

## Chapter 5

# Classroom Management for Special Education Providers

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### ABSTRACT

*Classroom management is a key component of instruction and learning for students with disabilities. The authors outline six practices to assist readers with creating effective classroom management that include (1) fostering trusting relationships, (2) identifying and teaching classroom expectations, (3) ensuring predictability and structure, (4) providing ongoing feedback to students, (5) managing unwanted behavior, and (6) engaging learners. Also discussed are use of data to ensure practices are effective and intensifying those practices.*

### INTRODUCTION

Effective classroom management leads to a positive classroom environment and provides the basis from which instruction can take place (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), 2020; Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), 2015; Simonsen & Myers, 2015). Developing expertise in managing student behavior takes time and is particularly important for educators working with students with delays in learning, those with intensive needs, or students receiving special education services (Oliver & Reschly, 2017). Within this chapter, the authors outline classroom management practices that are correlated with improved classroom functioning, lower rates of disruptive or undesired behavior, and increases in academic achievement (CESE, 2020; Oliver et al., 2011; Simonsen & Myers, 2015; Simonsen et al., 2008, 2020). While the practices outlined in this chapter are described as “classroom” management practices, they are applicable across a variety of settings, including small-group and individual instruction. Because special educators provide special education services across settings, it is

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important that they have a strong foundation in effective classroom management practices to establish a positive environment.

Further, these practices provide an effective foundation for students with disabilities (Simonsen et al., 2020), and they align well with functional behavior assessments (FBAs) and behavior intervention plans (BIPs). Although the focus of this chapter is not on FBAs or BIPs, readers will be able to align the practices outlined in this chapter with their FBAs and BIPs.

## **Effective Classroom Management Practices**

At its foundation, effective classroom management is about taking a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to addressing student behavior (Darch & Kame'enui, 2003; Harlacher, 2015). Being proactive in addressing behavior is similar to what takes place in academic areas. Educators must plan their instruction, deliver that instruction, and respond with corrective feedback to promote student success. At the student level, educators may listen to a student read and identify specific areas in which the student needs additional skill development or explicit instruction (e.g., phonics, phonemic awareness). Likewise, educators need to follow a similar process when addressing behavior—they must plan their environment, instruct expectations, and provide feedback. At the student level, educators may “listen” to student misbehavior to identify factors outside of a student’s control (e.g., social skills deficits, attention deficits, exposure to past trauma) that they can address through explicit instruction rather than using punitive approaches (e.g., yelling, detention, suspension). When unwanted behavior is viewed as an opportunity to reteach, students are more likely to succeed both academically and behaviorally. Similarly, when classroom management is proactive, a positive instructional learning environment is created (Harlacher, 2015; OSEP, 2015; Simonsen & Myers, 2015).

Over the last decade, several literature reviews have identified key classroom management practices focused on establishing structures, routines, and expectations to ensure a proactive approach to addressing behavior (see CESE, 2020; Greenberg et al., 2014; Oliver et al., 2011; Simonsen et al., 2008). In addition to these practices, the quality of relationships and attachment to school have emerged as critical factors for student success (Anderson et al., 2004; Decker et al., 2006; Zolkoski, 2019). As a result, the authors promote the following six practices that incorporate both literature bases: (1) fostering trusting relationships, (2) identifying and teaching classroom expectations, (3) ensuring predictability and structure, (4) providing ongoing feedback to students, (5) managing unwanted behavior, and (6) engaging learners (see Table 1 for definitions). Implementing these practices can create a positive and proactive classroom setting that encourages collaboration, reduces unwanted or off-task behavior, and enhances academic outcomes (CESE, 2020; Harlacher, 2015; Simonsen & Myers, 2015).

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