**How to Implement Effective and Equitable Classroom Management**

Madalyne L. Heiken

Teacher Education Program, University of Denver

CUI 4031: Teaching and Learning Environments

Ms. Betsy Leonard

August 19, 2022

**Introduction**

At its root, education is about the relationship between teachers and students. Classroom management is critical, because student success is impacted by how a teacher manages student behavior and interactions. Teachers help guide students' behavior, enable them to make good choices, and prevent future problems or chaos (Weinstein et al., 2004). Classroom management, or the classroom community, determines the environment that students will be able to learn in. If the environment is hostile or unaccepting, then students will be less likely to succeed. However, if the environment is warm, welcoming, and inclusive of student cultures, they will be more likely to succeed because they are humanized. A culturally responsive classroom management style can help educators achieve this goal.

Culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) ensures that every student receives the effective and equitable education that they are entitled to. CRCM is made up of five pillars (Weinstein et al., 2004). 1. Recognition of one's own ethnocentrism and biases. 2. Knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds. 3. Understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system. 4. Ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies. 5. Commitment to building caring classroom communities. At its core, CRCM emphasizes that we are all cultural beings who hold beliefs and biases about behavior, which influences the way we treat and interact with others.

Educators can implement CRCM into their system and structures to better teach children of various backgrounds. For centuries, classroom management has been seen to be "culturally neutral," however, it is influenced by Whiteness and middle-class ideologies (Bowers & Flinders, 1990 as cited in Weinstein et al., 2004, p. 26). Issues in the classroom may arise when a teacher and their students have different cultural backgrounds. Cultures define "appropriate

behavior" differently, which can lead to tensions when a White educator tries to teach from a White lens without regard to other cultures behaviors. For instance, cultures have different views on eye contact. Japanese students might not use eye contact because it is disrespectful to look someone in the eye. A white teacher may take the students' lack of eye contact as a sign of disrespect. Understanding a student's culture is understanding the student and their behavior. It is also working to build a relationship with them that honors who they are as a person.

**Precise Directions and Positive Narration**

Sayeski and Brown (2011) describe a tiered system for classroom management. Those tiers include preventative classroom management, first-line interventions, and intensive individualized interventions. Precise directions and positive narrations can be utilized as preventative classroom management tools that universally help all students succeed. Precise directions help simplify tasks for students in ways that they can easily follow. They also provide students with clear teacher expectations for the task and student behavior. Additionally, precise directions are clear and simple to best maximize student work time.

Positive narration helps aid educators in managing the classroom and students' behavior. This looks like a teacher saying, "I see Jose and Winslow talking quietly" or "I notice Nadine actively listening to Jorge." An unbiased observation of student behavior encourages other students to follow suit which can promote engagement and help students understand the expectations if they didn't understand before. Positive narration also holds students accountable to meeting the teachers' expectations and behavior standards which can increase student motivation to complete classwork.

I haven't had the chance to witness my mentor teacher give class directions yet. However, after practicing with my peers, I discovered that it is harder than it looks. In my video, I

neglected to include the instructions for the activity; instead, I focused primarily on behavior expectations. I did not include how students would complete the task, but I did make the expectation and reward clear. Moving forward, I need to practice balancing both. I can create a bullet point list to help me practice precise directions. This would include instructions for the task/activity, my expectations for participation and behavior, and the rewards or consequences. I would want to ensure that my directions and expectations match my student demographic in order to be culturally responsive. We can work together to create class norms and expectations that determine "appropriate" behavior which can directly target CRCM.

**Consequence and Reward Ladders**

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Early College (DMLK) dealt with many attendance issues last year. This year, they have implemented a strict attendance policy to help students be accountable and ensure they are in class to receive the effective and equitable education they deserve. Some school-wide consequences include lunch and after school detention, Saturday school, and putting phones in lock boxes. DMLK is also trying to implement more restorative justice practices to help repair harm and promote student success. These are relatively new systems, so it is hard to tell how students will respond to them. I am going to ensure that I uphold these school-wide systems in my instruction and expectation of students. This includes not allowing students on their phone and using the lock box system the School Culture Team (SCT) recently created.

In my classroom, my mentor teacher and I are going to be focusing on promoting student involvement through rewards. We will ask students how they feel valued and appreciated, then we're going to integrate those ideas into our reward system. In the past, these rewards have included food and music. I can also document what students say in our initial survey to create a purposeful curriculum that relates to their experiences (Mooney, 2013). This promotes an

accepting classroom climate. Additionally, students will create their own classroom norms after hearing our expectations. This will promote more student accountability, self-management, and buy in. If a student or group of students acts against our norms, we are going to have a restorative circle with the whole class to determine how we can prevent that issue from happening again. We will also collect student feedback often, so we can assess what to improve on our end. These systems align with the principles of CRCM by maintaining high expectations for students, learning what students like, and creating a classroom climate that highlights that.

**Challenging Students**

There is no doubt that I will have some students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. I have been unprepared for this in the past, but now I have better tools to rely on. When I am faced with a difficult student, I will utilize my understanding of the student to analyze why they might be acting out. This will help me rehumanize the student and consider the external or internal factors that might be influencing their learning or behavior including their social, emotional, and cognitive development, race, poverty, and more (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health, 2018; Lareau, 2011). Addressing the cause could be helpful in determining next steps the best ways to aid the youth moving forward.

After that, I would set up a time to talk to the student to get to the root of the problem. From there, we can work together to create a system that will benefit the young person academically and behaviorally. This may look like creating a plan for special supports or creating a secret code or gesture to help the student. I can also request the student participate in a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) to determine if they need social skills instruction or self-monitoring instruction. Once the student takes that assessment, I'll be able to better support them and their needs. For instance, a student with social skill instruction may need to learn how

to deal with their feelings or how to handle their aggression (Sayeski & Brown, 2011). It is important that I work with the youth to set specific goals and to determine my role in holding them accountable as they work toward achieving that goal. In creating the individualized system with the student, I am considering their uniqueness and cultures which aligns with the CRCM.

We know that students are less likely to have behavioral issues when they are engaged in their learning. As Sayeski and Brown (2011) say, "teachers can create highly engaging instruction by providing frequent opportunities for students to respond" (p. 122). To support students more long-term and to avoid hitting that tier 3, my mentor teacher and I can incorporate opportunities for students to respond verbally/non-verbally in class, add visual supports to our walls, and provide youth with handouts that clarify our directions and expectations (Sayeski & Brown, 2011). If we notice more students are acting out, we can help refresh student understanding of the rules and procedures in place to help recenter ourselves. DMLK is encouraging community circles this year, so that could be the place to mention that reminder.

Lastly, the best thing I can do to support my students long-term is to be confident in my abilities as a teacher, uphold the structures in place, and be respectful of them, their identities, and their cultures. They deserve the right to an excellent and equitable free public education, and I hope to offer that by implementing the pillars of culturally responsive classroom management.

## References

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