



5 PRINCIPLES OF CLASSROOM CULTURE

Discipline — Discipline is NOT just a verb- “I had to discipline my student.” It is also a noun- “I taught my students to have discipline.” This form of the word reminds us that at the core of its definition, discipline is TEACHING – Teaching students the right and successful way to do things. To have a positive classroom culture, you have to teach your students acceptable behavior and the appropriate responses to all situations. If you teach students appropriate behavior, you’ll spend less time correcting wrong behavior.

Management — Management is the process of reinforcing behavior through the use of consequences and rewards. However, frequently reprimanding with consequences for wrong behavior as well as handing out too many rewards for expected behavior will prove to be ineffective. Effective classroom management systems set clear expectations and teach students how to behave before establishing consequences; and relationships are built with students so that while rewards may be offered, they aren’t required for compliance.

Control — Control is often thought of as a negative word. However, control is needed to create a positive classroom culture. Having control of situations and your classroom does not imply controlling students by means of manipulation. Instead, control signifies authority for the betterment of students. Controlling means speaking to students in a way that makes them more likely to comply- such as replacing phrases like, “Calm down!” with specific requests like, “Please return to your seat.” Control means understanding the power of language and relationships, being firm and confident, while also being civil and kind. Consistency is key to developing effective and positive classroom control.

Influence — Influence must follow control. If control gets students to do the things you suggest, then influence gets them to internalize the things you suggest. Influence is the process of instilling belief - belief that rules, procedures, norms, and classroom culture was designed for their own benefit. Through influence, students move from following the rules as an avoidance of consequences and start following the rules because they believe in their importance and behave appropriately out of choice.

Engagement — Engagement is key to creating a positive classroom culture. The human mind is a powerful thing, and when left unstimulated, it will find something else to keep it busy. Positive classroom cultures are created by teachers who offer students challenging, interesting, rigorous, and meaningful lessons. Setting high expectations and offering tools to success are key elements in meaningful engagement

Classroom culture is not a single entity. It is a complex combination of each of the principles listed above. Each principle must be actively present in the classroom to create a learning environment that is safe and orderly and fosters student growth while producing positive results.
