

4. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOURAL EXPECTATIONS

“... effective management ... is more an instructional than a disciplinary enterprise. Effective managers socialize their students to the student role through instruction and modeling. It is important that these teachers be consistent in articulating demands and monitoring compliance, but the most important thing is to make sure that students know what to do in the first place.” (185)

—J. Brophy

At each and every grade level, teaching classroom behavioural expectations begins on the first day of the school year. These expectations, framed in positive language, apply to all activities at all times.

Three to five classroom behavioural expectations are sufficient at any grade level. They should be posted in a conspicuous place in the classroom and reviewed regularly. Specific expectations may vary slightly from class to class but should align with school-wide expectations.

Clear classroom behavioural expectations

- provide students with a sense of security
- contribute to a positive climate
- increase academic learning time
- reduce classroom stress
- enable students to monitor themselves
- enable teachers to facilitate and support positive behaviour
- support good communication with parents and other school staff, including substitute teachers

Although *rules* and *expectations* are often viewed as interchangeable terms, *expectation* has a more positive connotation. The implication is that expectations are tools for helping as opposed to enforcing, and involve commitment rather than compliance. Expectations tell students, “We believe this is how you can be.”

Respond consistently to students who meet behavioural expectations and be flexible when students do not meet them, keeping in mind their individual needs and the context of the behaviour. Most students who do not meet expectations benefit from feedback and opportunities to correct their behaviour. For example, “We walk in this classroom. Return to your desk, please, and walk quietly to the computers.”

Some students who do not meet expectations have not yet learned the skills they need. For other students, differences in ethnic and cultural behavioural and social expectations can lead to misunderstandings and affect schooling experiences. These expectations should be considered in terms of the context of the behaviour. These students may require additional coaching and practice. For example, if an expectation is that students be prepared for class, some students may need additional supports, such as a specific verbal prompt (e.g., “Bring your math textbook, binder, and something to write with”). It may also be helpful to accompany the student to the locker to model what it looks like to be prepared, or to provide the student with a checklist or colour-coding to organize materials.

A few students may challenge the classroom expectations. These students require individualized approaches that include both proactive and reactive strategies.



For more information, see *Towards Inclusion: From Challenges to Possibilities: Planning for Behaviour* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2001).

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/beh/index.html

Teach Expectations

Take time during the first weeks of school to teach classroom expectations and ensure that students understand them. Expectations need to be reviewed and reinforced periodically throughout the year (e.g., following school or semester breaks, whenever a new student joins the class).

Sample Strategy for Teaching and Reinforcing Expectations



- Create and use a triple T-chart, where expectations are identified and students have an opportunity to participate in defining what each expectation looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Younger students can learn about behavioural expectations by drawing pictures of appropriate behaviour, presenting them to the class, and then posting the pictures as friendly reminders.

Listening While Others Are Speaking		
Looks Like	Sounds Like	Feels Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ eyes are on the speaker ■ mouths are closed ■ hands are still 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ only one voice talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the speaker feels that what he or she is saying is important ■ both the speaker and the audience feel respected

An additional benefit to reinforcing school-wide expectations in the classroom is that when substitute teachers or guest speakers are present, they are able to refer to and reinforce the posted expectations more consistently.

Develop Activity Procedures

In *Rethinking Classroom Management: Strategies for Prevention, Intervention and Problem Solving*, Belvel and Jordan discuss the importance of establishing “activity procedures” in the classroom (112–113). Activity procedures are detailed written statements of what will occur each time a certain type of activity takes place in the classroom. For example, the social skills used in cooperative groups are quite different from those used to listen to a guest speaker.

Teaching specific activity procedures

- maintains consistent positive behaviour
- provides students with a sense of security
- reminds the teacher and students about what to do
- provides a focus for setting limits
- prompts self-direction and less dependence on the teacher
- increases the time available for learning

Belvel and Jordan also recommend that teachers consider these types of questions when developing activity procedures. Some sample questions are provided below:

1. How will students work?
 - whole groups
 - small groups
 - partners
 - individually
2. How will they communicate?
 - show of hands
 - in writing
 - talk with partner
 - one at a time in group
3. How will they ask for help?
 - raise hand
 - use signal card
 - ask other students

4. Where will they work?
 - at their desk
 - at partner's desk
 - at table
 - moving around
5. How long will they have?
6. What materials will they use? Where are materials stored? How will they be distributed and cleaned up?
7. What should they do when they are finished?
 - begin the next task
 - read silently
 - select an activity
 - visit quietly with partner