



Classroom Skills: Behaviour Management

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Student Workbook

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Session Teacher

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Session Overview

This unit outlines some of the basic techniques and strategies used by teachers to create classroom environments where student behaviour is conducive to good learning. It will examine some of the common student behaviours that disrupt classrooms how the SRE teacher can respond appropriately to create positive learning environments and outcomes for all students.

Notes

What is Classroom Management?

Reading 1 - Collaboratively developing Expectations with Students (written by Jude Hennessy)

Often when discussing with students what the expectations of the classroom will be, you'll find the students are tougher on themselves than teachers might be. An important part of classroom management is understanding the need for clear consequences for students. Individual schools will have really clear guidelines on what the expectations are for student behaviour and so cooperating with the school's rules is really important for Catechists. Remember, there should be no favorites in the classroom; whether it is a student who is really struggling; a student who has shown poor behaviour in the past; or a student who does the right thing all the time. It is important that Catechists respect and care for, as well as desire the best learning outcomes for all students. Another really important part of teaching is establishing routines for all phases of the lesson. Within the limited time that you have as an SRE teacher, you will have to manage many things as part of your lesson plan, but clear routines for such things as entering the room, the way you sit down, the way you greet each other at the start of a lesson, the way you finish a lesson, the way you hand out books, all of these things are important so that the students understand expectations. Essentially, any time there is movement in the class room, there is the danger of disruption, so having clear expectations of behavior and of routines is really important. Mapping out your lesson so you know where the lesson is heading, not just for yourself but also for students, is also vital. If students understand the sequence of what's going to happen in a lesson, they're much less likely to get distracted.

Make sure when you enter the classroom that teaching aids are close by and ready to use as any time you need to pause to organize yourself for a lesson is an opportunity for something to go wrong with student behaviour. Really importantly, at the start of every lesson, you should welcome the students and let them know that you enjoy being with them. Be positive and look to affirm good behaviours in students, don't simply find the bad things that one or two students might be doing. Establishing routines, particularly routines for the start of the lesson and at any time of movement during the lesson, is very important. Reiterating this with students, particularly at the beginning of the year, will ensure that you're clearly establishing expectations for the whole year.

Establishing Routines

Reading 2 - Developing Clear Rules (written by Jude Hennessy)

One of the mistakes that schools and teachers sometimes make is having long lists of rules for students to develop; we then get "paralysis through analysis", where students find it really difficult to remember the long list of rules that they're given. Thus, while it's important that we have clear rules and consequences for very poor behaviour, try to limit the rules to some basic concepts and understandings of expectations for students. Core rules across schools broadly are related to listening, how students follow instructions, the way that students ask and answer questions, appropriate speaking in the classroom environment and the way students share resources. How they contribute in groups, and cooperate with each other are further areas where classroom management techniques need to be employed.

Listening

Reading 3 - How to develop good listening skills (written by Jude Hennessy)

Good listening involves a variety of things. Firstly, just pausing, slowing down, even stopping prior to speaking to students, ensures that students are really listening to what is being said to them. Asking students to avoid the distractions of other people and objects in the room, is an important part of listening too. By ensuring that students have put their pens down, that they are facing the person who is speaking and are not speaking to others or moving around, is an important part of good listening skills. Giving students the skills to be silent by simply looking at the person who is speaking is also very important and this is an expectation that teachers should have of all students. Sometimes asking students questions like. You might ask students: "So what would a good listener be able to do?" and it wouldn't take very long before one of your students would answer that a good listener would be able to repeat elements of what they heard, would be able to ask questions about what was spoken about, perhaps ask questions about what was not clear for them, or would be able to follow directions because they have truly listened to what has been discussed.

Asking Questions

Reading 4 - Features of Good Questions (written by Jude Hennessy)

What are the features of good questions? Good questions are not repetitive and they show that students have been listening. They help us individually as learners, while also helping others in the classroom. While you can expect that sometimes you will need to clarify things for students, questions often come about because students haven't been listening. This is an opportunity to remind the students of the expectation to listen effectively. Good questions are not meant to disrupt the classroom. So if you get a sense of that happening, please avoid the question and come back to the topic in the classroom. Good questions are always asked politely, so ensure that the students use words that are polite and show respect for the individual. Really importantly, you might have to teach some students what sort of words need to be used in asking questions. Words like who, what, when, why and how are all important ways of asking a question. Teachers should allow time for good questions, as they are an essential part of a good learning environment. It would be important in your lesson planning, particularly when you're beginning teaching, to refer to some of the questions that are outlined in your teacher manuals, or if you have specific questions that you want to address, write them down and make sure that you lead students into answering those questions. Also, a good teacher, in preparing for their lesson, might try to predict some of the questions that are likely to come out of the content and the discussion.

Following Instructions

Reading 5 - Following Instructions (written by Jude Hennessy)

Following instructions well, involves a number of elements for students. These include listening well and as a part of that, being able to repeat, list, read or even write down instructions. Students who follow instructions will be more likely to start on time, stay focused and will use the time set for a particular task, properly. Good teachers remind students during the lesson, about the importance of staying focused on the lesson, avoiding distractions and not being a distraction to others. By following these instructions as a group, the class can move forward. Self-evaluation by the students of their achievement in any particular task also helps them to grow in their understanding of expectations. A good teacher will have clear expectations about all of these things and how the students follow instructions in their classroom. When beginning teaching, it would be really important as part of your lesson plans, to clearly list for yourself, and to articulate to the students, the clear instructions associated with each of the tasks that you have set down for your weekly lesson.

Sharing

Reading 6 - Sharing in the Classroom (written by Jude Hennessy)

Good sharing leads to good learning. This means waiting our turn, not dominating talk time or all the questions, and using our own time well so that it doesn't stop the learning of others. Another element to sharing is sharing the learning space. This means that students understand the importance of sharing the line-up space, bag space, the place on the desk that's been allocated to them, the floor space around them and the space set aside for activities. It is important to be aware of what we do with our body movements, where other people are and what they're doing, making sure we act safely in our group environment. Avoiding rushing at all times is an important part of sharing space. Linked with this, is making sure that students don't move around the room unless they've been directed or given permission by the teacher to do so.

Sharing friendships is vitally important for students and a real learning opportunity, particularly for younger students. No-one should dominate another person's time in a way that excludes others, whether it is in friendships, with the teacher or helper. So ensuring that students have an understanding of sharing the resources of people, is important for them and an important part of classroom management. Sharing things like books, paper, pencils and art materials are also very important and are all required of students in a classroom setting to ensure that tasks get done, particularly group work tasks. Returning anything in good condition that students have borrowed, whether they are things from school supplies or from their friends or the group in the classroom, is a natural part of sharing. So sharing involves a number of things. Important in this is understanding the concept of "My Space" and not interfering with other peoples' space. Good sharing means a student won't touch other students or their things without their permission. They will use things well, are not wasteful, are patient, polite and ask nicely when borrowing things from other students. A good teacher will have clear expectations about sharing time, space, people and objects. Again, a good teacher will have consequences when this doesn't occur and they'll also write into their lesson plan, clear directions for sharing, particularly in a group work setting.

Part of a Group

Reading 7 - Cooperation and Group Work (written by Jude Hennessy)

Many students need to learn or be reminded of what it means to cooperate. They need to be taught those skills and be given clear expectations about how cooperating is a really important part of being in a classroom. Good cooperation involves a whole lot of things. Knowing what the current task or activity is about enables students to cooperate with each other. It's very difficult to do that if students are not clear about expectations. Nothing is worse in a group setting than going back and saying to the rest of the group, "Does anyone actually understand what we've got to do?" So make sure that the group is really aware of what's expected of them. Completing a task as part of a group, to the best of a student's ability, is a clear expectation and while they might have a different role in the group, understanding that they're an important part of the group dynamic and overall achievement of that goal or activity is an important part of student's understanding of their role in cooperating. So, classroom management involves getting all students to understand their role as a member of the team. This will involve talking to some students about how to get things done; not letting some students do all of the work and for some students, it will mean encouraging them to offer help to others if they need it. A good teacher in a well-run classroom will help students to develop their cooperation skills. An important part of this sometimes is really thinking very clearly about what sort of group you want to set up. Often one of the problems in this situation is letting students form into their own groups. One of the clear, decisive factors in ensuring that group work is done well is making sure that you've got a good mixture of student abilities and personalities within each group and letting students form their own groups can often be a recipe for disaster. Allowing students to form their own groups might be something you use as a reward, but only after you've established really clear expectations of how groups are to run and of how students should cooperate with each other.

Understanding the reasons for Rules

Reading 8 - Helping students understand the reasons for rules (written by Jude Hennessy)

We spoke right at the start of this module about the importance of instilling self-discipline in students and so, good teachers allow time for explaining rules. Obviously, in SRE, you've got a set, short amount of time, so doing this effectively at the start of lessons, or as reminders as part of the lessons is a good way to make sure that students understand that you know the rules and also a good way to ensure that they know the rules and the reasons for them. Understanding classroom rules and expectations involves many things. The most basic of these is being able to list the rules, and to be able to explain them and articulate them to others. A really good technique is to get students to remind you and each other of the rules and the importance of following them. Asking questions about rules in order to take ownership of them is an important part of what an SRE teacher does. When you do this, you allow students to make choices based on logic and not feelings and you take behaviour away from the realm of feelings, back to the area of good sense and logic. Being able to explain the reasons for rules, particularly in the way that links to good learning is what good teachers do. From time to time, students might challenge a rule or they might ask that a rule be left aside in a particular type of activity.

This is possible as long as a teacher understands that they are in control of letting a rule change, for good reasons, however, in doing so it is important that the teacher uses the right process. Part of this is ensuring that students be given the opportunity to ask questions about rules and to be able to ask that they be changed or modified. A good teacher will help students list, understand and explain the reasons for rules, but will also allow them to collaborate in changing the rules from time to time if need be. This in turn helps students to take ownership of the rules and to understand that rules can sometimes change so that good behaviour and learning outcomes can take place. A simple example of this might relate to the way that the students are required to come into a learning space in one particular activity. This might be explained to students before they come inside along the lines of "Good morning class; ordinarily I'd ask you to line up behind our chairs, but today we've got a guest speaker and I'm going to ask you to simply place your bags behind your chairs and move down to the floor so that we can listen to our guest speaker." You've changed, particularly for a younger class, an essential part of what their routine is, so explaining this and the reasons why, is a good technique for SRE teachers and it avoids the disruption that is likely to be linked to it if it wasn't explained. Importantly, good teachers follow through on the rules that they've discussed and created collaboratively with their classes.

Consequences

Reading 9 - Basic tips for managing behaviour (written by Jude Hennessy)

Sometimes one of the best techniques we can use in correcting students behaviour is to find a student or students doing something good. Perhaps it's finding the student in your class who's continually being disruptive doing something that's good, and making sure that you recognize it and that you're very happy with their good behaviour. It's important for teachers to recognize when behaviors in the class room are starting to go a bit wrong, prior to things going really badly wrong. 'Nipping things in the bud' means being aware of what's going on in the classroom environment and making sure that you step in before things get worse. Be aware of what's going on, therefore, but don't overreact to poor behaviour. Don't fire off all of your 'big guns' at once; that's a common mistake for beginning teachers and for teachers that are just starting out in the SRE realm. Don't use high-level strategies, interactions or consequences for low-level disruptions. Good teachers stay calm, they never model anger, they model justice and they model clear consequences. Importantly, all teachers should avoid responding to secondary behaviours. For example, if you're challenging a student about continually talking and that student then turns that into blaming others make sure that you stay focused on that specific behaviour, carry through on it and then, if need be, follow up later on the way that they responded to your intervention. It's really important that students understand that, even when we're correcting their behaviour, that we're on their side, that we're helping them to be the best that they can be. You're helping them to develop as individuals who understand the importance of self-discipline.

Consequences II & III

Reading 10 - Rules for Limit Setting (written by Jude Hennessy)

Whenever you're enforcing rules that are limit setting, it's important that the consequences are immediate. You don't want a big gap between behaviour and a consequence, for example you would never want the consequence to come a week later. It's important that you're consistent when enforcing rules and not showing favoritism to one student over another. It's important to stay calm when you're dealing with limit setting behaviour. There's always the trap that you can lose control of your own behaviour because you've got a student who's consistently testing you out. Sometimes one of the best things you can do is actually rehearse what a response to you might see coming, due to a student's consistent poor behavior in the classroom. Extreme behaviours obviously require intervention from the school and you, as an SRE teacher, should immediately call on the assistance of School staff to assist you with extreme behaviors.

Tips for Success

Reading 11 - Some more tips for good classroom management (written by Jude Hennessy)

Without a doubt, pre-thinking your reactions to situations; pre-thinking how you will speak and the consequences for behaviour that you know are coming, is an important way of dealing with student behaviour. As we've said throughout, knowing your school, the expectations and what happens with particular behaviours, is really important and so asking the school to give you a simple, clear list of expectations of students that you can use in your class room is really important. Finally, we always need to be flexible with students, with ourselves and sometimes, as the situation demands, we do need to be able to bend the rules a little bit, to ensure that we get the best outcome for students. There's a really clear link between classroom management and child protection. The behaviors we exhibit as teachers are often linked to the safety of children. We have an expectation on us that we treat children justly and fairly and that they always feel safe in our presence. The only thing we truly have control over is our own behaviour. You obviously would expect that if you're teaching for long enough, you're going to have students who are going to test you out. Don't be surprised when it happens, but when it does, you have to have really clear expectations of yourself and your own behaviour. You would have learned in the Child Protection module, "Hands off, no corporal punishment, it's not necessary". All of these things are a violation of the law and of Gospel values. In the same way, our use of voice and gesture and body language is critical in making students understand that we have respect for them. We should never shout at a student, make threats, intimidate, use sarcasm, name-calling or belittle students. Those behaviours never have a place in any teaching environment, least of all SRE, where not only are we teaching students about our faith, but living out our faith as true witnesses of people who are called to love others. We've got to respect the physical and emotional space of students and respect arenas of safety and personal space. Linked with respecting these arenas of safety is making sure that we're never alone with any student particularly when we're managing classroom behavior or disciplining a student.

Golden Rules

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