



Grammar School Symposium: Introduction to Classical Education and Grammar School Teaching with Lori Jill Keeler

Lesson 6: Classroom Management Conducive to Learning

Outline

Classrooms Conducive to Learning How to Establish Order in Your Classroom

- **Order can be active engagement**, not necessarily quiet.
- **Meet students at the door.** Greet students and welcome them, looking them each in the eye.
- **Assign students roles in the community of learning.** This helps students to understand they “in this together.”
- **Have a strong start:** Consider “do nows” for morning work. This could be independent silent reading, or learning game, etc. Communicates purpose and planning instead of chaos. Relevant research: Primacy-Recency Effect.
- **Establish efficiency** in classroom procedures and routines: e.g., the way students pass in papers, turn in homework, sharpen pencils, etc. Train students on how to follow these procedures; this will free up more time for learning.
- **Use time effectively.** Students can sense when you don’t really have a plan. Students will try to take “the train in a different direction.”
- **Students appreciate order.** Students who feel a sense of order are able to focus better on learning, and learn better.



Management

- Proactive classroom management involves a host of strategies that teachers can implement to prevent the occurrence of problem behaviors and create a classroom environment that is conducive to learning.
- **Prevent disruptions** to learning before they emerge.



- **Teach them the right ways** to do things before establishing consequences for **the wrong way of doing them.**
- **Don't teach procedures *ad hoc***—this creates confusion and frustration for students. When this happens, teachers tend to mete out consequences out of frustration.
- **Tight transitions:** Transitions are one of the main times when there can be chaos. There should be little or no unmanaged time. Consider how you will manage the way students go to the restroom, etc.
- **Discipline:** An important part of managing student behavior. See [Lesson 4: Shepherding the Grammar School Student's Heart](#).
- **Is it a public or private issue?** If private, discuss privately with the student. K-2 grades: often the disruptions are impulsive rather than intentional. Consequences for impulsive behavior may be different than for intentional behavior. To what degree has the behavior been repeated? To what degree has it been disruptive to other students? “Are you stealing time from your classmates?” “Are you trying to get the attention on you?”
- **The Art of the Consequence:** Will you call the parents? Wise Time: When students reflect on what they have done. Note the difference between giving a consequence and making a correction to a student's behavior. If you give both, make sure you give gentle correction first. Better to respond than to react.
- **Managing the Pacing of Your Instruction:** When do I need to slow down? Sometimes you need to shift down into first gear and go slowly. Sometimes teachers are tempted to stay in “fourth gear” and go too fast for too long. To climb a hill (of learning) we often must go slowly in “first gear.” Some teachers stay too long in first or second gear when they could be “cruising.” Therefore, be aware of how students are learning and gauge what will be a proper pace of learning.

The Classroom Environment: The Physical Space

- **What type of decorations** are we using?
- Avoid mere “cutesy” decorations.
- **Use beautiful art.** Put art on the walls.
- **Resources for learning on walls:** for example, a history timeline; number line; scientific laws. Say to students, “Use your resources” (a cue to look to the resources on the walls).
- **Avoid clutter.** Too many resources and art on walls can create clutter and distraction. Consider asking other teachers for their opinion of your room décor.
- **Judicious and wise use of music.** Classical music in the morning “in the background.” Catechism song playing during some kinds of classroom work.
- **How we use space and resources:** What direction are students facing? When students are facing one another they are not focusing on the teacher; this creates a temptation to talk to one another, be disruptive. Best generally to



have students facing the teacher, though there are some times when students are working in groups when they can face each other. Try to make sure that you have access to each student desk and can freely circulate around the classroom. You will also need access to other resources—like whiteboards, projectors, etc.

- **Primacy of word-based instruction.** Best for most learning to be word-based rather than image-based. Use media wisely and judiciously.
- **Cultivate the love of truth, goodness, and beauty.** You do this through art and music, but also by the stories you tell and the books you read aloud. How can we foster a love of words, wonder, and curiosity?

Authority

- **Establish yourself as an authority in the classroom.** Students can sense your fear or lack of authority. You teach students about God’s authority when you establish your own.
- **Definition of authority:** Your capacity to cause students to choose to do what you ask, regardless of the consequences of disobedience. Tell students: When they obey their parents, they are ultimately obeying God. The opposite is true as well. Rewards (getting something out of the treasure chest at the end of the week) are not good motivations for obedience. Control and authority actually provide students with security and freedom.
- **Establishing authority in your classroom:** You need to be prepared and skilled. Students respect teachers who are prepared to teach and skilled in the art of teaching. It is also helpful to attain a blend of warm and strict, firm but calm, nurturing but structured. It should never be either one or the other. Strong voice: use your voice in a way that commands authority. This does not mean that you always have a loud voice. A strong voice—the voice students listen to the most. Emotional constancy: it is very important that students feel security and freedom in your emotional constancy.

Influence

- **Behaving and believing:** Move from getting students to behave to getting them to believe—to believe that they can learn, that learning is enjoyable and something they want to do the rest of their lives, that they can overcome challenges.
- **Relationship:** To have influence, you must have a relationship with your students. Students will work harder for a teacher that truly cares about them—even outside the classroom.

Engagement

- **100% engagement:** As much as possible, ensure that 100% of your students are engaged in purposeful learning. No student should “fall through the cracks.”
- **Engaging different kinds of learners:** There are a variety of different learners in a classroom and it can be challenging to meet the needs of each individual



learner. Therefore, it is helpful to have instructional support teachers who are shared among grade level teachers in math, grammar, and literature; they pull out students into smaller groups, sometimes for remediation in reading or math. Sometimes “high flier” students can be pulled out too for enrichment instruction.

- **Our goal:** to engage every student in the class.
- **Ratio:** a means of teaching that ensures that every student is engaged. See [Lesson 10](#) on total participation for more on “ratio” teaching techniques.
- **Total Participation Techniques:** See [Lesson 10](#).