

CSTP Standard #2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning

Element 2.5: Developing, communicating and maintaining high standards for individual and group behavior

Any classroom teacher knows that managing student behavior is the most important step in creating an effective learning environment. Even the most engaging activity will still fail to meet its learning objectives if the students do not behave in a manner that allows them to watch and listen, participate, and strive for excellence in thought and action. A classroom with poor behavioral standards is “dead on arrival” when it comes to ensuring that students learn and grow. It is of the utmost importance that teachers communicate, develop and reinforce appropriate behavior in the classroom that allows students to learn. Even beyond the consideration of specific content, however, I strongly believe that it is our job as teachers to prepare our students to function in society in the many roles they will take on at home, at work and in the community. It is critical that students become aware of the behavior that is expected of them in these roles, and learn to behave appropriately and effectively in a variety of environments. Next to parents, teachers are probably in the strongest position to make this happen. By setting clear behavioral expectations and daily insisting on their use, teachers not only make the learning in their own classrooms much more effective, but also create habits and values in their students that will do much to ensuring their success for the rest of their lives.

As evidence of my dedication to developing, communicating and maintaining high standards for individual and group behavior, I have included a part of my behavioral management plan that I use in my classroom. The plan consists primarily of five simple behavioral standards (I refer to as expectations) and five class routines that are discussed and put in force within the first week of class. These five behavioral standards—supported by a class discussion in which we clarify and model several successful applications of these standards—provide the framework from which students can make successful behavioral choices in class. The standards remain posted in a prominent location of the classroom, and all behavior—good and bad—are measured against these standards and either positively or negatively reinforced appropriately. If a student chooses to misbehave in class, I immediately draw their attention—either informally in class or in a special teacher-student conference, depending on the severity of the behavior—to the disparagement between their actions and the behavioral standards we agreed to uphold as a class. I let them know that their behavioral choice has let down the rest of the class and themselves, and give them the opportunity to make better choices in the future.

Artifact: "Class Expectations," "Class Procedures," and "Consequences" Wall Posters

Class Expectations

1. Be **Professional** and **Appropriate**.
2. Be **Respectful**.
3. Be **Involved**.
4. Do Your **Best**.

Class Procedures

1. Start of Class
2. Whole Group
3. Small Group
4. Individual Work
5. End of Class

Consequences

- Verbal Warning
- Written Warning
(name on board)
- Student-Teacher Conference
(detention)
- Teacher-Parent Conference
- Sent Out of Class

Additional Artifact: Section of Classroom Behavioral Management Plan

Behavioral Expectations and Consequences

Within the first week of school, each class will have a discussion on the meaning of our class expectations and why they are important to our success as a class. We will walk through several specific applications of the expectations so each student will have a deep understanding of the behavior expected of them. Finally, I will ask the students to pledge to live up to these expectations every time they come into this classroom.

I will also inform students of the consequences of they do not follow the expectations. Chronic and/or more severe misbehavior will enact the school's discipline policy (parent-student-teacher conference, vice-principal's office, suspension, etc.). Since each one of the expectations directly relates to the class's learning objectives, I inform students that not meeting these behavioral expectations will also result in a lowered grade in the class.

Daily Routines

Within the first week, students will also be informed of our class routines and what specific behavior is expected of them during these activities.

Start of class routine: Students must use appropriate behavior as soon as they enter the classroom. They must get their choir folders from the box and place their bags under their seat. Then, they are free to appropriately visit with other class members until I call the class to order. At that point, they must immediately stop talking and be in their seats for warm-ups, roll and announcements.

Class activity routine: Students must remain in their assigned space and participate. If they have a question or need something, they must raise their hand and wait to be called. It is understood that they should not take group time to talk about things that only apply to themselves (such as "I'm sick and I can't sing today."). For personal comments, they must talk to me personally at the beginning, end or outside of class. If they need to use the restroom, they must raise their hand and give an agreed-upon, non-verbal signal, and wait for my nod. Talking to neighbors will only be permitted when I am not directly instructing and must cease as soon as I begin instructing again.

Small-group activity routine: For the occasional times when students will break up into small groups to rehearse or work on a project, students will be expected to continue the same behavioral expectations (speak in classroom-appropriate tones, stay on task, etc.). Whenever I address the class, they still must cease talking and turn to look up at me.

Individual work routine: When students are given individual time to work (such as on a journal reflection write), they must stay in their seat, using their notebook or binder to write on. They are not allowed to talk, and if they have a questions they must raise their hand and then come up to me when I acknowledge them, so as not to disturb the others working. If they finish early, they can do some silent activity such as reading or drawing.

End of class routine: Students will generally be given about 3 minutes at the end of each class to pack up and visit before they leave (unless this "preferred activity time" is removed due to class-wide misbehavior). They will be permitted to do just about any appropriate activity (singing, playing piano, homework, etc.) as long as they are considerate of the others around them. They are not permitted to line up by the door and certainly not permitted to open or leave through the door before the bell rings.