feel valued, no matter a student’s cultural background.

What We Can Do
- Embody Respect and Support
  - Give respect first (no sarcasm), even when they seem least to deserve it
  - Avoid directives and orders (try phrasing of ‘you may…’)
  - Discipline through positive relationships, not exerting power or authority
  - “The development of emotional resources is crucial to student success. The greatest free resource available to schools is the role-modeling provided by teachers, administrators, and staff.” (Payne)
- Change your Frame
  - “Behavior that comes off as apathetic or rude may actually indicate feelings of hopelessness or despair.”
  - “Whenever you and your colleagues witness a behavior you consider inappropriate, ask yourselves whether the discipline process is positive and therefore increases the chances for better future behavior, or whether it’s punitive and therefore reduces the chances for better future behavior.”
  - Pinpoint assessments (where is the source of the issue?)
- Embed Skills
  - Teach a variety of options for responses
  - Teach and practice problem-solving, communication, and turn-taking
  - Incorporate stress reduction techniques
  - Explicitly model critical thinking and problem-solving
  - Teach procedural self-talk, positive self-talk, planning, goal setting, coping strategies, appropriate relationships, and connections to additional resources. (Payne)
- Empower Students
  - Invite students to apply learning to their lives, use content from their neighborhoods or homes in assignments, etc.
  - Celebrate accomplishments and positives often
  - Share the decision-making in class
  - Give options for assignments to allow for creativity and relevance
**Breaking the Cycle of Trauma**

When trauma causes emotional or psychological damage to children, they may adopt a set of behaviors or patterns of thinking that put them on a path for further trauma. Either directly through their own repeated actions (e.g., they are quicker to resort to violence) or as a result of consequences for their actions that do not fit within societal rules and norms (e.g., punitive measures after violation of rules/laws), *children may become re-traumatized and their problems are only compounded.*

We need to understand the “cycle of trauma” (see figure below) which is particularly important to keep in mind in the school environment, where students may display problem behaviors related to past trauma and *then become re-traumatized through punishment for those behaviors – embedding the trauma further and continuing the cycle of behavioral problems rather than lessening them.*

![Cycle of Trauma Diagram](attachment:image.png)

**Breaking the Cycle: Evidence-Supported and Evidence-Based Approaches**

Given the high prevalence of childhood trauma, many systems working with children have had to confront this issue. From medical centers to courts to child welfare systems, several evidence-supported and evidence-based approaches to address trauma have been developed and have proven to be effective. These approaches can be broken into two categories: *trauma-informed systems approaches* that aim to shape organizations to be more trauma-sensitive in their work with children and families and *trauma-specific treatment interventions* that can be implemented at the individual-level to address trauma and its symptoms. Both types of approaches are explained in more detail and applied to school settings below.
Becoming trauma-informed requires a paradigm shift at the staff and organizational level to re-focus on understanding what happened to a child, rather than focusing on the conduct alone. Trauma-informed approaches represent a holistic approach to shaping organizational culture, practices, and policies to be sensitive to the experiences and needs of traumatized individuals.

Several models have been developed to guide the design and implementation of trauma-informed systems that take these key elements into consideration. One well-known approach is the Sanctuary Model®, developed by Dr. Sandra Bloom, Associate Professor at Drexel University in Philadelphia. This model engages organizational leaders and staff to develop an organizational culture where staff model and clients build skills in key areas such as safety, emotional management, self-control, and conflict resolution. At the same time, open communication, healthy boundaries, healthy social relationships, and growth and change are promoted. The model also utilizes the S.E.L.F. curriculum to guide individual treatment and organizational change. S.E.L.F. stands for “safety, emotions, loss, and the future.” The Sanctuary Model has been used across a variety of settings including residential facilities, juvenile justice facilities, mental health programs and schools. Links to information about the Sanctuary Model and other trauma-informed systems approaches are included in the resources at the end of this publication.

Evidence Supporting Trauma-Informed Approaches at the Organizational Level
The use of trauma-informed systems and methods in other fields, including medicine and child welfare, has had very promising results. Positive outcomes of these “trauma-informed” systems include client engagement and retention, staff and client safety, staff development, and increased supportive environments. Here are some examples of measurable positive outcomes:

- When staff in a child and adolescent inpatient psychiatric facility were trained on trauma-informed care, the facility experienced a 67% reduction in the number of times children were placed in seclusion and/or in restraints.
- In a study that compared units at a residential treatment facility that implemented the Sanctuary Model® with units that provided services as usual, staff in the Sanctuary Model® units were more likely to report community environments that promoted support, autonomy, safety, open expression of feelings, and personal problem-solving.
- Women receiving substance abuse treatment that was trauma-enhanced (i.e., promoted physical and psychological safety, provided culturally competent and individualized services, and involved staff training on trauma) were less likely to leave treatment early, compared to women receiving services as usual.
- Child welfare supervisors in Arkansas who attended a two-day training on trauma-informed services reported a significant increase in their knowledge of trauma-informed practices, as well as a significant increase in their active support of trauma-informed assessment and trauma-informed care among the staff they supervise.

Researchers and practitioners in the field agree that trauma-informed approaches at the system level make intuitive sense, and a growing body of research supports their implementation as evidence-supported approaches. However, rigorous evaluations are still needed to build on this evidence and further establish the efficacy of these approaches.
Trauma-Informed Approaches: What Schools & Educators Can Do

Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches in Schools
Similar to other child and family-serving organizations, being trauma-informed in schools means being informed about and sensitive to trauma, and providing a safe, stable, and understanding environment for students and staff. A primary goal is to prevent re-injury or re-traumatization by acknowledging trauma and its triggers, and avoiding stigmatizing and punishing students. At the state level, Massachusetts and Washington are two states that have undertaken a systemic approach to incorporating trauma awareness and trauma-informed practices in their school systems. At the school level, some schools have pursued training and certification in trauma-informed approaches such as the Sanctuary Model®.

In Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Harvard Law School, and the Task Force on Children Affected by Domestic Violence launched Helping Traumatized Children Learn, a policy agenda for the state, in 2005. Schools are encouraged to adopt a “Flexible Framework” for trauma-sensitive practices and supports at the school-wide level. More specifically, schools are asked to incorporate an understanding of trauma in the following domains: [47]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Massachusetts’ “Flexible Framework” for Trauma-Sensitive Practices in Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
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<td><strong>School Culture and Infrastructure</strong></td>
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Seven Key Elements of Trauma-Informed Systems
(National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

1. Screen routinely for trauma exposure and symptoms.
2. Implement culturally appropriate, evidence-based assessments and treatments for traumatic stress and symptoms.
3. Provide resources to children, families, and providers on trauma, its impact, and treatment options.
4. Build on the strengths of children and families impacted by trauma.
5. Address parent and caregiver trauma.
6. Collaborate across child-serving systems to coordinate care.
7. Support staff by minimizing and treating secondary traumatic stress, which can lead to burnout.
| Links to Mental Health Professionals | Schools should create links to mental health consultation and services for staff, students, and families.  
- For staff, clinical supports include the opportunity to participate in sessions with their peers and a clinician to confidentially discuss specific cases, reflect on experiences of secondary trauma, and learn and practice strategies for working with children and families.  
- For students and families, school staff should refer families to appropriate mental health resources and following up on referrals. Trusting relationships between parents/caregivers, school staff, and mental health providers can help to ensure success. Be sure to secure the necessary authorization for release of information between parties to facilitate communication and collaboration. |
| Academic Instruction for Students who have Experienced Trauma | • Specific strategies can be used to support the learning needs of students who have experienced trauma, including discovering and building on the student’s individual interests and competencies; maintaining predictable routines and expectations; maintaining expectations for the student that are consistent with those of his/her peers; and providing positive behavioral supports.  
• Language-based teaching approaches can help students process information and alleviate their fears. Students who have experienced trauma often pay more attention to nonverbal cues than verbal communication, so using multiple forms of communicating information and helping students identify and verbally express their feelings are important strategies to support learning.  
• School evaluations, including psychological, speech and language, functional behavioral, and occupational therapy evaluations, should assess the role of trauma and identify needed supports. |
| Nonacademic Strategies | • Build nonacademic relationships with students.  
• Support and facilitate participation in extracurricular activities. |
| School Policies, Procedures, and Protocols | School discipline policies are trauma-informed when they:  
- Balance accountability with an understanding of traumatic behavior;  
- Teach students the school and classroom rules while reinforcing that school is not a violent place and abusive discipline (which students who have experienced trauma may be accustomed to) is not allowed at school;  
- Minimize disruptions to education with an emphasis on positive behavioral supports and behavioral intervention plans;  
- Create consistent rules and consequences;  
- Model respectful, nonviolent relationships.  
Communication procedures and protocols are trauma-informed when they:  
• Respect confidentiality;  
• Involve open communication and relationship-building with families;  
• Ensure ongoing monitoring of new policies, practices and training. |

Source: *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*[^48]
In addition to the systemic approach outlined above, Massachusetts has taken its interest in promoting trauma-informed school environments to the legislative level. In 2004, the legislature established a grant program administered through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to support school-based efforts to address the educational and psychosocial needs of students whose behavior interferes with learning, with a particular emphasis on those students who have witnessed violence and experienced trauma. Schools have implemented innovative trauma-informed practices utilizing these funds. For example, Framingham School District offered a 12-hour course for credit for teachers and school staff on the impact of trauma on children’s learning, and the Academy for Strategic Learning Charter School instituted bi-weekly meetings for staff to discuss implementation of trauma-sensitive school practices, provide training, and conduct case consultations with a psychologist. Trauma committees have also been formed to better meet the needs of students experiencing trauma in some schools, as highlighted in the adjacent textbox.

Washington State has taken steps at the state-level to bring special attention to the needs of students who have experienced trauma. The Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Compassionate Schools Initiative released the second edition of its handbook *The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success* in 2011. In addition to providing background information on trauma and the importance of self-care for school staff, this handbook outlines six principles which should guide interactions with students who have experienced trauma:

1. **Always Empower, Never Disempower:** Avoid battles for power with students. Students who have experienced trauma often seek to control their environment to protect themselves, and their behavior will generally deteriorate when they feel more helpless. Classroom discipline is necessary, but should be done in a way that is respectful, consistent, and non-violent.

2. **Provide Unconditional Positive Regard:** As consistently caring adults, school staff have the opportunity to help students build trust and form relationships. For example, if a student tells you, “I hate you. You’re mean,” respond with unconditional positive regard by saying “I’m sorry you feel that way. I care about you and hope you’ll get your work done.”

3. **Maintain High Expectations:** Set and enforce limits in a consistent way. Maintain the same high expectations of a student who has experienced trauma as you do for his/her peers.

4. **Check Assumptions, Observe, and Question:** Trauma can affect any student and can manifest in many different ways. Realize when you are making assumptions, and instead, talk with the

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**Trauma-Informed Student Engagement: Ford Elementary School, Lynn, MA**

After receiving a state grant to focus on youth traumatized by violence, Ford Elementary School trained staff and established a “trauma committee” that works to identify children whose behaviors may be impacted by trauma at home. These staff members then identify the strengths, interests, and talents of those students experiencing trauma, and use this information to help engage students in school. For example, in one case, a teacher recognized a student’s passion for baseball and facilitated an arrangement where this student, who was struggling academically and experiencing domestic violence at home, was able to join the team provided he improved his grades. Recognizing and building on the student’s strengths led to improved behavior, grades, and self-esteem.
student and ask questions. Make observations about the student’s behaviors and be fully engaged in listening to his/her response.

5. **Be a Relationship Coach**: Help students from preschool through high school develop social skills and support positive relationships between children and their caregivers.

6. **Provide Guided Opportunities for Helpful Participation**: Model, foster, and support ongoing peer “helping” interactions (e.g., peer tutoring, support groups).  

The Washington State Compassionate Schools Initiative recommends applying these principles to three curriculum domains – safety, connection, and assurance; emotional and behavioral self-regulation; and competencies of personal agency, social skills, and academic skills – and provides specific strategies to do so. To create a feeling of safety in the classroom, teachers may implement strategies to create consistency and routine.  

Examples from the handbook include posting the Monday schedule on the board (students experiencing trauma may be returning to school from a weekend of chaos at home) and creating spaces where students can go to calm down. To promote emotional and behavioral self-regulation, the handbook emphasizes the importance of helping students learn to recognize and identify their emotions. Example exercises include discussing the emotions of characters in books and engaging in relaxation exercises. Finally, in the domain of competencies and skills, students who have experienced trauma may need additional opportunities to build their sense of personal agency, social skills, academic skills, and executive functions (e.g., setting goals, anticipating consequences). Sample exercises are provided including journal writing and training on non-violent communication.

**Actions Taken in Other States**. In addition to the systematic frameworks developed in Massachusetts and Washington, other states have promoted education on trauma-informed practices. For example, states such as Illinois, Wisconsin, and Massachusetts have included resources on trauma on their State Department/Board of Education websites. Information on trauma can also be incorporated into mental health training received by school staff. In Idaho, three out of four school districts have attended the “Better Todays, Better Tomorrows” training on children’s mental health which is offered by Idaho State University and includes education on trauma.

**Trauma-Informed Discipline Policies: Lincoln High School, Walla Walla, WA**

Jim Sporleder, principal of Lincoln High School, recently implemented an approach to school discipline that looks to the underlying factors prompting student behaviors. Rather than automatically suspending students for behavioral problems, school leaders sit down with students to check in and ask “what’s going on?” Students still receive consequences for their actions, including in school suspensions where they have access to a teacher and a comforting environment. Sporleder reports that students are very receptive to this approach and open up to staff about underlying trauma and stress that are contributing to their behavior. Suspensions and expulsions have also dropped dramatically, from 798 suspensions and 50 expulsions in the 2009-2010 school year (prior to implementing this trauma-informed approach), to 135 suspensions and 30 expulsions in 2010-2011.

[Links to the resources from Massachusetts and Washington highlighted here are included in the resources at the end of this publication.]
Example Student Reflection Sheet

Name: _________________________

1) What did you do? ________________________________

2) When you did that, what did you want? ________________________________

3) List four other things you could have done:
   a) _____________________________________________
   b) _____________________________________________
   c) _____________________________________________
   d) _____________________________________________

4) What will you do next time? _____________________________________________

Classroom Management Workshop Key Points

Challenging some Common Assumptions

- Teachers need to be strict and show who’s in charge
  - Many times, teachers try to get control of the classroom by asserting their power to punish students. This can provoke just as much as it controls.
- There need to be punishments so kids know how to act
  - Punitive approaches don’t work well because they reduce trust and help form the identity of students who now may start using the troublemaker label to get attention and respect.
- It’s student behavior that determines the discipline they receive
  - It’s also teacher bias and cultural expectations that determine the application of the rules. Examine your assumptions and tendencies: do you assume negative intent for some but not others, do you notice misbehavior of some more than others, do you expect some to get in trouble but not others?
- There can be no learning without order and silence
  - Actually, there can. Generally, as long as you have cooperation, you can provide a good environment for learning.
- Students know how to behave; they just choose not to.
  - We often assume that students are intentionally doing things to disrupt or annoy us. We forget that all people need to be shown exactly what the expectations are and given opportunities to feel successful and valued through those choices.

Routines

- Routines provide structure and clarity and can greatly speed up and smooth over the common tasks that need to be done: lining up, sitting down, starting a class, getting attention.
- As useless as it sounds, practicing all these basic things will pay off.
- What routines have you seen be effective in classes or groups?

Planning

- Plan for space: allow for your free movement, plan for the types of activities you need, don’t let students take ownership of space at the outset
- Plan for consequences: students should already know ahead of time what the consequences for their actions will be, so there are no surprises or arbitrary consequences. Consequences should be natural and designed to help with learning what the correct action or behavior is. One example:
  - Step 1: Positively-framed reminder (“redirection”)
  - Step 2: Final redirection or first consequence (record something)
  - Step 3: Second consequence (record and follow up)
  - Step 4: Third consequence (record and sit-down meeting)
  - Step 5: Fourth consequences (record and remove)
- Plan for follow-up: Without consistency of enforcement and follow-through, classroom management turns into a game of trying to get away with things.
- What plans do you already use for CM?

Discipline conversations

- This is where the real work happens
- Payne: “Discipline should be seen and used as a form of instruction”
- Clarification and relationship-building should be the main goals
  - Step 1: Here is what I needed to have happen for success today: _____
  - Step 2: When that didn’t happen, I applied the clear consequences.
  - Step 3: Are there things that you need to happen before you feel you can meet this expectation?
  - Step 4: What should I see next time, and what should happen if I don’t see it?
- Should be in private to avoid peer pressure and public power struggles
  - Allow student a chance to reflect and brainstorm alternative choices
Classroom Arrangement Strategies

Poverty obviously impacts social capital; however, without the capacity to address abject poverty in the lives of many of the children who sit before us, we must focus on issues that may be addressed in the classroom: physical arrangement and management strategies.

Classroom Arrangement

As Fred Jones, a noted classroom management expert, explains: “A good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of classroom management. It’s discipline for free.”

Many experienced teachers recommend assigned seating for students to facilitate discipline and instruction. They argue that students left to their own devices will always choose a seat that places the teacher at the greatest disadvantage. Best practices suggest a few common-sense rules to guide classroom arrangements.

- Students should be seated where their attention is directed toward the teacher.
- High traffic areas should be free from congestion.
- Students should be able to clearly see chalkboard, screens, and teacher.
- Students should be seated facing the front of the room and away from the windows.
- Classroom arrangements should be flexible to accommodate a variety of teaching activities.

Establishing Rules of Conduct

Much research on classroom management has focused on student participation in establishing codes of conduct. It suggests that students should actively participate in the creation of guidelines governing classroom behavior. This belief suggests that students will support rules they establish. Best practices recommend minimizing the number of rules. Children have a tendency to recommend a laundry list of rules. Teachers, however, should provide limited structural input so that rules are direct, clear, and consistent, and encourage positive behavior. In addition, teachers must make sure that rules are designed to support a concept of consequences for inappropriate behavior rather than punishment.

A good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of classroom management.

— Fred Jones

Classroom management expert Fred Jones says teacher mobility should be the aim of any classroom seating arrangement. This arrangement is among several different seating configurations illustrated in Jones’s book, Tools for Teaching.
Consequences versus Punishment

Emerging research suggests that inappropriate behavior should be followed by consequences rather than punishment. Consequences are viewed as an end result of a child's inappropriate act. That is, they should not be viewed as something imposed, such as sanctioning, but rather as an appropriate outcome for an inappropriate act. A consequence should make sense, be a logical ending for an action. It should be the effect of behaving inappropriately.

Punishment, on the other hand, is punitive and/or penal in nature. It does not necessarily serve a learning purpose, but rather “gets even.” It sends the wrong message. Children are in school to learn. Part of learning is making mistakes, both academic and social. Imagine punishing a student for misspelling a word. It sounds absurd. Effective teachers discover appropriate ways to help the student learn the correct way to spell the word. A like approach should be taken to address inappropriate behavior. The approach should have as its major tenet ways in which the student might learn from the mistake. This approach takes the perceived personal affront toward the teacher from the student and replaces it with an objective approach that will allow students to learn from the mistake. Schools should and must be environments where mistakes are made and students are provided caring opportunities to learn from them.

Ruby Payne, in her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (2003), suggests that any program which has as its intent to address discipline (inappropriate behavior) must clearly delineate the expected behaviors and the probable consequences of not choosing those behaviors. The program must also emphasize that the individual always has a choice—to follow or not to follow the expected behaviors. With each choice comes a consequence, either desirable or undesirable. When a program of discipline has as its focus “I tell you what to do and when,” the child is unable to move from dependence to independence (p. 101).

Preventing Disruptions

Effectively managed classrooms are orderly (relatively speaking), with a minimum of student misbehavior and reasonable levels of time on task. Effective classroom managers are more skilled at preventing disruptions from occurring in the first place, according to J. S. Kounin (1970). Kouin identified specific approaches to keep students focused on learning and reduce the likelihood of classroom disruption. These included:

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**Classroom Rules of Conduct**
*(examples written by children)*

- No chewing gum
- No hitting
- No using bad language
- No talking without raising hands . . .
• **“Withitness.”** Communicating that you know what the students are doing and what is going on in the classroom.

• **Overlapping.** Attending to different events simultaneously, without being totally diverted by a disruption or other activity.

• **Smoothness and momentum in lessons.** Maintaining a brisk pace and giving continuous activity signals or cues (such as standing near inattentive students or directing questions to potentially disruptive students).

• **Group alerting.** Involving all the children in recitation tasks and keeping all students “alerted” to the task at hand.

• **Stimulating seatwork.** Providing seatwork activities that offer variety and challenge.

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### Classroom Management Strategies

- **Hold and communicate high behavioral expectations.**
- **Establish clear rules and procedures, and instruct students in how to follow them; give primary-level children and those with low socioeconomic status, in particular, a great deal of instruction, practice, and reminding.**
- **Make clear to students the consequences of misbehavior.**
- **Enforce classroom rules promptly, consistently, and equitably from the very first day of school.**
- **Work to instill a sense of self-discipline in students; devote time to teaching self-monitoring skills.**
- **Maintain a brisk instructional pace and make smooth transitions between activities.**
- **Monitor classroom activities; give students feedback and reinforcement regarding their behavior.**
- **Create opportunities for students (particularly those with behavioral problems) to experience success in their learning and social behavior.**
- **Identify students who seem to lack a sense of personal efficacy and work to help them achieve an internal locus of control.**
- **Make use of cooperative learning groups, as appropriate.**
- **Make use of humor, when suitable, to stimulate student interest or reduce classroom tensions.**
- **Remove distracting materials (athletic equipment, art materials, etc.) from view when instruction is in progress.**
Psychology of Problem Behavior

Children Behave Inappropriately for a Reason

When teachers seek to understand why some children behave inappropriately, they should begin their inquiry with a consideration of practical factors:

- Is the child hungry, bored, or tired?
- What does the child seek to gain from the behavior?
- Does this child have particular disabilities? What might this mean?
- Are the behaviors predictable?

The first consideration may be addressed rather easily. A hungry child should be given a snack. This should not be viewed as an interruption, but rather seen as an easy way to address the student’s needs with minimal interruption. A teacher might have a supply of nutritional snacks in the classroom and begin the morning by simply asking students, “Has everyone had something to eat?”

If student restlessness or inattentiveness always occurs around the same time, first rule out hunger as the cause for disruptive behavior. If the same one or two students cause the disruption and hunger has been ruled out as a factor, then the teacher might determine whether the disruption occurs at times when students are focused on a particular subject.

The disruption may be an attempt to communicate to the teacher that these students have not understood the directions or that the assignment presents problems for them and teacher assistance is required. Perhaps further clarification is required.

Do not assume that because the rest of the students understand the directives and are working quietly that all students do. Provide students additional help when their behavior asks you for it! You’d be surprised to know the number of students who simply struggle with the instructions even though you think you explained them adequately. Making sure that all students understand what they have been asked to do should be considered an ounce of disruption prevention.

When you have ruled out hunger and you are clear that the children understand the assignment, yet there are children who continue to be disruptive, ask yourself if the disruption is interfering with the other children’s ability to complete the assignment. If so, what do you do? Are you sitting at your desk? It might help to take a walk among the students. A simple pat or tap on the disruptive student’s shoulder or quietly asking if additional help is needed will often encourage the student to return to the assignment. Minimal disruption to students on task is the objective. If the goal of the disruptive student is to disturb the class, then this effort has been thwarted.

Do you know the children sitting in front of you?

- Michael arrives at school late after having missed breakfast. His day starts with the teacher sending him to the office for inappropriate behavior. Could be that he’s hungry!
- Jason has his head down on his desk. The rule is, “No heads down on the desk.” You insist that he pay attention. Later you learn that his parents fought all night and Jason didn’t sleep well.
Problem behavior is often a child’s attempt to convey a message. When asked to read, Bobby refuses: “I don’t feel like reading.” The message may be that Bobby can’t read!

with their teacher. Also, teaching prosocial skills, such as self-awareness and cooperation, will often lead to improved behavior.

When Intervention Is Required

Formal Assessment of Inappropriate Behavior

Positive behavior support is a strategy that attempts to reduce or eliminate inappropriate behavior. It utilizes a multi-component behavior plan that first seeks to understand the communicative function of the behavior. The program has three primary features: functional behavior assessment, comprehensive intervention, and lifestyle enhancement.

• Functional assessment is designed to understand both the person and the nature of the challenging behavior in their environmental context.
• Comprehensive intervention requires a continuum of behavior support for students. It involves teacher decision-making through information, student behavior change through “best practices,” and staff behavior change through systems.

Moving from Inappropriate to Appropriate Behavior

Anderson and Prawat (1983) and others have noted that many students simply do not perceive a connection between their level of effort and the academic or behavioral outcomes they experience. These students have what psychologists call an “external locus of control,” and do not believe in their own ability to influence events.

Researchers have observed behavioral improvements in settings where students are taught to attribute their success or failure to their personal effort. In these situations, students have learned to: (1) check their own behavior and judge its appropriateness; (2) talk themselves through a task, using detailed, step-by-step instructions; and (3) learn and apply problem-solving steps when confronting classroom issues.

Brophy (1983), Gottfredson (1986) and others have also noted that the use of cooperative learning structures can increase student task engagement, acquaint students with the benefits of working together, and ease the tensions that sometimes arise among racial/ethnic groups—all of which are related to reductions in the incidence of misbehavior.

The work of other researchers (e.g., Ornstein & Levine 1981) has also revealed that it is beneficial for teachers to use humor to hold student interest and reduce classroom tensions. Removing distracting materials, such as athletic equipment or art materials, may also be effective, especially when implemented in the beginning of the year.

Children can learn how to modify their behavior through active planning and negotiating contracts with their teacher. Also, teaching prosocial skills, such as self-awareness and cooperation, will often lead to improved behavior.
• **Lifestyle enhancement** involves significant diminishing of inappropriate student behavior, improvement in academic outcomes, and building appropriate teacher strategies.

The Functional Assessment and Behavior Support Plan instrument may be found in Appendix A.

**Why Conduct a Functional Assessment?**

The purpose of a functional assessment is to gather information in order to understand a student’s problem behavior. However, a functional behavior assessment goes beyond the “symptom” (the problem behavior) to the student’s underlying motivation to escape, avoid, or get something. Government-sponsored research, as well as educators’ and psychologists’ experiences, have demonstrated that behavior intervention plans stemming from the knowledge of why a student misbehaves (i.e., based on a functional behavioral assessment) are extremely useful in addressing a wide range of problems.

Through these inquiries, a teacher can begin to understand the child in his or her care. An understanding of the child’s behavioral habits provides a basis for considering ways in which to meet the child’s academic and social needs. Posing these questions necessarily requires a teacher to evaluate his or her pedagogical approach to teaching and, hence, classroom management techniques. Only a thorough examination of classroom methods and a clear understanding of the children with whom he or she is charged will enable a teacher to provide a successful learning experience.

### Sample Behavioral Assessment Questions

- **What do we know about the child’s likes and dislikes?**
- **What does the challenging behavior look like?**
- **Does the challenging behavior occur all the time or at certain times?**
- **When is it less likely?**
- **What are the activities or expectations and with whom does it occur?**
- **Is the behavior harmful to self or others or is it merely distracting?**
- **Is the problem significant to some teachers and not significant to others?**
- **Whose problem is it?**
- **What are some of the strengths/weaknesses and needs of the child?**
- **What does this child value?**
**Teacher Management Styles**

We have focused our attention thus far on understanding student behavior, from student assessment to strategies for improving inappropriate behavior. However, an equally important topic concerns the teacher’s management style. That is, how well do you as a teacher know your style of teaching and your ability to interact with students? Are you authoritarian in your approach to teaching, more of an authoritative teacher, more indifferent, or something of a laissez-faire style of teacher? Understanding your profile increases your ability to address inappropriate behavior before it escalates into something more serious. Knowing your limitations (that is, your level of tolerance of certain behaviors) and your students facilitates your capacity to de-escalate potentially problematic situations.

Answer the questions on the survey (located in Appendix B) to learn more about your management profile. The descriptions of the four management profiles are listed below.

The **authoritarian** teacher places firm limits and controls on the students. Students will often have assigned seats for the entire term. The desks are usually in straight rows and there are no deviations. Students must be in their seats at the beginning of class and they frequently remain there throughout the period. This teacher rarely gives hall passes or recognizes excused absences. Often, it is quiet. Students know they should not interrupt the teacher. Since verbal exchange and discussion are discouraged, the authoritarian’s students do not have the opportunity to learn and/or practice communication skills. This teacher prefers vigorous discipline and expects swift obedience. Failure to obey the teacher usually results in detention or a trip to the principal’s office. In this classroom, students need to follow directions and not ask why.

The **authoritative** teacher places limits and controls on the students but simultaneously encourages independence. This teacher often explains the reasons behind the rules and decisions. If a student is disruptive, the teacher offers a polite, but firm, reprimand. This teacher sometimes metes out discipline, but only after careful consideration of the circumstances. The authoritative teacher is also open to considerable verbal interaction, including critical debates. The students know that they can interrupt the teacher if they have a relevant question or comment. This environment offers students the opportunity to learn and practice communication skills.

The **indifferent** teacher is not very involved in the classroom. This teacher places few demands, if any, on the students and appears generally uninterested. The indifferent teacher just doesn’t want to impose on the students and often feels that class preparation is not worth the effort. Things like field trips and special projects are out of the question. This teacher simply won’t take the necessary preparation time and may use the same materials, year after year. Also, classroom discipline is lacking. This teacher may lack the skills, confidence, or courage to discipline students.

The **laissez-faire** teacher places few demand or controls on the students. “Do your own thing” describes this classroom. This teacher accepts the students’ impulses and actions and is less likely to monitor their behavior. The teacher strives not to hurt the students’ feelings and has difficulty saying no or enforcing rules. If a student disrupts the class, the teacher may assume that the student is not getting enough attention. When a student interrupts a lecture, the teacher accepts the interruption with the belief that the student must surely have something valuable to add. When discipline is offered, it is likely to be inconsistent.
Our goal (and for many, our calling) is to provide the best educational opportunity for all children who come into our classrooms. This profession provides some days that are much more complicated than others—for example, days when all we can do is collapse when we arrive home because we have given all we had to give. We have undertaken a huge responsibility. We have someone else’s children for whom we are responsible for a good portion of the day.

Perhaps it would be less complicated if all our children were well nourished and emotionally, physically, and spiritually healthy. It would probably be much easier if we were sure that all of the children returned home to families who were happy to see them coming. Life as a teacher would be easier if school resources were distributed so that all children had access to new books, updated technology, and the best teachers (who were well compensated for their work). But our reality is different; we take all children and all that they bring to the classroom. And, inevitably, there are some children for whom school is a far greater challenge than it is for others. This booklet was written for those children.

The following are a few tips that were helpful in my effort to better address the needs of my more challenging students.

- Get to know the child. Solicit support from family members. Uncover the child’s likes and dislikes.
- Never publicly humiliate a child. You can’t imagine how this can adversely impact this child.
- Yelling at children all day is ineffective. Try lowering your voice.
- Tell children something about you, perhaps a funny story. Children want to know that you are human too!
- Remember what it was like being a child.
- Acknowledge good behavior.
- Learn from family members, other teachers, or any available resource what works with the child.
- Give students choices. Repeated choice opportunities allow students to build a sense of competence and may prevent challenging behaviors.
- Help students celebrate their successes, however small. This will help them open up to more positive thoughts and actions about themselves.

... Teachers must be peddlers of hope ...
WE’VE ALL HEARD THIS ABOUT STUDENTS: “If they are engaged, they are managed.” And this is absolutely the truth. But we still need rules, routines, trust, and student ownership to make a classroom run smoothly and effectively. This guide will address those practical aspects of managing a classroom, with suggestions and resources appropriate for grades K-12.

Most of these tips are applicable to students of all ages, but the actual techniques will look different for the various grades. For instance, Build Community (tip #1), might mean playing name games with elementary students but involve setting up a photo booth for middle school students. Tip #8, Integrate Positive Classroom Rituals, may sound like it’s all about elementary learners, but look for suggestions to make the morning meeting an important part of the day for teens and tweens too.

During my first year in the classroom, a seasoned teacher told me, “You are as much an ethics teachers as you are an English teacher.” What she meant was that literature brings along life lessons and themes, so it’s inevitable that you end up deeply discussing morals, what is right and wrong, and wise choices versus poor decisions. It’s no accident then that the ten tips offered here also give a noticeable nod to social and emotional learning, or SEL. (http://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning), an approach that teaches children how to handle challenging situations, manage their emotions, and form positive relationships.

And finally, we all know there are more than ten tips for great classroom management, so be sure to visit Edutopia’s Classroom Management Group and share what you do: http://www.edutopia.org/groups/classroom-management.

—Rebecca Alber
Edutopia blogger, former high school teacher, and online education teacher at Stanford University

visit edutopia.org
Build Community

BUILDING CARING RELATIONSHIPS with students is the cornerstone of good classroom management. Building these relationships—teacher-student, student-student, classroom-community—and creating the time and space to do so in the beginning of the year and throughout the following months can make or break a classroom. Simply put, when there is care in the air, there will be significantly fewer behavioral problems.

Greet your students at the door: This simple gesture creates that moment when you and the student make eye contact, speak directly to each other (“good morning”), and have a connection. This may be the only one-on-one you have that day with the student, but it has great value. When you model a respectful way to greet another human being, you are implicitly telling each student that this is how we will communicate with each other.

Get to know one another: Teachers and students begin learning one another’s names the first day of school and should be able to address one another by name within two weeks. Use engaging, age-appropriate activities (http://wilderdom.com/games/NameGames.html) for learning names and for getting acquainted. As students learn more and more about one another, connections will begin to happen. This inevitably leads to more empathy and understanding and, ultimately, caring relationships with a lot less classroom conflict.

Student photos will help you connect names and faces. In this article from the NEA’s website, retired middle school teacher Phil Nast recalls some favorite photo tips, such as having students create their own passports as a first-day-of-school activity: http://www.nea.org/tools/getting-to-know-each-other.html.

With the right app, you can even set up a photo booth in a corner of your classroom—something that should appeal to tweens and teens. Here’s an example using the iPad: http://www.imore.com/tag/photo-booth.

Veteran educator Peter Pappas recommends using the first day of school to encourage teens to multitask, to get students thinking at the same time they’re getting acquainted. He explains on his Copy/Paste blog how an engaging activity like solving a mystery can deliver multiple benefits: http://www.peterpappas.com/2010/08/first-day-school-engage-problem-solve-how-to-get-students-thinking.html.

Definitely take the time and energy to continue growing community and relationships in the classroom. The payoff is worth the effort.

Related Resources:


➔ Edutopia’s Schools That Work series spotlights Louisville, Kentucky’s Jefferson County Public Schools to show how they integrate social and emotional learning into their curriculum. Get suggestions for building relationships with students: http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/stw/edutopia-stw-louisville-sel-how-to-build-relationships-worksheet.pdf.

➔ Are you looking for more examples of effective classroom-management techniques such as hand signals to use with primary or older students? Watch this Edutopia video, Classroom-Management Tips for Teachers: http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-management-teacher-tips-video.
Design a Safe, Well-Managed, and Friendly Classroom Environment

**The Right Physical Environment** helps create a positive learning community. When students walk into a classroom, they need to feel ownership. Their writing assignments and projects should prevail on the walls, and they should have easy access to supplies and handouts and a place to turn in class assignments.

**Ask students to be designers of their room:** They choose where to hang the dioramas on photosynthesis or the book reports, and they get to do the hanging. Also, charts, directions—any permanent posters—should be written by student hands. The more they see themselves in the environment, the more they feel valued (and the fewer number of conflicts we teachers will have with them).

How’s the lighting in your classroom? Try making small adjustments, such as bringing in a few floor lamps and turning off some of the fluorescent lights. This can create a calmer, less institutional vibe. Learn more about lighting in this Edutopia primer, “What They See Is What We Get: A Primer on Light”: http://www.edutopia.org/what-they-see-what-we-get.

Moving desks and trying different table configurations can also create a more friendly setting that’s better suited for collaboration. Social and emotional learning emphasizes student-centered, cooperative learning. This means you will cluster desks into groups or move students so they face one another. This may make your classroom a bit louder, but it helps grow a community of learners a lot more quickly than rows of desks facing the front of the class. Take the plunge and just do it!

**Related Resources:**

- See how designers helped a middle school teacher transform his crowded classroom into a space that fosters collaboration, creativity, and active student learning. http://www.edutopia.org/remake.


- Get more tips for good classroom design in this Edutopia article, “Give Your Space the Right Design”: http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-space-design-feng-shui.

Include Students in Creating Rules, Norms, Routines, and Consequences

**RULES ARE DIFFERENT** from routines and norms. Rules come with consequences whereas routines and norms have reminders. (Read Rebecca Alber’s Edutopia blog post for more on this: [http://www.edutopia.org/blog/rules-routines-school-year-start-classroom-management.](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/rules-routines-school-year-start-classroom-management.))

**Social Contracts:** When establishing both rules and routines, it’s crucial that students have a say in the matter. The teacher’s role is to facilitate and guide students through the steps to develop social contracts. What’s the result? Students have full ownership in what has been decided around class norms, expectations, and consequences.

The start of a new school year is the ideal time to draw up a social contract. Start by asking kids to brainstorm about all the things they see, feel, and hear in a classroom that make them feel comfortable, safe, and happy. Use this graphic organizer, [http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/stw/edutopia-stw-louisville-sel-y-chart.pdf](http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/stw/edutopia-stw-louisville-sel-y-chart.pdf), to create a chart as a whole class and then decide on rules, routines, and consequences together.

**Developmental Discipline:** How often do you notice the same student arriving late to class, making unkind comments to peers, or repeating other negative behaviors? Change the pattern with developmental discipline. This is a philosophy that has the individual examine why something happened and then consider what can be done to rectify the situation and prevent it from happening again. Developmental discipline encourages teachers to use community-building activities, along with appropriate consequences, to lead students to think about how they behave and how they treat one another. Instead of detention, a student may write a fix-it plan or apology letter or come up with his or her own suitable and effective consequence.


Create a Variety of Communication Channels

**HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS** do students have for communicating with you? The more modes they have, the better.

**Teacher-Student Communication:** Having varied and reliable options for students to talk with you will help keep your class running smoothly. Here are a few ideas to try:

- Encourage students to connect with you online. Provide them with your school email account so they can send you their questions, concerns, and suggestions, or use social-media tools to connect with students who are old enough to have Facebook accounts. To create a private back channel for real-time classroom discussions, check out tools such as TodaysMeet (http://todaysmeet.com/) or Chatzy (http://www.chatzy.com).
- Offer a variety of times when you are available. This will make certain that all students are able to come and sit down with you privately for a chat if needed (before school, once a week at lunchtime, any day after school).
- Place a suggestion box on your desk where students can leave anonymous notes. You might be surprised to get messages like these: “Please turn up the heat in the morning,” “Richard is picking on Jessica after class,” or “Please give more examples for writing a thesis statement.”
- Have students turn in weekly notebooks or project logs. Include one or two assignments for which students can just freewrite anything, including a letter to you if they wish.

**Student-Student Communication:** Students grow emotionally and socially as they share their intellectual thoughts and ideas with one another. As teachers, we must explicitly integrate as much time for this as possible. We can do so through such activities as think-pair-share, talking-triads, tea parties, and Socratic seminars. To learn more about various thinking routines (and the research behind them), visit the Visible Thinking website at Harvard’s Project Zero: http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/.

When it comes to student groups, be mindful to mix them up frequently to prevent cliques from forming. If you keep groups and pairs in heavy rotation, then in no time, all students will have spent some time with one another and the connections will be visible.

Finally, when you’re talking with the whole class, use phrases that are empowering rather than defeating, accusatory, or negative. As teachers, we must continually model the behaviors—and language—we wish to see in the children we teach.

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**Related Resources:**

- Check out the following chart for examples of empowering teacher language: http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/swt/edutopia-stw-louisville-sel-empowering-teacher-language.pdf.
- Edutopia blogger Nicholas Provenzano explains how he keeps issues from escalating in his high school classroom: http://www.edutopia.org/blog/effective-classroom-management-nick-provenzano.
Always Be Calm, Fair, and Consistent

TRUST IS THE BEATING, healthy heart of a functioning classroom. Without it, classroom management is nearly impossible, as is building relationships with students. A calm, fair, and consistent teacher is a trusted one. (Edutopia blogger Rebecca Alber shares more insights on this topic: http://www.edutopia.org/trusting-relationships-teachers-students.)

Calm: Always keep a calm and steady demeanor, even if your head and heart are telling you to act differently. (Don’t ever match a child’s rage, sarcasm, or anger.) Use those acting skills we all acquire as teachers! And when you feel the blood boiling, remember this: Kids do not trust reactive teachers, and often they don’t respect them. Fear should never be the great motivator in our classrooms.

Staying calm means never raising your voice or speaking over the class. If students are talking, wait. Wait longer. Wait until it becomes so uncomfortable that several students begin to shush the others. Then, even if you are feeling beyond annoyed, use a calm, quiet voice so they will need to lean in to listen. Now you’ve got them.

Fairness: Though you may not feel the same way about every student, they should never know or see this. Being fair means all students are under the same rules—and get the same exceptions to those rules.

To make sure you are being fair, remind yourself to do the following:

- Avoid calling on or selecting the same students over and over.
- Acknowledge to the class when there has been an exception (for a student, another class period, or a group) and, if possible, share why.
- Keep a solid line between rules and routines. Rules come with consequences whereas routines come with reminders.

Consistency: If you are having an erratic day, stay the course and don’t change that day’s agenda or class structure. This helps children feel safe.

Modeling Positive Behavior: While you are teaching, you should be demonstrating compassion, caring, patience, and self-control every chance you get. Students’ eyes are on us at all times, even when we think they are immersed in the task at hand. They watch, they listen, they learn, and then they repeat the behaviors they see.

Related Resources:

⇒ How well do you support the social and emotional growth of your students? Take this Edutopia emotional intelligence quiz to find out: http://www.edutopia.org/sel-quiz.

⇒ Tribes is a research-based process for building positive, respectful learning environments. Watch these short videos to learn more: http://tribes.com/videos/.

⇒ Want some help managing a specific classroom situation? Ask the experts at the NEA, and you can expect an online reply within 24 hours: http://public-groups.nea.org/discussion/forum/show/162197.

Know the Students You Teach

ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION, “How well do I know myself?” Thinking about this question helps you to better know and understand your students. By looking at your own background (economics, culture, education, and gender), you will be able to acknowledge the lens through which you view your students. For example, if you grew up middle class but teach students whose families live mainly below the poverty line, you can take time to learn about their specific challenges.

The Education Alliance has produced an online guide to culturally responsive teaching: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tdl/tl-strategies/crt-principles.shtml.

Take a moment to reflect on where you are with all this. Consider the following characteristics of a culturally responsive educator:

- She challenges and confronts all stereotypes in the instructional curriculum and environment.
- She strives to know her students and seeks professional development and reading materials to learn how to better serve all of them.
- She helps her students gain hope and develop strategies for overcoming academic and societal barriers.
- She uses texts that are relevant and speak to the lives and experiences of the students she teaches.

When we do our best to exhibit all of these qualities, we are including all children, especially those we most struggle to understand.

How are you doing when it comes to creating a culturally responsive classroom? As a way to invite feedback, consider asking a colleague or mentor to observe your classroom. The Coalition for Essential Schools has developed an observation tool and debriefing guide to make this process productive. Download the PDF: http://www.essentialschools.org/system/school_benchmarks/4/observation_tools/original/Culturally_Responsive.pdf.

Related Resources:


➔ For practical pointers on how to become a more a culturally responsive teacher, read this article from the NEA website, “Sounds Great, But How Do I Do It?”: http://www.nea.org/home/16711.htm.

➔ Pedro Noguera, in a thoughtful essay that draws on his own family experiences as well as academic insights, concludes, “Differences in race, gender, or sexual orientation need not limit a teacher’s ability to make a connection with a young person.” Download this PDF and consider discussing it with colleagues: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter.olde/resources/PDF/Joaquin’s%20Dilemma.pdf.
Address Conflict Quickly and Wisely

**DON’T LET CONFLICT FESTER.** That means you should be sure to address an issue between you and a student or between two students as quickly as possible. Bad feelings—on your part or the students—can so quickly grow from molehills into mountains.

Now, for handling those conflicts wisely, you and the student should step away from the other students, just in the doorway of the classroom perhaps. Ask naive questions such as, “How might I help you?” Don’t accuse the child of anything. Act as if you do care, even if you have the opposite feeling at that moment. The student will usually become disarmed because she is expecting you to be angry and confrontational.

And always take a positive approach. Say, “It looks like you have a question” rather than, “Why are you off task and talking?”

When students have conflicts with each other, remain neutral. Use neutral language as you act as a mediator to help them resolve the problem peacefully.

Educators for Social Responsibilities maintain an Online Teacher Center with a variety of resources and classroom-ready materials (free registration required) that focus on resolving conflict: [http://www.esrnational.org/otc](http://www.esrnational.org/otc).

Not In Our School ([http://www.niot.org/nios](http://www.niot.org/nios)) showcases stories of students and communities that stand up to bullying and prejudice. Online resources include classroom discussion guides and lesson plans designed to create safe schools, free from intolerance.

### Related Resources:

- Learning to resolve conflict peacefully is a valuable life skill. Watch this Edutopia video to see how students have become “peace helpers”: [http://www.edutopia.org/conflict-resolution-peace-helpers-video](http://www.edutopia.org/conflict-resolution-peace-helpers-video).
- Watch an Edutopia video in which students learn the skill of conflict resolution: [http://www.edutopia.org/forum-conflict-resolution-video](http://www.edutopia.org/forum-conflict-resolution-video).
Integrate Positive Classroom Rituals

IT’S MORE COMMON in elementary grades that the day will begin with a community-building activity. But getting off to a good start is important at all ages. Here are some suggestions to make it happen.

Morning meetings: This is a brief forum during which each individual in the group is acknowledged. It creates a feeling of “we are all in this together.” Edutopia blogger Suzie Boss describes morning meetings at a unique school in Colorado: http://www.edutopia.org/building-school-community-eagle-rock.

Good things: Ask for a few volunteers to share something good that has happened to them (getting an A on a test or having a new baby in the family, for instance). The student can also share an upcoming event that is positive (such as a birthday or trip).

Whip around: Ask students to say one word that describes how they are feeling today. Start with a volunteer and then “whip around” the room. Give students the option to pass if they like.

Related Resources:
➔ Watch this Edutopia video to see what a morning meeting looks like: http://www.edutopia.org/louisville-sel-morning-meetings-video.
➔ Go to Edutopia’s Classroom Management Group and share what you do: http://www.edutopia.org/groups/classroom-management.
Keep it Real

**DISCOVER THE THINGS** your students are interested in—trends, music, TV shows, and games—and incorporate those as you teach the skills, concepts, and knowledge they need. You want to attach the learning to their lives as often as possible.

**Tap Into Prior Knowledge and Schema:** The father of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, rejected the notion that children are empty vessels. Instead, he promoted the belief that learners offer a wealth of knowledge—conventional and unconventional—for the teacher to build on.

Kids with “bad” behavior tend to get treated and taught as if they need to be “filled” with information and knowledge. This tactic, in fact, leads to more acting out. With a constructivist approach, the teacher encourages the child to actively construct new ideas or concepts based upon his current and prior knowledge and beliefs.

**Use Essential Questions:** Big, overarching questions are a fantastic way to launch a unit of study and to help connect learning with the lives of your students. Essential questions do not have a right or wrong answer, nor are they easy to respond to. They give meaning and relevance to what your students are studying, and they are meant to grab the attention and thoughts—and sometimes the heart—of a group of learners. They are not to be solved but to be discussed and pondered.

Here are some examples of essential questions (but remember to use them strategically and sparingly):
- In what ways are animals human and in what ways are humans animals? (science)
- What is love? (English/poetry)
- When is it acceptable to rebel? (history)
- What would life be like if mathematics did not exist? (math)

**Authentic Assessment:** Authentic assessment ([http://www.edutopia.org/stw-assessment-school-of-the-future-introduction-video](http://www.edutopia.org/stw-assessment-school-of-the-future-introduction-video)) measures student learning with relevant, high-level Bloom’s Taxonomy tasks—the kind students might be required to do if they were actually working in the field of study.

To do authentic assessment, you will need to backwards plan, starting with what you want the kids to know and be able to do for the assessment. Grant Wiggins, the acclaimed author of *Understanding By Design*, calls this “starting with the end in mind.”

If the start and end of a unit feel “real” to your students, then they are more likely to be engaged during the important journey in the middle. Edutopia blogger Suzie Boss explains how to get projects off to a good start: [http://www.edutopia.org/blog/summer-pd-starting-projects-suzie-boss](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/summer-pd-starting-projects-suzie-boss).

**Related Resources:**
- What do other educators have to say about classroom management? See how readers responded to a post by Edutopia blogger Maurice Elias: [http://www.edutopia.org/blog/good-classroom-management-secret-maurice-elias](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/good-classroom-management-secret-maurice-elias).
- Or you can weigh in on blogger Elena Aguilar’s schoolroom peace plan: [http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-management](http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-management).
Partner with Parents and Guardians

THIS IS THE LAST TIP FOR A REASON.
Teachers know that partnering with parents is neither easy nor completely in our control. Returning a teacher’s call may not be the top priority for a parent or guardian. They may be more concerned with paying bills, putting food on the table, navigating the rough waters of managing a single-parent home, and so much more beyond our imaginations.

Yet connecting home and school is worth the extra effort because of the benefits for students. So here are some simple yet surefire ways to partner and connect with parents and guardians.

Intel First: Have kids fill out an “About Me” index card the first week of school. Ask them about their favorite books and school subjects and things they are good at. Also ask for their parents’ or guardians’ cell phone numbers.

Go Digital: Consider setting up your own website, wiki, or page on your school’s website so parents can take a quick look and get up-to-speed with topics of study and class and homework assignments. Edmodo (http://www.edmodo.com) offers a free platform for creating a secure social-networking site for your students and their families.

Face to Face: Make sure on open house and back-to-school night (or any other family night) that you have plenty of business cards or contact-information cards that include your email, cell phone number (optional), classroom room number, and the school’s phone number. This may seem basic, but that card not only makes it easy for parents to connect with you, it shows them that that you want them to call.

Calling Home: Make “good” calls home as often as you can. There is nothing more depressing than having to sit down after a day of teaching and call five students’ homes with bad news. Calling home with something positive will put a smile on your face and theirs, and it opens the door for a relationship.

When you do have to make that call with a concern, be sure to mention something positive about the student before you say, “One thing I am concerned about . . . .”

Related Resources:
➔ Set up a class wiki at Wikispaces: http://www.wikispaces.com.
➔ This Edutopia article, “How to Strengthen Parent Involvement and Communication,” offers more ideas for increasing parent or guardian involvement: http://www.edutopia.org/how-to-strengthen-parent-involvement.
Notes about Team Function and Dysfunction

Notes about Conflict Resolution Styles

Link to the conflict resolution style quiz: http://goo.gl/noZYXx
What conflict resolution style are you most associated with, according to the quiz? _________________

Goals, values, and strategies for creating and maintaining a good team culture
Positive Approach:

1. They trust one another.
2. They engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas.
3. They commit to decisions and plans of actions.
4. They hold one another accountable for delivering against those plans.
5. They focus on the achievement of collective results.

*It sounds simple, it’s because it is simple, at least in theory. In practice, however, it is extremely difficult because it requires levels of discipline and persistence that few teams can muster.*
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team
By Patrick Lencioni

Instructions: Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to your team. It is important to evaluate the statements honestly and without over-thinking your answers.

3 = Usually
2 = Sometimes
1 = Rarely

1 _____ Team members are passionate and unguarded in the discussion of issues.
2 _____ Team members call out one another's deficiencies or unproductive behaviors.
3 _____ Team members know what their peers are working on and how they contribute to the collective good of the team.
4 _____ Team members quickly and genuinely apologize to one another when they say or do something inappropriate or possibly damaging to the team.
5 _____ Team members willingly make sacrifices (such as budget, turf, head count) in their departments or areas of expertise for the good of the team.
6 _____ Team members openly admit their weaknesses and mistakes.
7 _____ Team members are compelling, and not boring.
8 _____ Team members leave meetings confident that their peers are completely committed to the decisions that were agreed on, even if there was initial disagreement.
9 _____ Morale is significantly affected by the failure to achieve team goals.
10 _____ During team meetings, the most important and difficult issues are put on the table to be resolved.
11 _____ Team members are deeply concerned about the prospect of letting down their peers.
12 _____ Team members know about one another's personal lives and are comfortable discussing them.
13 _____ Team members end discussions with clear and specific resolutions and calls to action.
14 _____ Team members challenge one another about their plans and approaches.
15 _____ Team members are slow to seek credit for their own contributions, but quick to point out those of others.

Scoring. Combine your scores for the preceding statements as indicated below:

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<th>Dysfunction 2: Fear of Conflict</th>
<th>Dysfunction 3: Lack of Commitment</th>
<th>Dysfunction 4: Avoidance of Accountability</th>
<th>Dysfunction 5: Inattention to Results</th>
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The Five Dysfunctions of a Team
By Patrick Lencioni

Members of teams with an absence of trust
- Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another
- Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback
- Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility
- Jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others without attempting to clarify them
- Fail to recognize and tap into one another’s skills and experiences
- Waste time and energy managing their behaviors for effect
- Hold grudges
- Dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together

Teams that fear conflict
- Have boring meetings
- Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive
- Ignore controversial topics that are critical to team success
- Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members
- Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management

A team that fails to commit
- Creates ambiguity among the team about direction and priorities
- Watches windows of opportunity close due to excessive analysis and unnecessary delay
- Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure
- Revisits discussions and decisions again and again
- Encourages second-guessing among team members

A team that avoids accountability
- Creates resentment among team members who have different standards of performance
- Encourages mediocrity
- Misses deadlines and key deliverables
- Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline

A team that is not focused on results
- Stagnates/fails to grow
- Rarely defeats competitors
- Loses achievement-oriented employees
- Encourages team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals
- Is easily distracted

Source: http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/Five%20Dysfunctions%20of%20a%20Team.pdf
The questionnaire is designed to assess your behaviour in conflict situations, where a situation arises and at least two people appear to be incompatible. In such situations, we can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions: (1) Assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns, and (2) Cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns. These two basic dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflicts, as shown on the grid below:

You will have a numerical score for each of the five conflict mode styles, competing, avoiding, accommodating, collaborating and compromising. Your highest scoring column represents the conflict style mode that is your ‘default or natural’ mode.

Each of the five columns has a range of possible scores from 0 (for very low use) to 12 (for very high use). These have been averaged out on a distribution curve against other manager responses. Check your range of scores against the following key to identify how they compare in relation to other managers in your business sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useage</th>
<th>Competing</th>
<th>Collaborating</th>
<th>Compromising</th>
<th>Avoiding</th>
<th>Accommodating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>8 to 12</td>
<td>9 to 12</td>
<td>9 to 12</td>
<td>8 to 12</td>
<td>7 to 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4 to 7</td>
<td>6 to 8</td>
<td>5 to 8</td>
<td>5 to 7</td>
<td>3 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0 to 3</td>
<td>0 to 5</td>
<td>0 to 4</td>
<td>0 to 4</td>
<td>0 to 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five Conflict Mode Descriptions

Read the descriptions below for each of the five different conflict modes taking particular note of your highest conflict style.

COMPETING - Is assertive and uncooperative - an individual pursues their own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's own position - one's ability to argue, one's rank, economic sanctions. Competing might mean "standing up for your rights," defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

ACCOMMODATING - Is unassertive and cooperative - the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

AVOIDING - Is unassertive and uncooperative - the individual does not immediately pursue their own concerns of those of the other person. They do not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically side-stepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

COLLABORATING - Is both assertive and cooperative - the opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. It means digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, concluding to resolve some condition which would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

COMPROMISING - Is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but does not explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.
Appropriate Use of Conflict Modes

Each of the five conflict modes has its strengths and weaknesses, depending upon the conflict situation you are in. To maximise your ability to influence and manage conflict it is important to know how to adapt your style according to the situation you find yourself in.

The following chart depicts some examples of conflict situations, and suggests the most appropriate conflict mode to use for that situation.

![Conflict Modes Chart]

Action

Think about the conflict situations you have experienced at work, and how you handled them. What worked well for you and what might you need to change or develop?

Source: http://www.nelacademy.nhs.uk/downloads/604