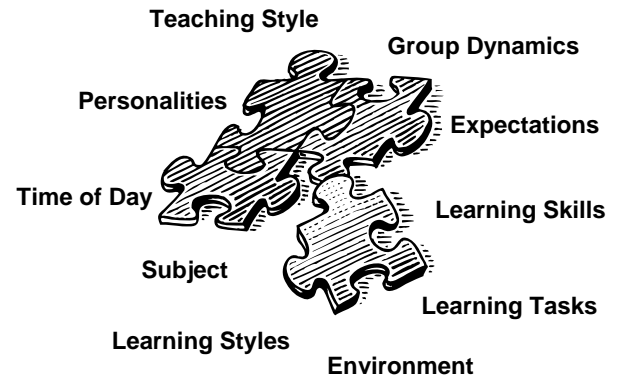




Special thanks to John Jacquemain, Heather White, and Steve McDonald for their input.

Lens on Learning Principles

Although there are **general guidelines** for creating and maintaining a positive learning environment, it is a complex puzzle and every teacher has to **experiment to find strategies** and ways of responding to students that work effectively. **People and learning are both complex**, so achieving and maintaining a positive learning environment is an ongoing and active process.



Ten Guidelines for Classroom Management

1. **Think prevention.** Consider how you can manage the learning process to prevent undesirable behaviour (i.e. classroom set up, opportunities for students to interact, active involvement, clear communication of expectations, structuring for success)
2. **Model behaviours you expect from your students.** Be an example to your students for behaviours such as: mutual respect, active listening, interest in learning, subject enthusiasm, open mindedness, positive attitude, etc.
3. **Avoid assumptions.** Talk with students about their behaviour and explain why something is bothersome or unacceptable. Examine your own assumptions and how these may affect student learning. Discuss assumptions with your students.
4. **Avoid singling students out whenever possible.** Although there may be the odd situation when something needs to be addressed immediately, the majority of the time, it is better to talk to a student outside the class.
5. **Know college policies** regarding things such as code of conduct, human rights, plagiarism, acceptable use of technology, cheating, evaluation, etc. Be specific about the things that are not tolerable (i.e. sexist and racist remarks, swearing, interrupting, etc.) under these policies.
6. **Communicate academic and behavioural policies and expectations** (yours and/or your department's) early in the semester regarding late submissions, class attendance, participation, missed tests, classroom conduct, etc. Put policies and expectations in writing, and repeat them often. Be clear and consistent.
7. **Make your subject relevant and interesting to your students.** Use examples that interest students (i.e. sports, entertainment). Take time to find out their interests.
8. **Teach for success.** Instead of taking a punitive or negative approach, help students understand what is needed to succeed in your course and in the workplace.
9. **Focus on solutions.** Consider how can you make learning a positive experience for both you and your students.
10. **Talk to your peers.** Classroom management involves ongoing learning for educators. There is no shame in discussing issues with your peers in order to maintain perspective, and generate workable solutions.

Reflection on Practice

1. How might time of day or events before/after your class (i.e. major test, tragedy, event) be affecting the classroom climate and how can you respond appropriately?
2. What are your expectations? Are they reasonable and realistic? How can you communicate these clearly to your students?
3. How can you engage students more actively in learning in order to minimize classroom management issues?

Expanding Your Teaching Toolkit

1. Disruptive talking

- Provide opportunities throughout the class for students to interact with each other
- Get students actively involved in learning (not passively listening to you talk). Active learning does not have to be complex or time consuming. Refer to the Pedagoggle on Generating Active Participation in Lectures.
- Ask the student if he/she has a question or concern about the topic at hand in a friendly, concerned manner (avoid sarcastic or patronizing tones).
- Be sensitive to the needs of the students – did they just come from a stressful exam? Is there something happening on campus that they need some time to talk about?
- Communicate an agenda at the beginning of each class so students know when they will have a break, how long you will be lecturing for, etc. Write the agenda on the board.
- Move around the room and interact with students in a positive way.
- Maintain an appropriate sense of humour.

2. Chronic late arrivals or early departures

- Communicate expectations and procedures around late arrivals or early departures early in the term. Consider whether missing only part of a class is better than missing a whole class.
- Speak to repeat offenders privately to find out if there is a legitimate reason and to ask them to enter or leave in a non-disruptive fashion.
- Evaluate your class and your teaching. Are students leaving for a reason that you can control (i.e. you're covering info that they can read in the textbook, you're spending too much time on issues that concern only a few individuals)?

3. Challenges to policies, procedures, and expectations

- Compare your policies, procedures, and expectations with others in your department before presenting them to students.
- Clearly communicate policies, procedures, and expectations in writing. Review these with students early in the course. Post them in Blackboard for continuous reference.
- Explain your philosophy of learning and its impact on policies, procedures, and expectations.
- Show examples of what you are expecting in assignments.
- Be firm, fair, and consistent in your dealings with all students.
- Be realistic time required outside of class to complete work for your course.
- Don't be afraid to have students take their issue to a higher level because often this is not followed up. If your policies, procedures, and expectations have been thoughtfully established and clearly communicated students will not have ground to stand on. Use an appeal as an opportunity to learn how you might clarify or revise expectations, policies or procedures to avoid future challenges.

4. Negative comments about your course

- Accept that not everyone will like you all the time, every course you teach, or every class you conduct.
- Remain friendly and professional at all times.
- In private, ask the antagonistic student to suggest how the course or class could be improved. Discuss this feedback with peers you respect before feeling obliged to implement them.
- Solicit feedback from all students early in the course using a simple “Stop, Start, Continue” form. See the pedagogy on Formative Assessment.
- Use a variety of teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of various learning styles and personalities.

5. Lack of participation

- Make sure students have the prerequisite knowledge or skills to participate
- Consider the wording and focus of your questions (i.e. open-ended, exploratory or investigative rather than factual, links course concepts to something of interest to the students)
- Have students first work in pairs or triads to explore ideas and then share with the whole group. Most students will be more comfortable speaking in pairs or triads.
- Work to create a reciprocal learning environment in your classroom (you learn from your students, students learn from each other, and students learn from you).
- Get to know students individually so you can draw them out when you know they have something relevant to contribute.

6. Monopolizing speakers

- Redirect talking back to a relevant topic
- Give speakers a designated amount of time each to speak
- Emphasize the value of hearing diverse opinions and several people’s input
- Acknowledge that “Bill” has already spoken and you’d like to hear from others
- Continue a discussion online instead of finishing it in class
- Move the lesson forward by starting to write on the board, advancing the Power Point, or passing out the next task

As always, we look forward to additional ideas, and discussion around these ideas in the Teaching and Learning folder in GroupWise.

More Information

Georgian College. (n.d.) *Academic policies*. Retrieved on January 13, 2002.
<http://www.georgianc.on.ca/calendar/policies/>

Hawaii Community College (n.d.). *Difficult behaviours in the classroom*. Retrieved January 13, 2003.
<http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/behavior.htm>

Hawaii Community College (n.d.). *General principles of motivation*. Retrieved January 13, 2003.
<http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/motivate.htm>

Queen’s University Instructional Development Centre Resources. (n.d.). *Dealing with difficult students*. Retrieved January 13, 2003.
http://www.queensu.ca/idc/idcresources/handouts/difficult_students.html