

# Techniques for proactive classroom management



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## Module 1: Five Techniques for Proactive Classroom Management

In the years pursuing my undergraduate degree, I attended classes regarding classroom management. These classes were filled with wonderful information, strategies, and techniques on setting up a classroom community. However, it was all very theoretical. We spoke of classroom management well before we were ever in a classroom environment in which to implement these strategies. Even after being placed for an internship, it was difficult to truly implement these techniques and strategies fully because that classroom and those students were not truly ours. The preparation of those classes, allowed me to enter my first year of teaching with an idea of what I wanted my classroom to look like, the expectations I wanted to present, and the classroom management system that I wanted to have.

After eight years of teaching, I consider myself a seasoned teacher aspiring to be a veteran teacher. My classroom looks very different than it did that first year. Experience that I have gained through mistakes, successes, trial and error have allowed me to shape what I do and how I do it. One thing that I have learned through this experience is, being proactive rather than reactive is a necessity in the classroom. Through my own experience and research, I have found that setting routines, setting clear expectations, having a classroom behavior management system, incorporating movement breaks, and a response method that is inclusive to all individuals, are all proactive ways to help to build a positive classroom community.

Positive Greetings at the Door (PGD)

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One of the techniques that helps to build a positive classroom community is providing every student a positive greeting at the door (PGD) of the classroom. For many students, the start of the day can be quite challenging for various reasons. According to Cook et al. (2018), it can be difficult for teachers to encourage the positive and productive start to the school day that is necessary to provide the momentum for learning. When the students have difficulty transitioning into the classroom, they can display disruptive or problematic behaviors before learning begins. These behaviors can have the teacher react with reprimands or consequences which can set a negative tone for the day (Cook et al, 2018).

In the Cook et al. (2018) article, it states “ PGD represents a straightforward method of teachers greeting students at the door in a positive, intentional, and strategic way.” This procedure has three features at its core.

First, the teacher needs to greet the students in a positive manner as they enter the classroom. This is to build and establish a positive classroom environment. In elementary school this initial greeting can be very different than in a middle school setting. In the elementary school where I am currently teaching, many teachers have a poster next to their door stating the different greeting the student can choose (i. e. a fist bump, handshake, high five, hug, wave or smile). After this initial greeting, the teacher then says a planned and precorrective statement to the student. This statement is very intentional. Its intention is to assist the students in transitioning positively into the classroom and engage quickly with the learning content the teacher has prepared. Finally, the teacher will positively reinforce the student by providing praise specific to the behavior they wish to see. An <https://assignbuster.com/techniques-for-proactive-classroom-management/>

example of what these last two steps could be the teacher saying “ Hey Sam! You did a great job on the math assignment yesterday. Our start-up today is a problem just like it, go on in, unpack, and get to work!”

PGD are a simple way to start the day (or class period) on a positive note and take next very little effort to implement. The study I referenced, found that the teachers that committed the time to implementing the PGD technique eventually spent less time having to deal with problem behaviors and as a result had more instructional time. (Cook et al, 2018). I feel that this is a goal of all teachers, to spend less time on behaviors and more on educating the students.

### Clear Expectations

Providing clear expectation to your students regarding your expectations is another proactive classroom management technique. Students are all learners and assuming that they will “ just know” how to handle the various situations in the school day it detrimental to their learning. As stated in Myers, Freeman, Simonsen, & Sugai (2017) if we, as teachers, do not clearly define our rules and expectations in the classroom, the students will end up having to learn from peers, trial and error, and from their prior experience. This is not the most effective or reliable way to have students perform the intended behaviors. (Myers et al. 2017)

In the article, it recommends creating a rule following matrix. This is something done in our school and something that I do in my classroom. At our school, the school wide expectations are, “ Be Safe. Be Respectful. Be Responsible”. In the first week of class, I sit with my students and we put in a <https://assignbuster.com/techniques-for-proactive-classroom-management/>

chart what those expectations look like in the different settings at school (i.e. small group, whole group, transition times, related arts). We also put together visuals to pair with the expectations for my students that rely more heavily on visual supports. These visuals help when reteaching and reviewing the expectations. According to Myers et al. (2017), these visual reminders along with verbal reminders increase the chance that the students will be able to display expected behaviors across all settings and with all individuals.

### Classroom Behavior Management System

In researching proactive techniques for classroom management, it appears that setting and having clear expectations for the students goes hand in hand with having a classroom behavior management system. Classroom behavior management systems can look very different from class to class, however an important aspect to keep in mind is that they should be focused on the rewarding the students who are following the expectations, not shaming the ones who are not. According to the PBIS school website, “Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective.” (Why School-Wide PBIS?, 2019).

A tool that I find useful in my classroom is the use of Class Dojo. With Class Dojo, I am able to load all of the positive behaviors that align to the school (and classroom) expectations into the site. Then, as the students are working through out the day, I am able to quickly reward them for exhibiting those positive behaviors. I also pair the points with a token economy system. It

initially appeals to the students because the website is bright, engaging, and they get to pick their monster avatar. Then it continues to appeal to them after they see that the points can earn them rewards for their behavior. It appeals to parents because they get to clearly see what the students are earning points for and if there are issues, they can quickly see what the issue is.

Although the site does have the capability to track negative behaviors, a 2017 study by Krach, McCreery, & Rimel, found that the teachers using Class Dojo tracked significantly more positive notations than negative notations. In contrast, that teachers using paper and pencil behavior charts typically tracked negative behavior and did not track positive behavior as frequently. (Krach et al., 2017)

### Movement Breaks

Another proactive technique to employ is incorporating movement breaks into your classroom. For the brain to work at its optimum level, it is suggested that elementary students take a movement break every 15-40 minutes, depending on their age. These movement breaks benefit the student by allowing a small chunk of time to redirect and refocus the mind. (Tichenor, Piechura-Couture, & Heins, 2017). These breaks are be relatively easy to implement and help students to display on-task behavior instead of becoming off task. (Goh, Fu, Brusseau, & Hannon, 2018).

These movement breaks can fairly short, perhaps half a minute to two minutes and can be academic or nonacademic. (Literacy and Language Center, 2016, Tichenor et al., 2017) Movement breaks are very flexible in

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their implementation. They can take place after as a planned part of the lesson, after set amount of time or when you observe that the students are becoming unengaged with the lesson.

There are also many options for movement breaks, there are websites such as GoNoodle Brain Breaks® that are dedicated to providing movement breaks. There are also many YouTube videos and songs that have been created by other individuals for the purpose of providing movement breaks. A movement break could be as simple as standing and stretching for thirty seconds or a quick game of Simon Says (i. e. Simon says touch your toes, Simon says do 5 jumping jacks, etc.). I find that my class really enjoys the educational songs that have movement in them like Count to 100 by Jack Hartmann. After enjoying a movement break, I feel that the students are more interactive with the lesson and less likely to display the disruptive behavior that often comes with being off task. This makes the classroom a more positive learning environment.

### Whole Group Response

The last proactive technique I researched was whole group response methods. When one thinks of a classroom, many times they think of students sitting in rows, raising their hands to answer questions, with one student answering at a time. This outdated method limits the number of students participating as well as limiting the number of students a teacher can interact with. When using whole group response strategies, the students receive the benefits of being more engaged resulting in activation of prior knowledge and improving their comprehension of the subject matter. (Nagro,

Fraser, & Hooks, 2019). One benefit to using whole group response methods, is that teachers have a quick visual of the understanding of their students. From a glance, they can see who is understanding the lesson and who is not. For example, if a student is not participating or looking at their neighbor's card, you can take note that they are not understanding some aspect of the lesson. This quick tracking can help teachers to adjust their lessons so that students feeling frustration and/or boredom do not have a chance to engage in disruptive behaviors. (Nagro, et al., 2019).

There are a variety of whole group response methods that can be used in the classroom. One method is whole group responding through hand signals. The hand signals can be used for a variety of purposes in the classroom. Two of those ways are in comprehension checks or within class discussions. One of the ways that Nagro, Hooks, Fraser, & Cornelius (2018), suggested that hand signals could be used is to guide classroom discussions by having a student hold two fingers up if they wanted to contribute a new idea to the conversation or by holding one finger up to add to a classmate's idea. (Nagro et al. 2018) You can also use the hand signals to check for comprehension of a concept. You just need to come up with a chart to indicate what the different hand signals mean. In my classroom, I use a simple thumbs up or thumbs down when doing a quick comprehension check. Another way to use whole group responding is with response cards. Response cards could be anything from true/false, multiple choice, parts of speech, or content specific. (Nagro et al. 2018). They are used in a similar fashion as the hand signals mentioned above. The students will hold up a card in response to a question given by the teacher. In my class, one of the ways I use response



cards is to practice sight word recognition. I will give my students four sight words and ask them to show me a specified word. It is fun for the students and a great formative assessment for me to use in tracking their IEP goals and their academic progress. An added bonus is that they are engaged so I have less off task behavior that must be dealt with resulting in a better learning environment.

## Conclusion

In reading the assigned chapter from Levin & Nolan (2000), I learned that the teacher is the most important factor in creating a successful learning environment. The teacher can make or break the classroom with their behavior and attitude. This is why a proactive strategy such as positive greeting at the door is so important. When the teacher is verbally and nonverbally positive and supportive, they start the day (or class period) on a positive note. This gives students less room to be discouraged or negative about their abilities and builds their confidence to become successful learners. Also, by proactively setting clear expectations for the students regarding their behavior in the school and classroom the teacher is being an instructional leader. They are taking control of the class and doing what is in their power to make their classroom the most ideal environment for learning. By having a classroom behavior management system that is consistent with and reinforces the school and class expectations, the teacher can reinforce the students that are making positive choices with positive attention but also does not discourage or demean the students that may have behavioral difficulties. This allows the students to take ownership of their behavior because they see that good choices can earn them good things. By having <https://assignbuster.com/techniques-for-proactive-classroom-management/>

movement breaks in the classroom, you are attending to their developmental needs by giving the students an opportunity to move and learn more effectively. This also lessens the chance that you will need to manage their misbehavior. Lastly by using whole group response methods you are allowing each student to have a voice. This allows them to feel competent and that their answer matters to the teacher and to all of their classmates. When using proactive strategies in the classroom you are not only providing a positive learning environment for your students but also avoiding making reactive decisions can lower the confidence of your students as well as your confidence in yourself as a teacher.

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