

## Classroom Management in Middle and Secondary Education

Classroom management is a critical teaching skill. Therefore, at James Madison University, Middle and Secondary Education students are thoroughly prepared to use evidence-based strategies. This includes those found by Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers and Sugai (2008)<sup>1</sup> in their extensive research (see **Appendix A**), as well as other strategies with proven effectiveness:

1. Maximize structure in the classroom
2. Post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce a small number of positively stated expectations
3. Actively engage students in observable ways
4. Establish a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior
5. Establish a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior
6. Use “Active Supervision”

A four-tiered hierarchical model of discipline (see **Four\_Tiered\_Model.pdf**) is used as a framework for teaching these skills. These tiers are arranged following the “*Law of Least Restrictive Intervention*.” Preventative Planning Techniques (Tier 1) are the “least restrictive” including several proactive strategies aimed at reducing the likelihood of minimally-disruptive student behavior. Included in this tier are:

- (a) Developing positive interpersonal relationships through practicing the “Diamond Rule” (treating others as you would want them to treat someone you love) and making personal connections with all students;
- (b) Modeling pro-social social behavior;
- (c) Maintaining physical presence (Active Supervision); and
- (d) Organizing the classroom environment through the use of scheduling, rules (delineate, teacher, post, reteach), and routines (management of materials, handing in assignments, entering and exiting the classroom, etc.) and recognizing appropriate student behavior through providing credible praise and other forms of social reinforcement (e.g., phone-calls home, positive notes, nonverbal communication) and activity reinforcement (use of the Premack Principle).

It is acknowledged that there are other important strategies that can be classified as preventative planning techniques—for example, “effective teaching” which includes managing materials, using a variety of instructional strategies, motivating students, and others.

The next three tiers are “*reactive*” and utilized when students are engaged in various and escalating intensities of disruptive behavior. The least restrictive of these are the Anticipatory Response Techniques (Tier 2) which come into play when the teacher spots the beginning signs of misbehavior (“prodromals” – signs and symptoms of impending or beginning misbehavior). Once the teacher spots these prodromals s/he uses various subtle strategies (e.g., proximity control, eye contact, nonverbal signals, vicarious reinforcement) to redirect the students’ inappropriate behaviors.

Assertive Limit-Setting (Tier 3) is used when the anticipatory response techniques are ineffective or the student’s behaviors have become disruptive and must be stopped. At that point, the teacher *clearly and firmly* shows disapproval of inappropriate behavior (e.g., “John, please talk respectfully to me!”) and is prepared to back up her/his words with actions, doing so when necessary.

Should the student’s disruptiveness continue to escalate, the teacher uses Tier 4 Negative Corrective Consequences (e.g., ODR – Office Discipline Referral). At this point the administration may select various consequences such as conferencing with the student, conferencing with the parent(s), in-school suspension, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, and/or expulsion. When a student’s disruptive behavior has continued over a period of time, the administrators (or a team of administrators and teachers) may opt to employ other Tier 4 strategies (i.e., Positive Corrective Consequences) such as contingency contracting, check-in/check out, social skills training, token reinforcement, and/or referral for a change of placement.

An interactive teaching manual, Herr, D.E. (2014) *Universal [Primary] Positive Behavior Support: Teacher Skills* has been developed for use in this training. In addition, students are taught to use the *Classroom Management Checklist* (see **Classroom\_Management\_Observation\_Form.pdf**) as a method of evaluating and refining their use of these practices. JMU middle and secondary education candidates use all of the techniques discussed above in both their methods practicums and student teaching internships.

<sup>1</sup>Simonsen, B., Fairbanks, S., Briesch, A., Myers, D. & Sugai, G. (2008). Evidence-based Practices in Classroom Management: Considerations for Research to Practice. *Education and Treatment in Children*, 31, 251-380.