Universal classroom management strategies to ensure success

1. Demonstrate the ideal behaviour that you want to see

Modelling ideal behaviour teaches students how to act properly in a classroom environment. This can include speaking politely to others, such as other staff and students, keeping electronics out of sight during class time, and handling conflict calmly and respectfully.

2. Allow students to help establish rules

Having a discussion about classroom rules, and allowing students to weigh in on the dos and don'ts of classroom etiquette, will ensure more compliance in the long run. This is a discussion that can take place at the beginning of the school year or semester, and depending on the classroom dynamic, may help students see classroom rules in a more positive light.

3. Document the rules

Once classroom rules are established, make sure that students have a way to keep track of them; whether they are written out in the classroom or the syllabus. This ensures that the rules are concrete, not just up in the air, and this will hold students accountable to them.

4. Follow through

Now that rules are established and documented, make sure that the rules mean something when they're broken. This can be in the form of verbally acknowledging that a rule has been broken, and following through with consequences that were set up in the rules.

5. Avoid punishing the whole class

Punishing the whole class can harm classroom management in the long run because it hurts the students who are behaving correctly. Instead of punishing the whole class, it can help to gently call out students who are misbehaving by engaging them back into the class topic. This can be a question such as, "Do you have a question?" or "Do you need help?" instead of disparaging the student for misbehaving.

6. Keep a friendly disposition

This brings us to the next tip: keeping a friendly disposition in the classroom. This is a mixture of modelling behaviour, offering positive comments instead of negative ones, and generally approaching students with a smile and a kind word.

7. Encourage student initiative

In every classroom, there will be eager and excited learners. Take advantage of this and encourage students to present to the class, work on innovative projects, and delve into the material at a pace that works with their enthusiasm.

8. Give praise generously

You can never hurt a student or classroom environment by giving praise to students or the class. This helps the class by inspiring students, raising students' self-esteem, and encouraging positive behaviour and participation.

9. Offer alternatives for tactile learning

Otherwise known as non-verbal communication, tactile learning involves activities that are not purely verbal or frontal learning. This may include learning stations that offer instructional videos, activities, projects, and infographics that help students learn about the material in a more hands-on manner.

10. Give tangible incentives

This can include rewarding individual students for good behaviour or rewarding the whole class with a party or special activity for good behaviour or reaching a milestone in learning.

11. Send positive words home

It's common for teachers to call parents when there are issues with certain students, but it can also be helpful to call home when there is positive news. Not only will this be appreciated by parents, but it will create positive reinforcement for the students.

12. Build excitement for the material

This can be in the form of starting class with a sneak peek of the day's material, with hooks that will make students excited and curious about the day's work. You can start the class off with a question or a riddle that will be answered throughout the day, or inform the class about an activity that will be done later that day. This will keep students engaged and excited.

13. Interview students

Take each student aside for a few minutes to ask them about how they work well in class. This can include questions such as:
- Who they work well with
- Which activities do they like the most
- Which subjects do they enjoy
- What kind of assignments/exercises help them remember the material
- What helps them focus during class

This will be especially helpful for the few students who cause disruptions during class.

14. Establish routines and goals

Teachers and students thrive on a schedule. Classroom routines can help students know what to expect, and what is expected of them. Goals are also a helpful way to guide students through the curriculum, whether it's the short-term goals for the day or the semester.

15. Have a plan for addressing bad behaviour

When there are disruptions in class, it's crucial to be equipped with a plan to meet it immediately, especially if established rules are being broken. This may include creative solutions for preventing and addressing disruptions, as calling out a student in front of the class leads to negative feelings all around.

Strategies that work for college

16. Build relationships

One of the most effective and positive classroom management techniques is to have personal relationships with the students. Students are more engaged and compliant when they like and admire their teacher, and the classroom environment is more pleasant for everyone when both the teachers and the students feel that they can trust each other.

17. Accommodate all types of learners

Design lessons that take into account a wide range of different learners. Some students learn best with lectures, others with graphs and visual presentations, others with hands-on assignments, and others in groups or in individual learning time. Creating lessons that include a wide range of learning methods allows every student the chance to engage with the material in the best way for them.

18. Be enthusiastic

Students can tell when their teachers are excited about the material, and it is more likely for students to be engaged and interested when the teacher is enthusiastic. Students naturally feel the emotions of the teacher, whether they are excited or bored, and they are likely to follow these cues and be more engaged when they sense excitement or interest.

19. "First step compliance" trick

This trick can work for any classroom. The idea is that students (and people in general) are more likely to follow a simple task when given. Giving one simple task at the beginning of a class draws the student's attention to the teacher (or task at hand). This can be as simple as asking for "everyone's eyes on me," or "please take a look at the board."

20. Preparation is key

Teaching begins long before you step foot in the classroom. Preparing lesson plans, and reviewing them for improvement, will help lessons go more smoothly, avoid disruptions and delays, and generally help the enthusiasm in the classroom.

21. Smooth out transitions

Part of conducting a successful lesson is mastering the transition between topics or activities. This helps avoid distractions and chatter and keeps students motivated and engaged.
A simple trick for transitioning can include this progression:
- Get the class's attention
- Announce what the next topic/activity will be
- Give clear directions for the segment (if needed)
- Say, "go" or "let's start now"

22. Implement group work

Group work is a great way to get students more involved and engaged in the material and the class. In addition, it allows students to work on relationship-building skills, collaborating and leading skills, and usually results in more learning and peer-to-peer teaching.

23. Incorporate play

Playfulness is important for both children and adults. Students deal with a variety of stress and pressure in their studies, and stress lowers concentration and the ability to learn.

By encouraging a stress-free environment, teachers actually help students learn better. This can include: cracking a joke, conducting an actual game in class, encouraging creative projects, and generally keeping a positive attitude in the classroom.

24. Tech-off policy

In colleges and universities today, it's difficult to do away with all of the distracting technology that is being used in the classroom and being implemented into the educational framework. Though some students may use laptops for note-taking, phones can still be banned for more productive class time. This can be in the form of a phone box, where each student places their phone upon entering the classroom, or alternatively, having students turn off their phones and keep them on the desk so that teachers can see that they are not being distracted.