



Getting Started with the Exemplary Literacy Day

CLASSROOM VIGNETTE: Meet Ms. Patricia Tapia

After 10 years of teaching students to become better readers and writers, Ms. Tapia starts to question her practices and begins to realize that there are always better ways to improve instruction. She starts to move beyond thinking about literacy instruction as a special “block” and focuses more on organizing and managing literacy throughout the day. Her thoughts turn to working smarter and not harder, with a more responsive classroom that builds a community of learners and empowers the students to be active participants in the classroom. She reads about motivation theory and decides that the cornerstone of her instruction will be choice, challenge, social interaction, authenticity, and success.

A NEW WAY OF THINKING: MOVING BEYOND THE “READING BLOCK”

When this book was first discussed among the authors, many conversations took place about shifting our thinking about literacy as a “balanced” program to a more comprehensive approach with best practices evident throughout the day. We imagined a school day where a child could enter the classroom and experience high-quality literacy instruction across content areas, taking place in an energized, highly organized, and well-managed school environment.

One challenge teachers face is that while many try to take advantage of literacy professional development by attending workshops and conferences, reading professional books, taking coursework, and working with colleagues within professional learning communities (PLCs), the learning that results from these efforts is

often out of context and disjointed. Putting it all together to organize and manage an effective classroom makes all the difference. Our work within schools revealed that despite teachers' desire to learn and grow, their efforts to promote balanced literacy was frequently fragmented and inconsistent, with teachers attempting to implement best practices in somewhat disconnected ways.

AN EXEMPLARY LITERACY DAY

The "exemplary literacy day" was created as a result of professional development, research, and fieldwork conducted through the Rutgers Center for Literacy Development. The day was designed to provide a plan for using research-based best practices in literacy instruction. Each component was carefully selected and placed into an appropriate part of a daily schedule. Intentional instruction within these components provides students with experiences to build the skills needed to be successful as literate and critical thinkers. A comprehensive K–6 literacy day includes phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, writing, and motivation. The exemplary literacy day provides a consistent plan that is intended for use across diverse schools and districts.

This can be accomplished when teachers consistently understand and utilize the same terminology for reading and writing instruction. Many strategies for literacy development are interpreted in different ways. This book will help teachers to understand the practices in a consistent, standardized manner. Having a consistent format across grades and schools provides continuity between grades, which allows children to know what to expect when it comes to literacy learning. The skills included in the day are based on common standards that have been adopted and refined across the country.

It is important to understand that the exemplary literacy day is not a prepackaged program. Instead, it is a compilation of best practices that will allow teachers to use data and professional judgment to become experts in their craft. Research has proven that there is no program or material that is best for all children. It is the expertise of the teacher in diagnosing and prescribing instruction for every child that makes the difference.

Studies show that the more literacy instruction and practice children participate in, the more likely they are to do well in school and beyond. Research also tells us that less than 10% of students who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade will ever achieve grade-level expectations. They will continue to struggle. Therefore, literacy instruction must be a priority and happen all day long in school. To address these gaps, we know that teachers must utilize explicit literacy instruction across content areas that include, but are not limited to, social studies, math, science, art, music, physical education, and technology.

We assume that teachers will differentiate instruction and adapt the format of our design to meet the individual needs of children. Finally, the day was created to emphasize an urgency for learning, where precious school time is used efficiently and effectively.

Research has taught us that changing practice requires a well-designed professional development plan and a commitment of at least 3 years. This allows a plan to become sustainable, so that over a period of time school leaders and teachers witness the exemplary day becoming a foundation of the school culture.

In addition to an exemplary literacy organizational plan, the teaching of skills and implementation of practices will always need to be revisited and refined as new research emerges. Beyond the design of the exemplary day, expectations are that schools will determine appropriate intervention programs for strugglers, encourage family and community involvement, and provide after-school programs to close gaps in achievement. All plans must be flexible and open to change as they are used.

The following is an outline of the exemplary literacy day with definitions of each component. Appendix A at the end of the book presents a complete sample unit plan for a 2-day rollout of exemplary literacy instruction that matches this outline. Two additional features that are not included in the schedule below are discussed in the book: *classroom culture* and *physical environment*. These two vital elements cannot be overlooked, as the achievement of an exemplary literacy day is based in part on the culture and environment of a classroom.

The Exemplary K–6 Literacy Day

Note: Recommended times may need to be adjusted based on teachers' schedules.

Do-Now (10–15 minutes)

Upon arriving at school, children are to . . .

- Engage in an immediate independent or partner activity in reading or writing that sets the tone for the rest of the day.
- Practice skills and strategies previously taught and prepare for the day's lessons. For example, a teacher can decide to allow students to partner- or independently read three times a week and make entries in a writing journal twice a week.

Vocabulary Meeting (15–20 minutes)

- Students participate in an activity centered on a vocabulary-enriched message.
- Students collaborate to deepen their understanding of word meanings.

Reading Comprehension Workshop (time varies, 30–60 minutes)

- Students engage in a comprehension-focused mini-lesson where strategies are taught to help students master grade-appropriate comprehension skills.
- Time is set aside for independent/partner practice concentrating on the strategies and skills taught.
- The teacher confers with readers.
- The teacher and students participate in a group share.

Guided Reading and Literacy Work Stations (minimum of two rotations of 15–20 minutes each)

- Teachers meet with small, homogeneous groups of no more than six students to explicitly teach strategies and reinforce skills as needed.
- Children move through work stations to practice strategies and skills previously taught.
- An accountability piece exists at each literacy station.
- Literacy work stations often include listening (comprehension), word work (vocabulary and spelling), writing (independent or with partner), library (independent or with partner), and technology (skill-based programs).

Word-Work Session (15–20 minutes)

- Teachers provide explicit instruction in phonemic awareness (for early and emergent readers) or phonics/decoding (for emergent, transitional, and fluent readers).
- Students often engage in word sorts, word building, and word games.
- Programs vary according to school districts.

Writing Workshop (time varies, 30–60 minutes)

- Students engage in a writing-focused mini-lesson where strategies are taught to help students master grade-appropriate writing skills.
- Time is set aside for independent/partner practice concentrating on the strategies and skills taught.
- The teacher confers with writers.
- Teacher and students participate in a group share.

Interdisciplinary Project-Based Instruction (IPBI) (time varies)

- IPBI is a student-interest-based project that crosses disciplines.

- Long-term activities include research and the creation and completion of a project that demonstrates student learning.
- Reading and writing skills are embedded throughout the project.

Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

At the end of each school day, end on a positive note by saying to the students:

- “What did you learn today in reading/writing that is most important to you?”
- “You can choose to read a poem, riddle, joke, or short story, or to sing a song.”



Breaking Through the Block: Create an area in the classroom for posting a daily learning agenda that all students can see. Laminate cards with the components of an exemplary literacy day. If the agenda is posted on a whiteboard, use a marker to update what students will be learning within each of these components. Referring to the agenda will keep you and the students on task, while ensuring that literacy learning is evident throughout the school day.

CHOOSING OUR EXEMPLARY LITERACY TEACHER

Based on the review of studies regarding effective teachers (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998), researchers from the Literacy Research Association’s Teacher Education Research Study Group (Bahlmann Bollinger et al., 2016) developed a position statement that demonstrates that exemplary literacy teachers . . .

1. Understand the importance of home–school communication.
2. Engage students through small-group, whole-class, and cooperative learning activities.
3. Allow time for independent reading and writing.
4. Teach strategies and skills through authentic and scaffolded high-quality reading and writing instruction.
5. Teach strategies and skills explicitly and spontaneously.
6. Encourage self-regulation through a well-organized and managed classroom.
7. Integrate literacy across the content areas.
8. Have high expectations for all learners.
9. Create print-rich classroom environments.
10. Articulate their reasoning behind all instructional decisions made.

Based on these criteria, we selected an exemplary literacy teacher with whom we have worked. Each chapter begins with Ms. Tapia, a dual-language teacher in an urban school district in the New York metropolitan area, recognizing the needs of her students and researching how best to meet those needs. We will follow her on a journey of discovery as she puts the components of an exemplary literacy day to work for the benefit of her students. It is our hope that after reading this book teachers will feel well equipped and empowered to organize and manage the key components of a comprehensive and exemplary literacy day.

CLASSROOM VIGNETTE: Examining Classroom Culture

Now that Ms. Tapia is getting used to thinking “outside of the block,” she considers her classroom culture and wonders how she can effect change in this area. She recalls that a member of her grade-level team recently talked about changes he had made to his classroom culture after having read a book about the power of teacher language. She decides to bring the subject up at their next grade-level meeting. The other teacher allows her to borrow the book that changed his thinking and invites her into his room to observe his new way of speaking to children in action. She comes away from the observation of his classroom impressed by the fact that his students seem to be willing to work hard and strive for independence. She decides that it is time to read up on how he accomplished this and to introduce it in her own classroom.

WHAT IS CLASSROOM CULTURE?

A discussion of the culture of the classroom is critical when talking about organizing and managing a comprehensive literacy day. It is all well and good to establish an environment that is conducive to literacy learning. Without the teacher’s modeling and direct instruction in how a classroom functions as a community, however, none of this will work. It is incumbent upon us, as teachers, to be reflective and honest with ourselves as we plan to create our classroom community. To what degree do we need control? How much background noise is acceptable? How do we truly hope and expect our students to behave? Prior planning is the key ingredient to creating a thoughtfully planned community. We need to pre-determine what is most important to us as teachers. Are we developing children who can spit out facts? Do we value student input if it varies from our own? What values do we wish to emphasize, and why? A wise teacher reflects both before and after he or she has made decisions. In fact, reflection (for both teachers and students) should be built into every day. When we reflect honestly, we can learn from our errors, replicate what goes well, and meet the needs of all learners within the literacy classroom.

USING LANGUAGE TO CREATE A LITERACY COMMUNITY: WHAT AND WHY?

A classroom is a community of learners, but that community does not develop by itself. Teacher language can encourage the sense of community in a classroom by using inclusive language indicating shared goals (“we” rather than “I”), and requiring that everyone in the room demonstrates and receives respect. It behooves us as teachers to reflect upon the tone and words we habitually use in order to eradicate negativity and focus on language that empowers students to become productive and respectful members of the community. The goal is that every reader and writer feels valued and part of that special classroom community.

A true literacy learning community is based upon the fact that learning is a social activity, and that the teacher is there to create a supportive environment within that social network. The goal here is to “provide children with the means and the desire to construct themselves as responsibly literate democratic citizens” (Johnston, 2004, p. 80). Every student in every classroom has something to contribute. When we plan for those contributions and take them seriously, the child becomes more aware of him- or herself as a learner.



Building a community of readers by posting “selfies” with favorite books.

USING LANGUAGE TO CREATE A LITERACY COMMUNITY: HOW?

Working with children to demonstrate and require respect means that teachers must be completely aware of their own phrasing, body language, and tone. Denton (2015, p. 12) proposes that five guidelines provide the foundation for all teacher language:

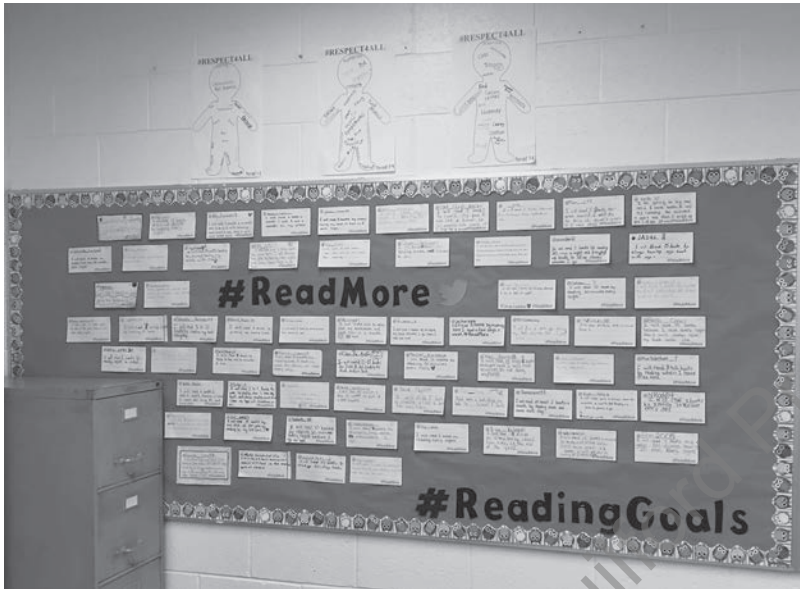
1. Be direct and genuine—for example: “We want everyone in our room to feel welcome and part of our reading group. As we gather on the carpet for today’s lesson, make sure that all readers have a comfortable space.”
2. Convey faith in children’s abilities and intentions—for example: “I know you can find a kind way to say that about your writing partner.”
3. Focus on action—for example: “Show me how it would look if you helped your station partner solve a problem.”
4. Keep it brief.
5. Know when to be silent.

Our primary goal is to obtain and keep the trust of the children in our charge. With trust comes risk taking, which is the basis of growth. Children learn that they can trust us “when we say what we mean and mean what we say” (Denton, 2015, p. 13). We give directions as clearly as possible, using statements (e.g., “Let’s all find a comfortable place to stop in our books”) rather than questions (e.g., “Can you put your books down?”). We demonstrate our sense of humor, but do not allow it to slide toward sarcasm. Our tone of voice will demonstrate whether we are serious or sarcastic about a statement. “You chose a great book there” could be interpreted in many ways, so our tone of voice must be calm and matter-of-fact. We match our body and verbal language, so that we don’t tell a child that we are listening as our eyes scan the room for some other unrelated purpose instead. We focus our attention on the student so he or she knows we are listening attentively. Most importantly, we follow through. When we see or hear a rule infraction, we stop, use an agreed-upon signal to get students’ attention, and address the problem quickly and quietly.



Management Tip: Create an attention getter for your students. For example, the teacher can say “Hocus pocus!” The class responds, “It’s time to focus!” Move beyond clapping patterns to get students’ attention and seek input from your students—for example: “When it’s time to gather on the carpet, which of my attention getters is your favorite?”

Language is powerful. We can use it to teach our students that they have potential, and to expand what they think they can be. We use it to convey positive



At the beginning of the school year, students set reading goals and post them.

assumptions and expectations (e.g., “I knew you could beat yesterday’s time on task for independent reading. You are within reach of your reading goal!”). We look for opportunities to notice and mention the good things that are happening in the classroom. This shows children not only that we have confidence in them, but that they can also have confidence in themselves as learners. We listen to ourselves speak and reflect on what we say and how we say it. We become more conscious of the wait time, eye contact, and the types of feedback we give to boys versus girls.

Focusing on action means we connect abstract terms (respect, cooperation) with concrete behaviors. We describe children’s behaviors instead of their characters. When we create an anchor chart headed “Respect,” we describe the behaviors we’re looking for:

- What does protecting your reading time look like?
- What does protecting your reading time sound like?
- What does protecting your reading time feel like?

Children need us to translate abstract terminology into actions. It can be frustrating to deal with a student who consistently seems intent upon not following a rule or following through on a responsibility, but it is not helpful to tell the student, “You don’t care about your work.” This can lead the student to believe that we have low expectations of his or her character. If, instead, we describe our

observed behaviors and ask what is going on, or if we describe the desired behaviors, we allow the student to understand that he or she can achieve them. Our words can contain assumptions and judgments stated indirectly—for example: “If you really cared, you’d study harder.” This assumption forces a student to be defensive. If, instead, we describe the problematic behavior—for example, “I’ve noticed that you have not handed in your reading log this week. How can I help? Is everything okay?”—we allow the student the opportunity to explain without feeling defensive.

Learning to be brief when discussing infractions is also helpful. Long explanations can drown children in words, and, even when delivered mildly, make a student feel as though he or she is being yelled at or lectured. Pupil attention can drift during such lengthy talks. Better to ask, “Who can tell us the rule about handling books in the library?” If the teacher and the students have taught and practiced the expected routines and procedures, this reminder will be enough. Leaving out warnings (e.g., “If this continues, we might lose free time”) is also recommended. They’re not effective, and sound like threats to the ears of children. Threats tell students that we don’t believe they can do well, emphasize the teacher’s power over student behavior, and make the correction of an error feel like a punishment. Our goal is to grow student capability to self-correct, and not to rely on adult threats (Denton, 2015).

A teacher’s skillful use of silence allows student voices to be heard, thinking to be done, and conclusions to be reached.



Management Tip: Provide wait time by designating a 3- to 5-second pause before students are allowed to raise their hands to answer a question. Give everyone a moment to think. Put up your hand to silently remind children they have 5 seconds of thinking time as you count down on your fingers slowly.

We can also model this action by pausing ourselves to gather our own thoughts before we respond to student questions. Research has shown that a slower pace of talking combined with steady eye contact improves literacy and reduces behavior problems. The faster we speak, the more we fit into a specific period of time, but we must ask ourselves how much of what we say so quickly is being retained by the students.

Other times to recognize the power of silence include truly listening to students as they speak. Listening means keeping silence and maintaining eye contact until the speaker has completed his or her thought. In this way, we model the respectful interactions we hope to attain in our classrooms. Interruption has become the norm, but we can model and expect something different.

It is important on several levels to resist the impulse to repeat directions. We give the direction once, allow time for questions, and stop. *The more teachers*

remind students, the less the children rely on themselves to remember. Of course, this doesn't mean that we allow confusion.



Management Tip: When a teacher sees students failing to recall a responsibility he or she can say, “Stop . . . look . . . and listen,” and then ask the class what they should be doing at that moment. We should make efforts to help students remember directions rather than repeating them. Stating directions only once also requires students to recall that they can learn to do anything (Denton, 2015).

USING STUDENT PRAISE: WHAT AND WHY?

A teacher is also consciously aware of his or her own beliefs about child development, learning, and intelligence. When he or she uses the language of “growth mindset” (Dweck, 2006), he or she demonstrates his or her conviction that perseverance and determination matter more than what we currently call “natural ability.” Growth mindset is defined by Mary Cay Ricci (2013) as “a belief system that suggests that one’s intelligence can be grown or developed with persistence, effort, and a focus on learning” (p. 3). This definition requires that educators change not only the way they look at student abilities, but also the manner in which they praise children. The shift from “You’re so smart” to “I can see how hard you worked to prepare that excellent book talk” changes a child’s perspective about intelligence and hard work.

USING STUDENT PRAISE: HOW?

Praising growth and persistence allows students to learn from failure, which eventually encourages them to take on more challenging work. When students persist through challenges, they build resilience. Sending messages that value effort stimulates children’s sense of agency and reinvigorates their desire to persevere (e.g., “You can be so proud of your improvement in reading this month. I know how hard you’ve worked on finishing a book that you’ve started”).

How to Give Praise

- Name the specific behavior.
- Use a warm and professional tone of voice.
- Emphasize description over personal approval.
- Consider asking a question to extend student thinking.

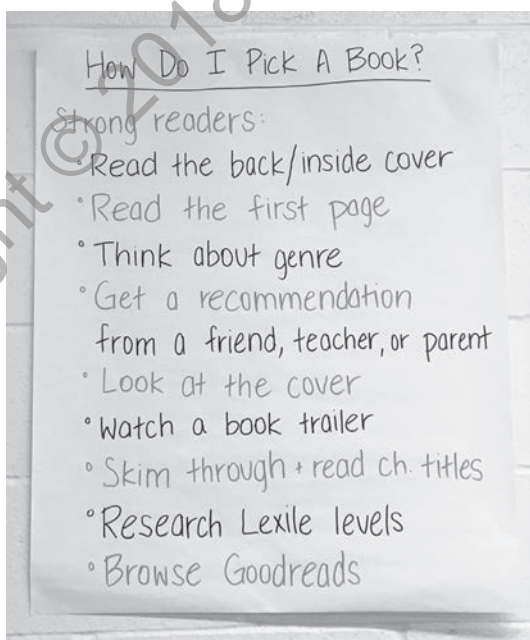
“The library corner looks wonderful. I see that you remembered to put books back neatly where they belonged. Why is this so important?”

Reinforcing language, which refers to naming the strengths we see in students, requires that we observe children to catch them doing something well (Denton, 2015, p. 90).

Find positives to name in all students. Avoid naming some individuals as examples for others. For instance, instead of saying, “I love how Trinity and Kerlin have cleaned up and are ready to move on,” say “Many of you are remembering the rules about cleaning up our literacy stations” (Denton, 2015, pp. 93, 94).

USING LANGUAGE TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP SELF-CONTROL: WHAT AND WHY?

To develop self-control, students need to have a growing sense of autonomy and competence. They also need to have a sense that they are controlled by themselves rather than by a force from outside, and a sense that they are capable of achieving desired outcomes (Deci & Flaste, 1995; Denton, 2015). This thought melds perfectly with having a growth mindset in that it reenergizes students to believe that they can create their own futures through dedicated work—for example: “I noticed that your group moved desks together to make conversation around the reading passage easier. What a great way to get everyone involved!”



An anchor chart for assisting students with book selection.

USING LANGUAGE TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP SELF-CONTROL: HOW?

A teacher's specificity, using simple and direct language, is the basis of that growing sense of self-regulation. Students learn from adults that they are capable of monitoring and changing their own behavior when we use a calm, but firm voice to remind them—for example: “Show me how you shop for books in our classroom library” or “What should you do when you have finally chosen a book?” (Denton, 2015, p. 69).

TEACHER LANGUAGE: WHAT AND WHY?

In order to be most effective, the language that teachers use is purposeful, empowering, and respectful. Denton (2015) states that teacher language can support children in several ways. Remember that a teacher's word choices should promote good learning habits, encourage children to learn cooperatively, and model the expected language that students should soon use as their own.

TEACHER LANGUAGE: HOW?

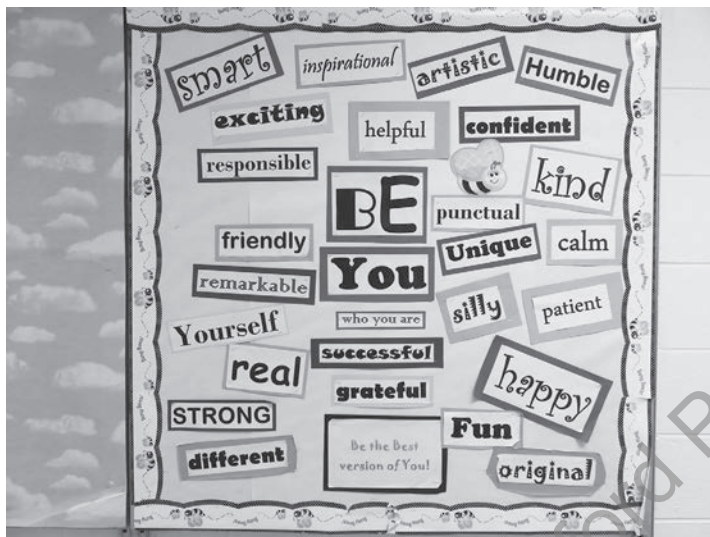
When a student hears specific, positive feedback about work or behavior (e.g., “Your use of powerful verbs had a strong impact on your story” or “I have noticed that you're trying hard to make good choices about how you protect your reading time”) instead of generic comments (e.g., “Good work today!” or “Good job!”), this empowers the student to replicate and build on what has been done. It also models language that the student can use when working in a small group or with reading and writing partners.

A teacher who asks open-ended questions stimulates both the imagination and the self-efficacy of his or her students. Asking “Did anyone notice what the character said to make us believe that?” provokes children to see “what kinds of things might be noticed, and to name the things being noticed” (Johnston, 2004,

The Benefits of Empowering Teacher Language

Your readers and writers will . . .

1. Gain academic skills and knowledge.
2. Develop self-control.
3. Build their sense of community.



A bulletin board with empowering statements about students as individuals.

p. 13). This eventually leads to more of the talking within the classroom being done by children.

Asking “How else could the author have stated that?” encourages children to understand that the possibility of choice exists, and that learning itself is a matter of choice. A teacher who is able to query, “How did you know that was the statement of the theme in the story?” demonstrates an understanding that student statements are the result of intellectual attempts. The question “How could we check to find another answer?” gives students a sense of responsibility for locating evidence for ideas. A comment like “Do you agree with what Alicia said about the relationship between the two characters, and why?” opens up what is said in the classroom to debate, which shows that, in a democratic society, it is okay to disagree, as long as we have evidence.

Johnston (2004) reminds us that talk is the largest tool in the teacher’s arsenal, and that it can be used to help children “make sense of learning, literacy life, and themselves” (p. 4).

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT: WHAT AND WHY?

Behavior management is a crucial part of a classroom that works. Without it, little learning can occur. If a teacher is often called upon to “put out fires,” precious learning time is lost. In classrooms that work, rules and routines have been

established. The teacher demonstrates respect for all pupils by learning about students' lives and being sensitive to their voiced concerns. Expectations for positive behavior must be enforced fairly.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT: HOW?

It is especially important in today's diverse classrooms to recognize and value the story of each student. Culturally responsive teachers (Bensman, 2000, quoted in Gay, 2010, p. 51, summarized here) . . .

- Foster warmth, intimacy, unity, continuity, safety, and security.
- Help students develop a consciousness of their values and beliefs and what they are capable of becoming.
- Build confidence, courage, courtesy, compassion, and competence among all students.
- Are academically demanding, but personally supportive and encouraging.
- Treat everyone with equal human worth.
- Acknowledge differences among students without pejorative judgments.
- Prepare students to understand and deal realistically with social realities, along with possibilities for transformation.
- Teach ethnic, racial, and cultural knowledge, identity, and pride.
- Provide intellectually challenging and relevant learning experiences.

Weinstein and Romano (2015) add that, as teachers, “We are responsible for all the children in the class—not just for those who are easy to teach” (p. 140). As such, we also prepare to work with English language learners, children with disabilities, children who are troubled, those who are living in poverty, and those who are gifted.

A clear set of responsibilities begins behavior management. Once students understand their responsibilities, it is up to the teacher to follow through with consistency and professionalism.

HANDLING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR: WHAT AND WHY?

Of course, there will be times when students misbehave, which can threaten the safety of or impede the learning of other children. At these times teachers will need to use reminding language to help students recall classroom expectations. Denton says that these classroom reminders “prompt children to do the remembering



The teacher provides individual attention and warmth centered on reading tasks.

themselves” (2015, p. 108). She gives several examples of reminders phrased as questions—for example: “What did we learn about choosing an appropriate book for independent reading?” and “What are some things you can do today to protect your independent reading time?” When we do this kind of “reminding,” we are calling upon our students to recall what we taught and rehearsed earlier in the school year.



Management Tip: Many teachers draft anchor charts with their expectations at the beginning of the school year. After long holiday breaks or observed points throughout the school year these charts may need to be revisited with the class.

With persistent misbehavior, Denton (2015) recommends that our language become even more “direct, specific, and explicit” (p. 130). Teachers must address the student by name and state not the misbehavior, but the desired behavior. We should keep our statement “brief, calm, and respectful” (p. 130) and should “phrase the redirection as a statement” (p. 132), not as a question. When students are calm, we remind and reinforce them, so that they make the connections between abstract terms (like “respect” and “ready to work”) and concrete behavior. When they are actively misbehaving, emotionally distraught, or threatening the safety of others, we need to step in to take immediate action using exact words.

The “must do” for teachers in these situations is to stop and think before speaking. We want to remember to name the desired behavior, not the behavior we see. It’s far more effective to say, “Sasha and Marc, it’s time to work quietly now,” than to say, “There’s too much noise in here. Stop talking so much. You know better than this” (Denton, 2015, p. 132).

We also do not want to soften serious redirections, so we use statements, not questions (“Line up now,” in lieu of “Could we all line up now?”). For the same reason, we don’t use “please” and “thank you” when we are redirecting behaviors. Those pleasantries are used to indicate that someone is doing us a favor. Expected behavior is not a favor.

Redirecting student behavior is simple and serious. Because of that, we need to follow through by observing the behavior of the redirected children, and giving more direct feedback when it is necessary. We must also have logical consequences in mind if students hear our redirection, but do not change their behavior. We avoid, however, naming the consequence while giving the redirection. We have taught logical consequences early in the school year and at other intervals, when students and teacher were both calm, and we have responded consistently throughout the school year. Following a redirection with a warning or threat can lead to power struggles and can communicate to our children that we don’t believe they can choose to behave well.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have emphasized the importance of embracing a comprehensive literacy program where students learn to become better readers and writers throughout the entire school day. Implementation of the exemplary day components allows the exceptional teacher to go seamlessly from one activity to the next while keeping students motivated and engaged to learn.

The power of teacher language cannot be overstated. It influences how students see themselves and how they learn. It reinforces their belief in themselves as learners. The language we use can set teachers up as givers of knowledge and students as receivers of knowledge, or it can reinforce the idea that children are constructors of their own learning, and foster a healthy literacy learning climate.

The remainder of this book provides specific guidance for organizing and managing the exemplary literacy day in grades K–6. Each component of the exemplary literacy day is discussed, and we provide a clear pathway for where teachers can go next.



Based on getting started with the exemplary literacy day, you should take time to reflect on the following:

- ☐ Moving beyond the “reading block,” what is your philosophy of comprehensive literacy instruction?
- ☐ What components of the outlined exemplary day are already in place within your classroom and school community?
- ☐ In what ways can you enhance your practice to include these components within the day?
- ☐ Think about the indicators of teaching excellence and identify a colleague in your school community with whom you could work to reflect about and improve on your literacy practices.
- ☐ Reflect on the language that you use to praise students and their work.
- ☐ Reflect on the language that you use to redirect students who misbehave in your classroom.