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Management techniques for Effective Teaching

Nancy J. Magee
University of Northern Iowa

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Management techniques for Effective Teaching

Abstract

Discipline and management are frequently cited as the greatest dilemma facing public schools today. In the Annual Gallop Poll of Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, respondents consistently ranked discipline as the major problem confronting American education. For 16 of the 17 years, the United States public has ranked school discipline as the number-one educational problem in the public school system. School teachers in the United States reported that discipline interfered with their teaching to a moderate or great extent (Bauer, 1985). Brophy and Putnam (1978) listed classroom management as the first or second major concern among teachers. Studies indicate that few teachers feel prepared to deal with the issues of maintaining and organizing a classroom so that it operates smoothly (Brophy & Putnam, 1978; Emmer, et al., 1979; Paine, 1983).

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Nancy J. Magee

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Norman L. McCumsey

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Adviser

Robert H. Decker

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Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper

Norman L. McCumsey

July 27 1987
Date/Received

Head, Department of Educational
Administration and Counseling

Discipline and management are frequently cited as the greatest dilemma facing public schools today. In the Annual Gallop Poll of Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, respondents consistently ranked discipline as the major problem confronting American education. For 16 of the 17 years, the United States public has ranked school discipline as the number-one educational problem in the public school system. School teachers in the United States reported that discipline interfered with their teaching to a moderate or great extent (Bauer, 1985). Brophy and Putnam (1978) listed classroom management as the first or second major concern among teachers. Studies indicate that few teachers feel prepared to deal with the issues of maintaining and organizing a classroom so that it operates smoothly (Brophy & Putnam, 1978; Emmer, et al., 1979; Paine, 1983).

Despite these facts, few states mention behavior management in certification regulations and few colleges or universities require courses in classroom discipline. Because of this, management and organization are among the most frequently requested topics for teachers' inservice, concern of school administrators, and have recently attracted more attention for teacher educators and researchers (Evertson, et al, 1983). According to Evertson, Emmer, Sanford, and Clements (1983) students frequently do not receive instruction

in classroom management and do not acquire a clear conception of overall management tasks that a teacher faces. Despite the general stress upon the importance of classroom management there is very little systematic theory or empirical research on the topic (Weber & Roff, 1980).

Present literature has highlighted the need to stress prevention over remediation. The skills most crucial to success in managing a classroom involve planning, organizing, and maintaining a learning environment that minimizes the need to deal with problems in the first place (Kounin, 1970).

In contrast to this, many of the classroom management approaches used by educators have been reactive; their procedures are applied only after the problem behavior has occurred (Paine, 1983). With this approach, the teacher waits for problems to arise and then reacts to them. The assumption of prevention approaches is that teachers can begin to plan and implement effective discipline and management strategies at the beginning of the year or before to provide circumstances that will motivate students to behave properly rather than waiting for the problems to occur (Brophy & Putnam, 1978). Doyle (1985) asserted that the approach to classroom organization and management which is most likely to succeed is a preventive one, in which a majority of potential problems

are anticipated and prepared for by the teacher before the year begins.

The beginning of school is an important time for classroom management because students learn behaviors, attitudes, and work habits that will affect them the rest of the school year. The intent is to create a classroom climate that helps children feel secure and prevent problems from occurring (Evertson, et al, 1984). Effective classroom management begins from the moment the first child enters the classroom (Chamberlin, 1971).

The influence of initial teaching activities upon the remainder of the school year has long been assumed by educators. As early as 1932, Waller observed that the first day of school, or the first class meeting, is all-important in determining the success or failure of the school year (Emmer, et al., 1979). A book on management published in 1907 by Bagley gave considerable coverage to initial activities, including a series of prescriptive statements for the first day of school.

Only a few studies have been conducted on the beginning of the year management strategies. In spite of clear practical and theoretical rationale for studying classroom processes at their inception, research on teaching typically has focused

on behavior after the school year has begun without observations of classrooms at the beginning of the year.

Although in the research that is available, most authors expressed agreement on the importance of a preventative approach to management with emphasis on starting the first day of school (Brophy & Putnam, 1978; Emmer, et al., 1979; Doyle, 1985; Paine, 1983). A study conducted in 1980 by Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson, indicated that effective classroom managers spend a large amount of time in the fall instructing students in classroom rules, procedures, and monitoring, resulting in clearer expectations for appropriate student behaviors (Pittman, 1985).

The decisions a teacher makes before the year begins has important consequences for the success of a proper learning environment (Eberle, 1984). The beginning of the year is an excellent time for teachers to use their role as classroom leader to present appropriate behavior, and is an excellent time to communicate clear expectations, rules, and consequences (Evertson & Emmer, 1982). According to research done by Weber and Roff (1983) effective classroom groups are identified as fostering reasonable, accurate, and clearly understood expectations.

The major emphasis of this paper will be to identify how effective teachers begin the year and what basic

management principles underlie their teaching activities. Any extensive research of classroom management would incorporate many areas. Due to a limited focus, this paper will address only behavior management strategies, specifically rules, procedures, and monitoring at the beginning of the school year.

One of the major concerns of both classroom teachers and researchers relating to classroom management at the initiation of the school year is establishing rules and procedures for behavior during the first few weeks of school (Emmer, et al., 1980). At the beginning of the school year, effective teachers showed evidence of careful planning and detailed thinking about rules and procedures and student behavior in their classroom. According to a study done by Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1980) effective teachers explained rules and procedures clearly with examples and reasons for the rules on the first day of school. There is a wide agreement among researchers on the importance of establishing classroom rules and procedures (Doyle, 1985; Paine, 1983; Emmer, et al., 1979). Teachers typically spent considerable time during the first week explaining, teaching, and reminding students of the rules (Brophy & Putnam, 1978). A few minutes spent reviewing rules and procedures, backed by occasional reminders helped students learn what to do,

how to do it smoothly, and eliminated many potential management problems for the rest of the year (Emmer, et al., 1979).

Not all rules and procedures were discussed initially, only those which were needed for beginning activities. Children were taught what they needed to know about using the room, but were not overloaded with information (Emmer, et al., 1980). Rules pertaining to use of the bathroom, storage areas, pencil sharpener, lining up and passing in the hallways should be taught on the first day of school (Evertson & Emmer, 1982). Good and Brophy (1978) recommended that rules be minimized and phased in terms of general qualitative aspects of behavior rather than specific do's and don't's. Maintaining flexibility in applying rules allows teachers to adopt to situational differences.

Research shows that effective teachers had carefully thought-out procedures for getting assistance, contacting the teacher, turning work in, and standards for conduct during seatwork, group work, and whole class activities. Students were given practice in classroom procedures, including responding to signals, receiving feedback, and having appropriate behavior acknowledged. Teachers explained, discussed rationales, demonstrated, rehearsed, practiced, reviewed, and retaught as needed (Evertson, et al., 1983).

Prepared teachers knew what children needed to function in the classroom setting and they proceeded to teach these skills as part of the procedures at the beginning of the school year. Getting the year off to a good start, teachers may have to show students what to do and give them practice doing it rather than telling them what to do (Evertson & Emmer, 1982). Teachers should demonstrate desired behavior whenever possible.

The first day should be planned for maximum contact with the children. Until rules and procedures were well established, teachers relied on whole-group activities that allowed them to stay in charge of all the students (Emmer, et al., 1980). According to the research available, effective teachers worked on rules and procedures until the children learned them, and initially stressed socialization skills before content.

In addition to establishing rules and procedures, effective teachers monitored students closely, dealt with problems immediately, and did not ignore deviations from classroom rules. The usefulness of this type of "with-itness" at the beginning of the year before a pattern of inappropriate behavior becomes established is evident (Kounin, 1970). Kounin found that a teacher's ability to exhibit with-itness behaviors is directly related to student on-task behavior. Kounin

observed that a teacher's success in classroom management, defined in terms of high levels of student work involvement and low levels of disruption, depended on the teacher's ability to monitor a classroom. To accomplish this task, successful managers were aware of what was happening in their classrooms and were able to handle two or more events simultaneously (Doyle, 1985).

According to Brophy and Putnam (1978) effective teachers station themselves physically so that they can monitor all of the students, scanning the class frequently to keep track of what is going on, and when working with individuals or small groups then intervene when necessary to prevent minor inattention from escalating into major disruptions. Monitoring encourages a teacher to move about the classroom and engage in brief conferences with individual students, which in turn provides individualized instruction or feedback (McDaniel, 1986).

For effective monitoring to occur teachers need to maintain eye contact with all the students as much as possible, scan the classroom frequently, and speak to all students in the class. Teachers should move around the room during seatwork and watch for a few minutes at the beginning of seatwork, if problems are noted, then the teacher can deal with them immediately (Emmer, et al., 1979; Duke, 1982; Brophy

& Putnam, 1978). Boynton, DiGeronimo and Gustafson (1985) stress the importance of moving about the classroom and avoid being "desk bound." A basic skill for a teacher, according to Chamberlin (1971) is to see what is going on in front of him/her and still be aware of what is happening on both sides. The best view is a standing position. The teacher must see and be seen.

From the research data available, there is a need for more teacher training and development in the area of school planning for the beginning of the school year. Information about effective management techniques can help teachers establish better learning environments in their classes at the beginning of the school year. Teachers need to be better informed about deadlines, activities, expectations, rules, and procedures and general management techniques in order to make the difference between a confused, anxious beginning and one that will contribute to a good learning environment for the entire school year.

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