



TEACHING HANDBOOK OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

First year survive, second year thrive



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Introduction

Classroom management is a complex topic and there is never going to be a perfect solution that matches every class. This handbook outlines five major behavioural theories used in Australian schools and the actions that stem from them. The theories provide a perspective for the teacher to understand student behaviour and an appropriate teaching style to adopt. The actions that these theories provide are not restricted to anyone theory. These actions (along with others) are in their respective sections later in the book. The brackets next to the strategy show my original source for the strategy.

Behavioural Theories

Goal Centred Theory – Rudolf Dreikurs

Highly Preventative – Democratic

Goal Centred Theory (GCT) takes the position that people are separate from their behaviours and people behave in a way to achieve what they need. GCT assumes everyone needs and desires to belong to social groups (school and family) but the actions taken to seek recognition and self-determination are sometimes detrimental to the safe learning environment of the classroom. When students come to understand their motives behind their misbehaviour, they can learn appropriate ways to satisfy their needs (Lyons G. et al. 2011).

Implementing GCT requires a democratic discussion on what these needs are and the actions students should take to achieve them. The class needs to democratically establish rules, clear boundaries and a hierarchy of consequences. Teachers need to be clear with instructions and consistent with their behaviour towards students. Once the class is established, the actions taken are highly preventative.

GCT doesn't work with students who do not seek group belonging or young classes who aren't able to recognise or understand their own motives for their misbehaviour.

Positive Behaviour Leadership – Bill Rogers

Highly Preventative – Democratic

Positive Behaviour Leadership is a practical, democratic way of managing classroom behaviour that is centred around modelling positive behaviour and teaching students to be accountable for their behaviour. Teachers should lead, not coerce their students "to accept the principle of shared rights and responsibilities" (Lyons G. et al., p23). Teachers must demonstrate confidence in students by offering choices about their behaviour.

The strategies used are highly preventative and if they start to fail, the correctives are used in the hierarchy from least confronting up to most confronting. The difference between this model and the others discussed here is that it doesn't explain or assume reasons why students misbehave. It is very general.

A problem that teachers often run into is switching between 'teaching mode' and 'discipline mode'. It is important to understand that discipline is a natural consequence of good teaching (Rogers B, 2002).

Cognitive Behavioural Theory – Jake Kaplan & Joseph Carter

Supportive and Corrective - Democratic

Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT) takes the stance that students are self-directed and have the ability to make good and bad decisions. “Behavioural choices are influenced by consequences and social context, values, motivation, problem-solving skills, self-organisational skills and interpretation of feedback from others” (Lyons G. et al., p10). CBT aims to teach students about what drives their own (mis)behaviour and arm them with self-management skills to bring them to the point of behavioural independence.

CBT is better used in a class where there are a number of chronic misbehaving students. The teacher must build a facilitative learning environment to enable students to manage themselves. Teachers need to collaborate with these students on behavioural goals (e.g., not swinging on chairs, not shouting in a class, etc.) and use social reinforcers when the right behaviours are demonstrated. There is a focus on building student motivation through appreciating the value of success.

CBT is difficult to execute without proper planning as a the most chronic students will need some direct personal intervention to get them on the right track – much like Phil Beadle in the first episode of the Unteachables.

Assertive Discipline – Lee & Marlene Canter

Preventative – Autocratic

Assertive Discipline is an autocratic style of management where misbehaviour is expected and increasing levels of discipline are needed in order to maintain order. Rules and boundaries are laid out early as are the consequences and rewards for disruptive and good behaviour (McIntyre T, no date). Once good control is established, it needs to be backed up by good teaching. If teachers have good control and poor teaching, students will think they are strict for a personal need for power and resent them for it.

To implement this, the teacher must come up with a discipline plan and be prepared to confidently and calmly implement and defend it. They need to appear in control and worth listening to. Subject knowledge and pedagogy is critical here. The teacher still needs to be approachable and the usual positive relationship building strategies are still employed here.

The downside to assertive discipline is that the chronic misbehaving students are coerced into behaving without addressing the reason why the misbehaviour was happening in the first place. It can be a useful tool to gain control but it alone might not help students in the long term.

Applied Behaviour Analysis – Paul Alberto & Anne Troutman

Supportive and Corrective - Autocratic

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) suggests behaviours are controlled by the present environmental conditions and the consequences that rise from those behaviours in those conditions. This is distinctly different from cognitive behavioural theory where students are taught about many components to their behaviours and how to take control of them.

To implement this style of behaviour management in a classroom, a teacher (or a helper) must observe the classroom and identify the behaviours that are linked to environmental conditions and

the responses to that behaviour. Then, changes are made and the class is monitored again. The teacher should also employ reinforcing and punishing consequences to promote the desired behaviours.

This style of management is oversimplified and finding an observer the children are impartial to is difficult and costly. However, the fundamental idea that the classroom and home environments influence behaviour is well established (Victoria State Government Education and Training, no date) and teachers can improve their classrooms by paying attention to their students and what basic environmental conditions get them off task. It might be as simple as classroom temperature or seating arrangement.

Choosing a Theory

Every teacher is capable of adopting any behaviour management theory although some theories naturally align better with the teacher. Teachers should adopt elements of theories based on their class and the school environment. The more responsible the students are, the better they will behave with a highly preventative behaviour management strategy. The chronic misbehaving classes will initially need more corrective strategies with the teacher aiming to move to preventative strategies.

In every class there are two things teachers **MUST** do to promote a positive learning environment:

- Build positive relationships with students.
- Never ridicule or humiliate students.

These two steps are the keys to breaking the cycle of chronic misbehaviour.

Preventative Actions

Most of these can and should be used in every classroom to prevent bad behaviour from even happening.

Praise (Amy Alexander - Teacher's TV)

Use authentic praise as a reward for good behaviour. If you praise and give good attention to the well-behaved student, the misbehaving students will understand what is required to get attention.

Example: Amy praises every positive action taken by students in her class – even raising a hand to attempt to answer a question (Praise and Preparation – 2:07).

Be Prepared (Amy Alexander – Teacher's TV)

The better prepared you are to teach your content, the more autonomously you can deliver it and focus your attention to controlling the misbehaviours in your class.

Example: In her difficult class, Amy writes down a colour coded set of instructions and goals for the class before they enter her room so at any point in time, there's never a reason to not know what to do (Praise and Preparation – 4:40).

With-it-ness (PBL – Bill Rogers)

Students misbehave less when they think you notice everything that happens. Be prepared and deliver your content in a way that allows you to see your students all the time. Have good classroom positioning.

Role Modelling (PBL – Bill Rogers)

A PBL strategy where the you model the behaviour you want the class to exhibit. Don't start the class off in a negative tone by shouting.

Establish Routines (Assertive Discipline – Lee & Marlene Canter)

If you establish a routine and enforce your expectations to that routine, your students will settle in class earlier. Make sure you establish and have control of the class before you start to teach.

Set Boundaries & Be Consistent (Assertive Discipline – Lee & Marlene Canter)

Much like the established routines, you must set boundaries and stick to them consistently. Students want to test those boundaries and you must have a consequence escalation plan in place for when they cross those boundaries. The punishment must suit the crime and the consequences must be consistent across all students.

Example: David Torn takes an assertive discipline approach to his class management when he first meets them. He isn't threatening, but is he is confident and assertive. Right from the start, his rules and expectations are clear (Tough Love - 0:49).

Collaborative Rule Making (PBL – Bill Rogers)

This one is from Bill Roger's PBL approach to classroom management and aims to have the students take ownership of the rules they themselves must obey.

Encourage Competition (Phil Beadle – Teacher's TV)

You can harness the energy of a group of excited students with competition. It might be a good strategy for classes late in the day after lunch. This needs to be done without making an individual feel bad about their score.

Example: Phil Beadle has his year 9 boys English class play 'argument tennis' where they argued different points of view in the class book Macbeth. The small competition element has students engaged and taking the time to read and understand the text to develop better arguments.

Lining Students Up Before Class (David Torn – Teacher's TV)

This is particularly good in classes after lunch where everyone has lots of energy. It's part of the routine establishment mentioned previously and helps establish class order.

Example: David Torn lines his new year 9 class up and gives them his expectations for entry and their first instruction before letting them in. (Tough Love - 0:18)

Prepare Extra Work (Zahra Pirvali, 2017)

In a generally well behaved class, the minor misbehaviour can come from being bored. Therefore, have a plan for the students who finish their work early. Make the work fun – like a puzzle.

Get Personal (Nicola Lamb – Teacher's TV)

Students are highly inquisitive of their teachers and small revelations of their personal life can be taken as a demonstration of trust – even if it is otherwise public knowledge.

Example 1: Nicola Lamb lets the students see her wedding ring as a reward for good behaviour. They have shown previous interest in her wedding. (Girl Talk – 11:30)

Example 2: David Torn gives a back story on his rough upbringing in the local area and talks about how he used education to turn his life around. (Tough Love - 5:02)

Use names (Assertive Discipline – Lee & Marlene Canter)

When giving praise or corrective instructions, use student names. It gives more weight to the praise/instruction.

Send Positive Notes Home (Finley T, 2016)

Get parents as an ally early in case their child misbehaves. It's good to have the support at home,

Supportive Actions

Supportive actions are taken to get disengaged students back on task. Students don't have to be disruptive to be disengaged. Occasionally you might find the whole class is disengaged. That's when you need to make radical changes.

Showing Interest (Tamsin Martin, 2017)

Approach the off-task students and take interest in their work in a friendly manner. Use praise when the work is done well.

Waiting Silently (Adam Deane, 2007)

Standing there confidently waiting for silence can work to get people paying attention. The silence is infectious. Be sure to use the evil eye on the last few students who are still talking

Evil Eye (Adam Deane, 2007)

Make eye contact with the mildly misbehaving students so they are aware that you are watching and feel like you are directly addressing them when you talk to the whole class.

Peer Reinforcement (Tamsin Martin, 2017)

Give praise and positive attention to the adjacent person who is behaving correctly. This works well with planned ignoring.

New Task (Phil Beadle – Teacher's TV)

Often difficult to execute without preparation. It might be that you have a class of kinaesthetic learners and asking them to read books in an English class bores them. Take a different approach to the task like Phil Beadle did in *The Unteachables* when the students read to cows.

Corrective Actions

These actions are listed from less confrontational/disruptive to most confrontational/disruptive. The aim is to choose the least disruptive action possible as to not break the momentum of your class. It is difficult for students to misbehave when there is strong momentum of good behaviour already happening. The further you get down this list, the more you take on an assertive discipline approach to behaviour management.

“When a student is misbehaving, the action taken should come down to how it will affect the learning of the whole class” – David Crouch, Principal of Renmark High School (2016)

Planned Ignoring (David Crouch, 2016)

Simply ignore minor misbehaviour or calling of your name. Don't reward disruptive behaviour with your attention. Be aware that the first use of planned ignoring will initially increase the frequency of the behaviour that you wish to stop as they try to regain your attention.

Signal and Proximity Interference (Tamsin Martin, 2017)

Your proximity and body language can be enough to stop a student from minor misbehaving. It works when a student is aware that they are misbehaving. A student fidgeting with something could be dealt with by quietly walking up and holding your hand out whilst still talking to the whole class. They'll probably give the item to you.

Whisper Technique (Amy Alexander - Teacher's TV)

When students are mostly on task and there is only minor misbehaviour, you can correct that behaviour by calmly and quietly talking to the student and getting them to correct their own behaviour.

Example: Amy notices Evelyn sitting at the wrong table. She comes up to her and quietly asks “is this your seat?” to which Evelyn gets up and goes back to her own table. Asking a question like that is less confrontational than giving an explicit instruction. (Praise and Preparation – 8:30)

Name Dropping (Jane Wright – Teacher's TV)

The opposite to planned ignoring but used when students are not paying attention to what you are saying. Maybe they are passing notes or whispering. You might call them out to show that you are aware of what they are doing.

Humour (Tamsin Martin, 2017)

Highly situational and depends strongly on your wit and rapport with students. You would use it to defuse or redirect something that was said and then move back on track. If done correctly, it can help to build a positive relationship which discourages future misbehaviour.

Questioning Awareness of Effect (Levin J & Nolan J, 2002)

Many students aren't aware of the effect their behaviour has on others people. The goal is not so much to discipline, but to make students learn their behaviour's effects and how to control it. Ask something like “Aaron, are you aware that you trying to get Nick's attention is distracting Nick, all the students between you and Nick, and myself?” Links back to cognitive behavioural theory.

Gordon's “I messages” (Levin J & Nolan J, 2002)

A three-part statement comprising of a description of behaviour, its tangible effect on the class, how it makes the teacher feel. Links back to cognitive behavioural theory.

Direct Appeal (Levin J & Nolan J, 2002)

Make a direct, but courteous request to a student to change their behaviour. This only works if you adopt an assertive discipline approach and the students see you as in charge, otherwise the request will appear as a plea for compliance.

Reminder of Rules (Levin J & Nolan J, 2002)

The first step in an escalation process. Make sure you have an escalation plan before using this strategy. If misbehaviour continues, start enforcing the consequences in your escalation plan.

Glasser's Triplets (Levin J & Nolan J, 2002)

Three questions or better, three statements that ask/state about: current behaviour, the rules relating to that behaviour, the correct behaviour. Once again, students need to already know the class rules.

Explicit Redirection (Levin J & Nolan J, 2002)

Like direct appeal, but less courteous. EG, "stop walking around the classroom and stay in your chair". Be prepared to execute consequences.

"You have a choice" (Levin J & Nolan J, 2002)

The final step before consequences. The student must conform, or accept negative consequences. It's a last resort strategy and getting to this point in escalation doesn't do anything to help fix the underlying issues the student faces.

References

Teacher's TV Videos

Phil Beadle in "Argument Tennis" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr2xdjQPH4I>

David Torn in "Tough Love" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec0v4kzYkCY>

Nicola Lamb in "Girl Talk" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3OxKAxpOdo>

Amy Alexander in "Praise and Preparation" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkXRjrSsMQg>

Jane Wright in "Attention Seekers" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXhtwDK4oHw>

Teachers

David Crouch, 2016 – Principal of Renmark High School

Tamsin Martin, 2017 – History and research project teacher at Coomandook Area School

Zahra Pirvali, 2017 – Physics teacher at University Senior College.

Adam Deane, 2007 – English Teacher at Coomandook Area School

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