

Preface

Welcome to *Elementary Classroom Management: A Student-Centered Approach to Leading and Learning!* This book provides an introduction to student-centered classroom management practices and the theories that support them. It was written with preservice teachers in classroom management and methods courses in mind, as well as for inservice teachers who are working to improve their classroom management practices. The ideas in this book, however, can be applied to a variety of settings. After all, the purpose of classroom management and therefore this book is to create classroom spaces that facilitate academic and social learning, as well as dispositions that foster lifelong learning.

Classroom management, a great influence on students, is a main reason many new teachers get out of the classroom early in their careers. Indeed, our schools and students deserve teachers who know content but also pedagogy, classroom management, and how to work with children who present special needs. Preservice teachers are often taught “tricks” to use for certain management problems rather than to understand the issues of the classroom and school, the students as individuals, and the pedagogical choices that profoundly influence their academic and social success. Tricks often work for a few days or months, and then the teacher is left reacting to problems that could have been prevented. This book is designed to help teachers think about and reflect on why things happen in classrooms, understand the connections between classroom management and learning, begin to utilize pedagogical structures that facilitate success and thus management, and finally design classrooms that work for students who may need something extra.

Many current textbooks on classroom management follow a model of telling readers what to do in specific instances, emphasizing what to do *to* students when they _____ (fill in the blank), or a model of sharing many different theories on classroom management. This book provides readers the opportunity to understand classroom management theories through research, stories, and cases and then asks them to construct their own philosophy of classroom management and begin to apply it in the classroom. Just as we cannot teach students by merely pouring information into their heads, we cannot ask teachers to implement effective classroom management plans by merely reading about theories or trying to memorize what to do in specific instances. Teachers must have the opportunity to understand the theories that shape students' academic and social learning; to think, reflect, and try strategies, structures, and tools and make them their own; and to realize that constructing a classroom management plan that works requires continued learning even after they are finished reading the textbook. In other words, constructing classroom management plans is about constructing meaning through knowledge, experience, and reflection.

Goals of the Book

There are five main goals that create the framework of this book:

1. Thinking and reflecting about key issues of classroom management, such as autonomy, belonging, competency, democratic communities for learners, and motivation. To create effective classroom management plans, teachers must understand *what* they are doing and *why* they are doing it. In my experience, many teachers think classroom management is about controlling behaviors. Instead, this book focuses on why students behave the way they do and encourages readers to pay attention to and address these needs with a variety of structures, strategies, and tools.

2. Thinking, reflecting, and designing pedagogical structures and classroom procedures that, when used, address the key issues of classroom management in very practical and innovative ways. In some ways, the education field is asking new and veteran teachers to teach in ways that they have never experienced. Indeed, many of us grew up in classrooms where our names were put on the board with chances for three checks before we had to go to the principal's office. It is very difficult to break out of what we have experienced. This book was designed to help readers resee classroom management, students with individual needs, and what it means to learn in general by providing examples of flexible structures that can be transformed into their own creations yet still promote the key issues described in other chapters. Some of these include cooperative workshops, thinking routines, and classroom meetings.

3. Thinking and reflecting about individual children, including those with needs that require something special in the classroom, so they can be socially and academically successful. New and veteran teachers are often the most worried about

students who may need them to try something different in the classroom. It is very easy to worry about disruptions, students who are seemingly unable to learn, and being out of control. This book was written to help readers understand and learn about individual students in the classroom, as well as to give them unique strategies and structures, such as language and literature, that will assist them. Perhaps most important, it provides an entire chapter dedicated to working with colleagues, parents, and outside resources when the strategies they are trying don't work. I hope this book encourages teachers to know individual students' needs, to create exciting opportunities for all students to learn, and to ask for help when they need it.

4. Thinking and reflecting about how managing the physical classroom, as well as the spaces outside the classroom, influences learning. There are many influences on academic and social learning, including the physical classroom itself and the procedures used to manage all of the various spaces in which students learn throughout the day. Once again, it is not enough to tell teachers what to do. Instead, this book was designed to help readers ask questions and reflect on where they will put items in the classroom, how they will help students walk down the hall, and who will be in charge of materials.

5. Thinking and reflecting about creating a classroom management plan that reflects the teacher's beliefs and philosophies so the plan doesn't change with each new problem or issue. We often behave like windblown flowers in the world of education. We bloom every time the latest, greatest trick comes out yet blow away when any problem arises that the trick doesn't fix. I hope teachers who read this book will develop some roots that will help them continue to bloom even when the wind comes. Teachers must understand what they believe about classroom management and how students learn and then create a plan that reflects those beliefs. I put reflection tools in each chapter and then created an entire chapter that addresses readers' core beliefs, their boundaries, and opportunities to keep learning.

Pedagogical Features of the Text

Learning about classroom management requires understanding the key issues that influence classroom management; actively experiencing practical strategies, structures, and tools; and thinking and reflecting in the past, present, and future. The pedagogical features of this text were designed to assist readers do all three.

Stories, Cases, Research

Throughout the text, stories from real classrooms are connected to the latest research on topics influencing classroom management. In addition, cases are included for readers to grapple with and think about what they might do. Key words are bolded and put into a Glossary.

Practical Strategies, Structures, and Tools

There are practical ideas throughout the text that readers can immediately take into classrooms and use. These practical ideas are connected with helpful questions that readers can answer as they begin to use these ideas.

Collections

I encourage all teachers to keep collections of everything from lesson ideas to brain tools they might use. In addition, I have included some collections for readers to take and make their own, including Internet sources, children's literature, and thinking routines. Some charts are also included so readers may begin creating their own collections. For example, Chapter 11 includes a chart they can use to list their school district's policies.

Activities to Try

At the end of each chapter, a section of activities to try is included. Readers may want to try these activities on their own or in classes. Each activity to try includes a mini action research project so they can continue to look at classroom management issues systematically and deeply.

Reflections

Throughout the text, there are questions helping readers go beyond their own experiences and think further about key issues and stories. There are also reflection tools, such as an opportunity to write a classroom management biography in Chapter 1 and a relationship diagram in Chapter 10, that will help them reflect on where to place learning areas in a classroom.

Letters From Master Teachers

Twenty-four master teachers took time to write friendly, supportive advice letters for this book. They are real teachers who really do the things discussed in this book. I hope they provide a sense that these ideas truly can be realized.

Organization of the Text

Section I. A Vision for Classroom Management

This section consists of three chapters on key ideas influencing academic and social learning that will allow readers to create a vision for classroom management. I put this section at the beginning because it is important for teachers to understand the influences on learning and classroom management before creating a plan that works for them. These chapters will become the readers' base for a philosophy that they will come back to throughout the book. **Chapter 1** introduces readers to the "what" and "why" questions of classroom management, as well as the need for all children to have autonomy, belonging, and competency in the classrooms they attend. **Chapter 2** introduces readers to democratic communities in the classroom and the notion that, rather than trying to change students, we need to change classrooms so learners are successful. Many people have misconceptions about democratic classrooms, and this chapter will help readers see what it is and is not. **Chapter 3** is devoted completely to motivation, a topic often left out of classroom management texts yet one of the most important ideas to understand when it comes to creating a classroom where students are motivated to learn rather than create problems.

Section II. Structures and Tools for Classroom Management

This section includes three chapters on pedagogical structures that will help teachers give all students autonomy, belonging, competency, motivation, and an opportunity to belong to a democratic community. Why put pedagogical structures in a classroom management book? Classroom management must be about all ideas that help children learn and succeed socially. Pedagogical structures that provide opportunities for the key ideas listed above are invaluable in creating classrooms where learners are successful. The first structure, included in [Chapter 4](#), is called a cooperative workshop and will allow teachers to design lessons and units within a flexible structure, providing “juicy” problems and meaningful group work. It can also be used to develop differentiated stations. [Chapter 5](#) introduces a pedagogical structure Ritchhart (2002) calls a thinking routine. Sometimes we forget that classrooms should be places where students are thinking rather than just looking busy, quiet, and good. Thinking routines help create thinking classrooms. [Chapter 6](#) is all about pedagogical structures that help teachers manage a whole classroom of students. Class meetings, data collection, and graphing are some examples of structures mentioned in this chapter.

Section III. Creating Classrooms That Meet the Needs of Individual Children

This section includes three chapters on working with students who need something special to succeed in the classroom. This might be a student who is just having a bad day, who doesn't speak English, or who is physically or mentally handicapped. The important idea from this section is that teachers should work to do something different that may help the learner succeed. [Chapter 7](#) is about identifying what individual children need. Sometimes we get stuck on labels, and this chapter encourages teachers to really know their students and find creative solutions to help them. [Chapter 8](#) is all about language and literature that teachers can use to help students who struggle in the classroom. Sometimes using a story or just a different way of phrasing something can help students. [Chapter 9](#) is about all of the resources teachers have inside and outside of their buildings that can help them when a student has a special need that they just aren't able to provide. I hope this chapter encourages especially new teachers to ask for help when they need it.

Section IV. Making a Classroom Management Plan Your Own Inside and Outside

This section is about making a plan for classroom management inside and outside of the classroom. Instead of giving them “right” answers, this section really works to help readers answer “right” questions. [Chapter 10](#) is about the physical nature of the classroom and setting it up so all of the ideas in previous chapters can be achieved. Several questions about room arrangement, materials, and aesthetics will help readers determine the design of the classroom. [Chapter 11](#) is about managing all of the places children go outside of the classroom. Whether it is the Internet, the playground, or a field trip, readers will begin to create plans for each place. [Chapter 12](#) is about making a classroom management plan that works for the individual reader. Although it is the last chapter of this book, it is really the

beginning of the journey into creating a classroom management plan. Readers will come away with their core beliefs and boundaries, as well as ways to have their own autonomy, belonging, and competency in the classroom.

Ancillary Materials

In addition to the text, ancillary materials further support and enhance the learning goals of *Elementary Classroom Management: A Student-Centered Approach to Leading and Learning*.

Instructors' Resources CD

This CD offers the instructor a variety of resources that supplement the book material, including video clips (also included on the Web-based student study site) with discussion questions, PowerPoint lecture slides, and test questions. Additional resources include teaching tips, sample syllabi, and Web resources. To obtain a copy of this CD, please contact Customer Service at 800-818-7243.

Web-Based Student Study Site



www.sagepub.com/kwilliamsstudy

The Web-based student study site provides a comprehensive selection of resources to enhance students' understanding of the book's content. The site includes study materials such as video clips, practice tests, flashcards, and suggested readings. Other resources include "Learning From SAGE Journal Articles," and additional activities created by the author.